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ELWOOD VIC 3184

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Parallel Importation of Books
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

I read with dismay your draft report on the Parallel Importation of Books. As an author of children's books I have had experience in both the trade and educational sectors of the Australian publishing industry and know that my livelihood and that of many other authors would be adversely affected by the changes you recommend.

Currently, many of the educational titles I have published have been sold to overseas publishers. In Australia I may receive a 5 to 10 per cent royalty on RRP depending upon how much illustration the title has but the same title sold overseas usually generates a royalty of 5 per cent of the sum the Australian publisher receives. This often amounts to 10 to 20 cents per book! In other words, I have to sell ten times as many books overseas as I do in Australia to earn the same royalty.

You don't seem to realize that most authors have very little power in the bunny eat bunny world of publishing. In educational publishing particularly, many titles are commissioned as part of a series so that there is no room to sell our rights to different territories ourselves. Educational publishers sell our rights off shore to help defray the costs of publishing here but usually at a very low price. If those same titles are sold back into the Australian market by overseas publishers, authors like me would receive very little reward for our efforts — perhaps as little as 10 cents per book.

As far as trade publishing goes, it takes many years for a publisher to build an author as a brand. Often the biggest profits come with continued sales of an author's backlist. What incentives will there be for publishers to stick by authors and keep their books in print here if they face excessive competition from cheap imports of those same authors' books? And you can be sure that the authors will receive much lower royalties on those cheap imports, such is the nature of overseas rights.

Successive Australian Governments have virtually killed our manufacturing industries by the obsessive pursuit of a free market and productivity. The big banks and telcos are on the road to destroying our service industry. And now you would like to bludgeon our creative industries. I say, where will it end?

Other countries protect their publishing territories, just as they protect their agricultural and manufacturing industries. Why should Australians be the bunnies that have their industries cannibalized by others? And for what benefit? Your own press release is full of vague language such as 'measuring is complex' 'price effect varies' 'current uncertainties about the impacts'. In other words, you don't know what harm the mooted change may do to the local publishing industry or even whether any savings to the public will result. This seems very irresponsible to me.

Your recommendations are yet another example of chasing productivity for productivity's sake with very little heed to the possible consequences. I urge you to reconsider.

Yours faithfully

Carol Jones

Author