

04/04/09

The Honourable Minister for the Arts

Dear Mr. Garrett

Re: Productivity Commission's recommendations regarding the changes to Parallel Importation and the adverse affects it will have on all aspects of the Australian Publishing Industry.

I am deeply concerned that Australia's "Australianness" is being eroded in huge break off chunks a bit like the arctic ice pack breaking up and drifting off to meltdown in a foreign sea.

I, along with others like me, am fighting to sustain my craft and get something.....just something back.

A good friend and collaborator went back to full time work because, even though she had more contracts coming to her than she could handle time wise in a day, the pay was so comparatively miniscule she and her family couldn't survive. My story is similar - I have 9 books out there and more coming but have to work full time to eat and keep a roof over my head and my family's. A picture book such as "Mending Lucille" brings me 5% of rrp and a work of fiction 10% rrp. Annual royalties would not feed my family for a fortnight and, insultingly, the Commission seems to think writers like myself can live on less? We scrounge precious minutes on buses traveling to and from work to try and write our manuscripts. Deny ourselves to scrounge postage to send out manuscripts, to query agents, to enter competitions [I have given up with the latter, too expensive – a luxury – yet many publishers look to see what you have won before even looking at your manuscript.] We write because we are passionate and believe we have a story that needs telling, that others will be entertained or educated by what we have to say. Are politicians passionate about what they do – are they made to do it for 'love', not an income???????

Productivity Commission's roundtable on parallel imports is investigating a proposal that seems to be bent on taking away what little Australian writers and artists have.

Publishing is far from easy in Australia because we have a small population. But we DO need our OWN publishing industry to preserve our OWN individual national voice and character. Take that away and we are 'melt' in the vastness of ocean - global anonymity. Worse - if we ship our identifiably Australian publishing content overseas, foreign editors and publishers are then given a freehand 'edit' and so to shape our culture and our education. This is as bad as importing overseas content reflecting a non-Australian way of life, placing it in our schools and libraries and touting it as representing us and our way of life to oncoming Australian generations. We cease to exist as an identifiable entity in our own national right.

I want my children and their children knowing about the ANZACS and Ned Kelly, Daisy Bates and Albert Namitajira as Australian writers know and reflect them! If an Australian history were to be edited and published overseas, would we even have ANZAC mentioned? Who is Bob Hawk or Bob Menzies to them? They probably think they belong to the same political party or are film actors! Few foreigners have heard of Australian greats like Albert Namitajira!

Please, preserve the Australia and its heritage that our ancestors fought for so bravely! Our written heritage interprets our history and our culture to present and future generations. Do we really want this power and influence to be handed to those who know nothing of us and care less?

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer R. Poulter

[Author of "*Mending Lucille*" nominated for the *Family Therapists' Award* and the *Crichton Award for New Illustrators*; formerly Assessment Package Writer and Editor for *Queensland Studies Authority*, reviewer and web reviewer for *Access Education*, *Education Queensland* and reference librarian with the *State Library of Queensland* and the *John Oxley Library*.]