

Restrictions on the Parallel Importations of Books

Statement in response to discussion draft.

As stated in my original submission to the Productivity Commission, my name is Libby Gleeson AM and I have been a published author since 1984. My work is written for children, young adults and adults and much of it has also been published in the UK, the USA, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Korea and Colombia. In the latter case, the books are also distributed through Spanish speaking South America.

I am extremely disappointed, and surprised at the recommendations in the discussion draft. I believe there has been a failure to fully understand the industry of writing, publishing and printing. At the same time, there has been no real acknowledgement of the damage that will be done to this industry if there is an abandonment of the current situation.

Territorial copyright is the way by which I negotiate and sell my work around the world. If that is abandoned I have nothing to sell. The best I will be able to hope for is that an Americanised version of my work will become available in my own country, delivering me a royalty significantly less than a home grown publication would have earned. That means I suffer financially but the literary culture of this country suffers as readers here no longer find their own stories – their places, their language reflected in the books they will have to read. The limitation of territorial copyright to twelve months fails to understand that books often take longer than that period to establish themselves in the market. Prizes, recommendations for reading clubs or school lists often take at least twelve months to be made. It is of vital importance that protection lasts beyond that incredibly short time.

The probably deleterious effects of the removal of parallel importation restrictions has not been fully acknowledged. It is important to note the comments of the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise 2004 report which stated, after that country removed restrictions, that the domestic market in

that country has been swamped by imports and book prices have not dropped.

Is this an outcome we want in this country?

Why is this change being sought? The draft document states that there is no guarantee that book prices would fall. The potential damage to the industry has been clearly articulated. Why would the government risk the loss of jobs, the contraction of the number of publishers and writers and therefore the loss of Australian story?

Let it not be forgotten that the only voices heard in the media advocating this change come from Dymocks, Big W, Coles, K Mart, Woolworth and Target. Their primary concern is not Australian culture and the creation of Australian story. It is generating profit for their shareholders.

It is not in the interest of any of us to have public policy determined by such organisations.

Libby Gleeson AM