

Dear Productivity Commission

I write as a published Australian author to urge you to retain the current parallel importation restrictions on books.

Publication of Australian books featuring our language, landscapes and characters are crucial to maintaining our cultural heritage and enabling our children to connect with place, language and the unique differences offered by our culture.

Abolition of the current restrictions will almost certainly result in a flood of American publications denying our children the opportunity to learn through texts they can relate to or see themselves in a global context. Mum will become Mom, petrol will change to gasoline etc.

The UK and United States do not allow parallel importation to protect their publishing industries and authors, and I question why lifting restrictions would even be considered here when the likely outcome is the devastation of our small but vital publishing industry and the erosion of our unique culture.

In a country where our literacy standards are shown to be sliding, and our grammar standard poor, why would any move be made to increase this problem further by lifting PIRs, which will result in less representation of Australian material both fiction and non-fiction in our schools and on our bookshop shelves?

I fear that with a competing glut of overseas publications Australian publishers will be forced to close their books to submissions from any but already established, well-known authors. Many Australian authors must already supplement their writing income by working two jobs. Further reductions in royalties and publishing opportunities will mean few Australian writers will be able to financially pursue their craft and careers and much emerging and existing talent will be lost to the industry.

The argument that abolition of restrictions would bring down the cost of books seems unsupported, and I believe publishers and printers at the recent *Roundtable* discussions in Melbourne asserted that the reverse was likely to occur. From my discussions with fellow writers and many readers, price is not the guiding motivator to the book-buying public. Most readers, as I do, purchase their books on the basis of author following, topical interest, and personal appeal.

As an author and avid reader I strongly urge the Commission to abort the twelve month rule proposal and retain full Australian territorial copyright on books.

Chris Bell
Author