

As an avid reader and occasional author in the non-fiction area, I am deeply concerned about any change that might compromise the health of the local publishing industry.

I've spent more than two decades living full-time in the USA, and returned to live most of my year in Australia some 6 years ago. During that time I've seen an horrific decline in the quality of some leading Australian newspapers, together with an increased concentration of media power in very few hands and ever greater sourcing of editorial and commentary material from overseas sources. In addition, we recently lost the Bulletin, a flagship publication that fostered many Australian authors over a very long time.

The last thing we should want as Australians is to become citizens of some derivative "Little America". The USA has its own fine traditions and culture and we have ours, but the power and wealth of their media, entertainment and information systems is so great that we can easily be swamped. Even many the advertisements on TV now feature US landscapes and attitudes, with Australian voices.

One of the few places we still encounter a genuinely Australian voice is in the books, plays and poetry that are published here. Australian authors are often fostered by small Houses with Australian owners and editors. Anything that compromises their health and well being damages all of us, and diminishes opportunity for those who come after. Occasionally, a Mathew Reilly or Peter Carey makes it on the global scene, but such successes are few and far between.

Some of the greatest enjoyment I've had since returning home is to read books like "Death of a River Guide" or "The Butterfly Man". It will be an enormous tragedy for this country if anything is done to still such voices.

sincerely

Peter C. Doherty AC, FAA, FRS,  
Nobel Laureate for Medicine  
Dept of Microbiology and Immunology,