

Ms. Jill Irvine,  
Parallel Importation of Books Study  
Productivity Commission  
CANBERRA.

15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009.

Dear Ms. Jill Irvine,

**RE: Proposal to Remove Parallel Importation Restrictions on Books.**

I am an illustrator of children's books, a parent and a member of a family of avid readers – particularly of Australian literature. I am very concerned about the current push for the removal of Parallel Importation Restrictions on books.

I do many hours of work to create the books I illustrate. I do not earn a great amount doing my job and I have always had to supplement my income with other work. I am convinced that Parallel Importation Restrictions will further erode my earnings. Australian publishers will have even less use for Australian book creators. The exercise of creating Australian literature for them will become a greater risk, far too expensive and will thus mean less work for authors, designers, illustrators, printers and editors – a whole industry will suffer.

It is so important that our own culture is reflected in our own literature. I recently illustrated three titles for the Making Tracks Series, published by the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. All of these books were based on historical exhibits in the Museum and bring our history alive for children. This series is a wonderful resource for teaching history in a meaningful and distinctive way. Sadly, the series will not continue as the funding has been cut. If more of our unique stories are not able to be told, a great opportunity will be lost to generations of children.

I am sometimes asked to illustrate books specifically for the American market. I am always amused and sometimes annoyed by the requests for changes so that the sensibilities of the folk of that nation will not be offended. For example, two characters I once illustrated in a story were shown standing quite close to each other. I was asked by the American

editors to move them apart because in the illustration they appeared to be 'invading each other's personal space.' Another illustration showed a young girl intently reading draped sideways across a chair. This was considered too naughty and she had to be made to sit up straight while reading in her chair. I am always relieved to be commissioned to do an Australian book where these kinds of issues simply do not exist – reflecting our wonderful Australian ease with ourselves.

In contrast to what the Productivity Commission has already concluded, claiming that 'cultural benefits arising from books [...] do not appear dependant on the nationality of the author' – wouldn't one deduce that Aboriginal writers would have stories to tell specifically about Australia like no other nationality in the world? And it is the same with non Aboriginal citizens of all ethnicities making stories about the specificity of Australian life.

It has been asserted that the entire basis for the removal of Parallel Importation Restrictions is predicated on the fact that this will put downward pressure on the price of books. Publishers and printers at Melbourne's roundtable discussion said this would not happen that in fact the reverse would occur. Printers for example would be doing less and having to charge more in order to maintain covering fixed costs. Publishers said they would have to increase prices to cover the increased costs on books that may not break even in an environment where PIRs had been removed. Thus the consumer would see no price advantage in such a situation.

Please protect our valuable publishing industry and do not allow the removal of Parallel Importation Restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

Teresa Culkin Lawrence  
Artist – Illustrator.