

Submission on the effects of lifting Copyright Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books into Australia

I wish to argue against a lifting of *Copyright Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books*. In my opinion, as a writer and a reader, we need to protect our distinctive writing style and our vibrant publishing industry in every way possible.

The publishing industry in this country has grown from humble beginnings from years back to become the advancing industry it is today. If this proposal goes ahead, we may not go forward, but backwards and fast. Apparently this is what happened in New Zealand.

If the suggestions are implemented, the Australian publishing industry could be reduced to a bare skeleton. Smaller publishing houses may dwindle and disappear and in all probability only the rich and famous and the well established authors are likely to be published by the larger companies. As a long term effect, less new talents may be discovered. Why would publishers gamble on somebody unknown if times are harder and smaller profits achieved, but also when remainder books with its consequences may be dumped here?

As I understand the issue, Australian authors and writers opting to have their work originally published in Australia may be severely disadvantaged. Australian readers too will be disadvantaged, and this includes Australian children, even if books possibly could become slightly cheaper. Please note that there are no guarantees for prices to fall. According to my latest research, the book prices at this stage in Australia seem to be well in line with overseas prices in any case.

If books published in the US, UK and Canada flood the Australian market, common sense tells us that the Australian uniqueness is going to disappear. To have every story worthy of publication to comply with the American way of speaking by using other words and other spellings than our own, means no protection of the Australian culture and our own publishing industry. This may be another issue, but if given the chance I believe that readers in other countries do embrace our culture, but if not, they should be made aware that we exist. Why do we need to change wordings and spellings to suit the US market when children may be taught that English comes in different shapes and sizes? Why would they be unable to learn new words and understand the differences? In Australia we have to understand the equivalent of many US words. Even so, if that never changes; domestically, we want to have the choice of reading books by authors with Australian voices.

So, why try and change the advantages of having a national industry to the detriment of all existing authors and budding writers waiting to be discovered? It may become much more difficult to get noticed and with a thinning market, publishers may never find the shining gemstone in the gravel pit.

Well-known authors have made their feelings about the issue of copyright restrictions lifted very clear. They have long struggled to have a place in the Australian market and in many cases in the overseas markets. They are understandably extremely hesitant about the long-term effects.

As an Australian reader and a writer waiting to be discovered and published in Australia, I can see my possibilities diminished if these changes are made. If I am struggling to become known now, what hope is there for my future if fewer books will be published in Australia? Worse is that it may be even harder for unknown Australian writers to get noticed in the US or the UK without first having proved themselves with a successful Australian publication. Well, if that is not achievable, what do you do? Anyone heard of Catch 22?

Some of the flow-on effects, if there are fewer books published in Australia, will undoubtedly be fewer movies made from Australian published books and lower royalty payments for Australian authors. Writing is usually not a well-paid occupation and most would be grateful for every cent received.

Another issue is that the US and the UK do not allow parallel importations for obvious reasons. Why should we make it easy for them to take advantage of our markets? No, our territorial copyrights needs to stay firmly in the ground.

What we have now is a booming publishing industry supplying books that readers, young and old, want and need. We have new talents emerging and established authors becoming well known overseas. Why do we need changes when nobody is sure about where this will ultimately lead?

Thank you for reading my submission.

Yours sincerely

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