

January 20, 2009

Dear Mr/Ms /Commissioners

As a fledging children's author, I struggle to get published in the current climate and I work 2 other paid jobs to support my family and my fairly unpaid dream to publish.

I am highly concerned that allowing parallel importation of books into Australia will be damaging to Australian writers, publishers and especially the readers!

The basis for my beliefs is explained below:

- Detrimental influence of accepting parallel imports into Australia

A study by the Productivity Commission revealed that allowing parallel imports will force Australian authors to write for a world audience, and this would diminish the unique 'Australianess' of the content and themes.

I believe we are overwhelmed by other countries cultures in the areas of film and music and now literature? Language will be lost. It already has been. I don't want my children or any children to lose the opportunity of reading a book by a indigenous Australian author or non indigenous Australian author who has lived experience with the culture, with all due respect to the authors of other countries, I feel the possibility that they would be trying to explain the subtleties and complexities of Australian life untenable.

Another possible a scenario created is where writers will be coerced into overlooking the needs of Australian readers, in order to make a meager living selling on the global stage.

I don't want to be a ghost writer for a global company. I have a voice and it is unique and it is Australian! Who will listen to it?

Publishers of small companies could not possibly sustain the influx of cheap imports and in this financial climate I fear for them. This in turns means the publisher that might take my books has now closed and I have little options for my original work to be published. What if Mem Fox, Shaun Tan and other prominent authors were competing to get their first book published? Imagine Australia without Possum Magic?

As a primary school teacher, I cannot imagine not having access to such books in the classroom. Wombat stew delights children no matter how many times they have heard it.

Each year the new offerings of Australian literature get smaller as it is with the state of the economy. Working in the Library as a volunteer at my children's school, I have first hand knowledge of the value of Australian books in the collection and how many are borrowed by the children and loved and re-loved!

As a parent, I know how little money there is left for books at the moment and how influenced my children are by advertising. I shudder when I think of book fairs filled with cheap imports and Libraries cutting costs unable to afford the quality literature.

How will they replace Australian classics if no one will publish them?

Overseas publishers will want them to sell all over the world so may tweak them to satisfy the global audience. Is that not censorship????

As a creative arts therapist, I work with children who are marginalized in our society including the gifted and talented. One such teenager had her very 'Aussie' novelette published at 16 through a combination of Make a Wish Foundation and Macmillan Publishing. These opportunities will surely evaporate if such publishers are no longer available.

I beg you to reconsider this plan to allow parallel imports into Australia,
For the sake of authors, publishers, good booksellers and above all the readers.
This is something once started will change the bookscape of Australia for eternity,

Yours in anticipation,

Michelle McGowan,
Fledgling Author, Educator, Creative Arts Therapist.