

A submission to the Copyright Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books "project".

From Kaz Cooke, Australian author.

Health Hazards

I have just become aware of the possibly consequences of changing the rules in this area. The introduction to the Australian market of foreign editions of my books would be unfair, if not totally disastrous for my readers, who rely on my books for important medical information - some of it including emergency telephone numbers relevant to the health of their newborn babies and small children, or in the case of pregnant women, to their own physical and mental health.

I am the author of non-fiction books for Australian would-be parents and parents. The books most relevant to this submission are Up the Duff: The Real Guide to Pregnancy, and Kidwrangling: Looking After Kids aged 0 to 5. They continue to sell to Australians several years after they were first released. These books have gathered a reputation for well-researched and trustworthy medical and other information which is updated between printings, as well as new editions. My readers rely on knowing they are getting Australian information. Much of it is garnered from the Australian federal department of Health, various Australian hospital and other sources, and includes lists and discrete sections of crisis and emergency medical contact numbers nationally and for each state and territory.

Information within the texts on matters such as immunisation schedules, or what to do when a baby has a high fever is not just strictly factual, although that is a vitally important portion. It extends to generally accepted Australian advice on various medicines and other issues pertaining to the health and welfare of Australian children.

This information is changed by foreign publishers for the market in which it is being adapted - in my case, books with health and other contact information re-configured for the UK or the USA would be sold in Australia. The books would look almost identical to the Australian editions - overseas publishers usually use the same artwork as the Australian cover, and of course my name and signature cartoons throughout the text. The book bought by an Australian reader would be indistinguishable from the Australian edition except it will be full of the WRONG information for Australian readers, and in many case be missing vital information Australian parents should have. This "branding" of my name and the cover illustrations, as well as the reputation of the book titles has come to mean that Australians can trust the books to have good local advice, much of it based on Australian government medical and other policy. If you allow and indeed encourage the importation of foreign copies of these books, they will be unwittingly bought by Australians. At best, they will be justifiably annoyed and angry that they have bought a book in good faith which provides them with wrong information that could have serious consequences. For example, in an emergency, people may frantically leaf through to find the Poisons Information Line telephone number, only to find it doesn't work, because the book gives numbers for England or America, but not here. Even without this extreme (but possible) outcome, readers may not know it is a foreign edition if they do not look at the contact numbers. This means that unbeknownst to

them, they'd be reading the text of a foreign edition, unaware that the advice given may be entirely wrong for them and their family in Australia.

This will cause my reputation as an author of useful books for Australians to be unfairly and seriously damaged, and people will be given wrong information under my name which I am not in a position to correct. I would find this mortifying, having built a reputation on solid research and telling the truth to readers. At best, the "dumping" of foreign editions in this market would create confusion and unnecessary bad will between myself and the readers, whom I respect and try to help. Consequently, it would have an ineluctably negative impact on my future book sales. At worst, and far more importantly, this is potentially dangerous to the health of Australian children and their parents.

Please reconsider the proposed changes.

Sincerely,
Kaz Cooke.