

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to oppose the proposal to surrender Australian copyright on Australian books. I urge you to retain the 30/90 day rule.

My only experience of being published overseas has been as an author; our fledgling publishing house has not yet sold rights overseas, but we foresee the problems that would be created by competition from overseas publishers in our market; under such circumstances we, and other small publishing houses, would go out of business.

I have had one children's book translated into Italian, and was surprised and dismayed at the lack of consultation with me, the author. The original Australian book had an attractive cover showing realistic children; the Italian cover was cartoon-like. The Australian version had no illustrations; I was astonished to find that the Italian one had cartoon-like illustrations that did not reflect the Australian reality: the Aboriginal child in the book looked like an African/Italian, with roman features and frizzy hair, nothing like a real Aboriginal child; the black-headed python was represented as a monstrous patterned creature more like a mini boa constrictor, while the blue-tongue lizard was unrecognisable. I do not speak much Italian, so was unable to judge the quality of the translation, but was concerned that nothing at all was checked with me. I understand that American publishers edit Australian work and Americanise it.

If this is what is allowed to happen to copyright work overseas, and if the author's intentions can be so disregarded, then we are in serious danger of losing our cultural meanings, just as we are already in the process of having our grammar and spelling colonised by American norms. If such bastardisations of our literature are allowed to compete with our own productions, we will lose the tenuous control we still have over our own culture.

I urge you to retain the 30/90 day rule.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Lowe