

Parallel Importation of Books  
Productivity Commission  
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The Australian Productivity Commission has recently released its draft report into Copyright Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books into Australia. The content of this report ought to be of concern to any who desire to preserve the individuality and identity of our Australian culture and history.

A layman's interpretation of these recommendations is that, if implemented, they will place another hurdle – one of immense proportions – in the way of our home grown Australian authors. I have always suspected that the road to success in book writing/publishing is long and torturous. It is only in recent years since my daughter entered this field that I have gained a better insight into just how difficult the road to success can be. After six years of determined struggle, she is finally anticipating the release of her first Australian picture book – in the face of this great industry upheaval. But would she even have this chance five years down the track if these proposals are implemented? I Doubt it.

It should be no surprise that the push for change is coming from “the big end of town” – big businesses like Myers, Big W, K Mart and Dymocks, that already have a monopoly on market share. We have seen what happens to “Mum & Dad” businesses and even a lot of medium sized businesses when chain stores get control of fuel outlets, hardware stores, electrical and white goods. Do we have to continue the same mistakes in an area which has the potential to destroy our Australian identity and make us the 51<sup>st</sup> State of the USA? Or perhaps we will just become another satellite state of the global village.

The trend to “Americanise” (Americanize – if we’re talking their language?) our vocabulary has been gaining momentum in recent years. Having the “spellcheck” on my computer constantly try to impose American spelling on me illustrates my point. However there is still a large section of the community that wishes to retain the spelling and expressions that have been a large part of our cultural heritage.

Try reading the instruction manual for a piece of electronic gadgetry manufactured in an Asian country and see if this is the “English” you want our children to learn. Yet the Draft report openly states, on page 4.1 ‘Were PIR’s removed, books – particularly educational texts – could potentially be imported from Asia at substantially lower prices, and Asia could also serve as a greater source of books more generally in the future.’ It is our Education Publishers who supply a large portion of texts to Australian school children.

Having genuine Australian authors and publishers is essential if the Australian history and culture is to be written in the language that we speak.

It has been difficult to find truly Australian stories, particularly in the area of children's books. It seems there has been no alternative for parents and educators, but to choose books that most definitely have the slant of another country in their content, their pictures, and their vocabulary. Recently there have been a number of authentically Aussie books published that allow our children to learn about our culture, flora, fauna and climate in the course of their early childhood reading. The recommendations in this report will seriously undermine

Personally I am happy to read books written by authors from any country, but if these books are going to be sold in Australia, I would prefer them to use the spelling with which I am familiar. Reading words that are spelt the American way frustrate me and take away from the joy of reading. Further, I would feel sadly cheated by my own Government if an action such as the one being suggested by the Productivity Commission was implemented, and in so doing, rob me of the pleasure of reading Australian stories written by Australian writers. I believe this will be an outcome of this action.

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