

8 April 2009  
Dear Don

Thanks for your email; it seems superficially plausible. However, given the small Australian market and the bizarre sale or return policies wielded by book retailers, Australian publishers actually have a very small margin to play with. It doesn't seem to me that, in this 'newly competitive' world you propose, Australian publishers will be able to reduce the RRP on their local products much, especially if they have reduced income from agency rights. So won't they struggle to sell/market Australian literature in competition with these cheap international imports? Won't they cut back on their local quality fiction publishing programs further?

In fact, how many of Thea Astley's works are in print even now? Which Australian publishers are still accepting unsolicited manuscripts? Could you explain to me how your proposal will ensure that Australian readers will enjoy new Australian literature in the future? Which publishers and their editors will have the luxury of developing a relationship with a young author who might one day become a figure with the stature of, say, Peter Carey or David Malouf? Who will take risks? Will we ever see an Australian Roberto Bolano under these conditions?

You talk about "opening the book market to international competition" as if it were some higher principle, as if the free market mechanism was what publishing and selling books should be all about. (I actually have easy access to cheap UK and American books via the internet if I want them, so it's not like protectionist policies are denying Australian readers access to the things we want to read. They're just denying you the right to make a profit off them, and I don't really care about that. Your business model may suck, but it's a bit disingenuous to suggest that's a threat to 'literacy'.)

As a book buyer, I don't want to be ripped off, but I don't want to read cheap US true crime, or biographies of basketballers, or idiots guides to shuttlecock, at the expense of developing Australian thinkers and artists. I'm not convinced that your idea is a good one, and I don't think I'll sign your petition. I'm pretty clear on the difference between your interests and mine.

Regards  
Katie Eberle  
"Booklover"

cc: The Productivity Commission

7 April 2009  
Dear Katie,

We need your help to bring you cheaper books.

The Australian Government, through the Productivity Commission, is reviewing the restrictive laws that unnecessarily inflate the price of books. The current laws stop Australian Booksellers importing books other than through the Australian subsidiaries or agents of overseas publishers. This may sound reasonable but it prevents copyright-protected books from being imported from the most competitive market, usually the United States or the UK, whichever is the cheapest when ordering. The current law stops us buying books at the lowest price to put in our stores for you to buy.

Under the Dymocks proposal, copyright will still be protected; authors will still receive royalties and publishers will still be paid for the rights they hold. Removing the import restrictions will open the book market to international competition. This will stop local subsidiaries and agents of overseas publishers charging inflated wholesale prices.

Similar importation laws on CDs were removed in 1998 and you might remember how the prices of CDs fell dramatically - the same can happen for books.

Dymocks is part of the Coalition for Cheaper Books. You can read our submission to the Productivity Commission at [Productivity Commission](#). The submission gives a number of examples of how the current law inflates book prices and restricts the number of titles available in Australia.

The Productivity Commission has just released a draft report which includes the draft recommendation that import restrictions should continue to apply for 12 months from the date a book becomes available in Australia.

Most books are purchased within 12 months of publication therefore this recommendation will not result in cheaper books for you.

Dymocks and the Coalition for Cheaper Books believe Australian booklovers deserve better. Dymocks believes that lower prices will enable more Australians to read more and as a consequence Australian literacy levels will improve. Dymocks believes that the Australian book industry should be driven by the Australian book buyer and not the local subsidiaries and agents of overseas publishers.

If you agree that books should be cheaper and the restrictions should be removed as they were for CDs, I urge you to respond to our petition at <http://www.dymocks.com.au/petition/petition.aspx>. On April 17, I will present this petition to the Productivity Commission as evidence that Australian book buyers would like access to copyright-protected books at internationally competitive prices. Please respond before April 17.

We are doing all we can to bring you cheaper books. Please help us to help you.  
Yours sincerely,

Don Grover  
Chief Executive Officer and a Dymocks Booklover