

To Members of the Productivity Commission  
re: **Copyright Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books**

I am strongly opposed to the proposal to introduce parallel importation of books into Australia from overseas publishers.

As the self-employed author of 48 books, comprising 44 for children and 4 adult biography and history, I am one of the Australian primary producers of material on which many other depend for their livelihood. I believe changes to Copyright legislation to allow parallel importation would cause hardship to the wide range of people involved in the Australian publishing industry: not only to writers and illustrators and their agents, but also to publishers, including editors, designers, and marketing teams, printers and binders.

In my 38 years as a published writer, I have witnessed the healthy growth of the Australian publishing industry, and in particular the emergence of a strong and internationally acclaimed commitment to innovation and excellence in children's books. This has contributed substantially to a better informed Australian readership and to overseas knowledge of, and recognition of, Australian identity.

Because the Australian publishing industry in 1970 did not produce many children's books, my first book, *The Picnic Dog*, was published in Britain, as were my next six titles. The second, *Windmill at Magpie Creek*, was runner-up for the Children's Book Council of Australia's Book of the Year Award in 1972, but because of a wharf labourers' ban, stocks of the book from the UK were not unloaded in time for the Awards and were not available until many months later. This severely affected potential sales and future recognition of my work, as I was then a virtually unknown author.

Since 1974, all my books except one, *New Patches for Old*, about an English migrant girl's first Australian experiences, have been first published in Australia. Not only have they contributed significantly to the ability of Australian readers to identify with their Australian heritage, but their production has involved employment for professionals in the book trade, and also importantly, in the secondary industries based on books: bookselling, libraries, education and the media.

My books are widely used in both primary and secondary schools. *Survival in Our Own Land: "Aboriginal" Experiences in "South Australia" since 1836* is also a standard work of reference in tertiary courses Australia-wide and overseas. Several of my titles have been made into short films by the ABC.

A number have been produced in foreign editions, including American and British, and translations in Danish, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Basque and Catalan.

If parallel importation were to proceed, there are serious implications both personal, in terms of livelihood for writers, illustrators and those engaged in book production, and also nationally, in terms of culture and identity. As one of the smaller and geographically isolated English speaking nations, Australia cannot afford to allow its unique voice through its books on the international scene to be swamped by major overseas interests.

Publishers in other Western countries have the benefit of exclusive copyright in their own territories. If the current Australia copyright territory ceases to exist, Australia will become an open market to its detriment, a dumping ground for multinational publishers. It will foster the undesirable cult of the bestseller. Australian publishers who have nurtured and invested in local writing and illustrating talent will be disadvantaged, and forced to limit or even abandon such activities. In particular the current and long overdue encouragement and emergence of Aboriginal writers and illustrators could be severely curtailed or disappear altogether.

In the 1960s when I first began trying to have my work published, there were only half a dozen or so Australian publishers, including university presses, all with small lists and stables

of established writers. Over my lifetime as a writer, Australian book publishing has evolved into a major and vibrant cultural industry, with dozens of publishers, large and small, offering creative opportunities to new generations of emerging writers and illustrators. Our nation cannot afford to lose this important undergirding of our education, employment and identity.

My 48th book, *Maralinga - the Anangu Story*, nine years in the making and to be released in April, could not have emerged without the vision and encouragement of the Australian publisher Allen & Unwin. Illustrated by Anangu artists and containing their statements, it focuses on the effects of the British nuclear testing in the 1950s and 1960s on traditional Aboriginal country still inhabited by Anangu. This tragic and important chapter of Australian history would have stood little chance of being published by an overseas publisher, or indeed by an Australian publisher struggling to compete with an influx of offshore books. But thanks to Allen and Unwin, Anangu people have a new voice which will be heard across Australia and beyond for generations to come.

On their behalf, and on behalf of the generations of Australian children who will grow into adult readers with pride in being Australian, I urge you, Commissioners, to recommend against the case for abolition of copyright restrictions which would allow the parallel importation of books.

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