

Having worked in the Australian book industry for fifty years, I feel qualified to comment on the current review of Australia's copyright laws. As Publishing Director at Hodder & Stoughton Australia I was involved in developing that company's highly successful Australian publishing program as well as its thriving distribution of books imported from overseas. As founder and director of Margaret Hamilton Books, an independent Australian company which succeeded both locally and on an international scale for ten years, I saw the industry from a different perspective. So working for both a large multi-national company and a small independent company gave me broad experience of the Australian publishing scene and its development over the last fifty years.

During those fifty years I have been instrumental in developing the careers of many Australian writers and illustrators, in promoting them in Australia and on the international market. During that time the Australian book industry developed into one of the most successful in the world, in spite of the smallness of the market. Not only did publishers benefit, but so did authors, illustrators, bookshops, printers and libraries.

I have serious concerns about the cultural and economic impact that surrendering Australian copyright would have on Australia's authors and our flourishing publishing and book distribution industry. Some individuals, including some booksellers, are crowing about the price of books in this country and that surrendering copyright would lead to cheaper books. A review of recent Christmas catalogues revealed that some of the large chains are actually increasing the price of books over and above the publishers' RRP. Surely this is in direct conflict with their argument?

In order to keep this submission brief, I want this country to remain one with a high per capita book ownership, with a flourishing book publishing industry and therefore a society which fosters free thought and encourages Australian authors, illustrators and book creators. There are too many industries in this country that have adopted American practices, ideas and products. The Australian government pours millions into the development of our sports people. Let's keep books Australian and encourage our literary voices.

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