

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to you from the perspective of a new and aspiring writer. I am a qualified accountant seeking a career change that will eventually enable me to be a full time writer/author. 'Why?' you may ask, would I change from a career where a decent income is guaranteed to one where nothing is guaranteed and the road to publication is often long and arduous... if at all. The simple reason is, I have finally found my passion, something I love doing and something I am going to pursue with great vigour and enthusiasm.

I strongly urge the Commission to retain the existing copyright laws and restrictions on parallel importations of books. If parallel importation is allowed, the Australian publishing industry will definitely shrink in size, as the proportion of the local market it supplies will in effect be reduced and supplemented by parallel imports. Australia has a population of around 21 million people which is very small relative to other countries. This leads one to pose the question, is the size of the Australian market, adequate enough to allow for foreign imports of books that are currently supplied by Australian publishing companies? A smaller Australian publishing presence is a major concern for all Australian writers, particularly new and emerging writers who do not have the benefit of having an established relationship with a publisher or literary agent.

The Australian culture is depicted in numerous picture books and novels and is something worth preserving for all future generations to come. Parallel importation would jeopardise our Australian content being Americanised because of language differentials and then returned to our shores and sold here. That's insulting to Australian authors and publishers who work tirelessly to produce books of the highest standard and it's simply unacceptable. Should future generations be reading Americanised Australian stories? With the government campaigning to achieve greater literacy skills across all government schools, one would assume that maintaining books written in the English language, as we know it, would be paramount.

Australians in general, are proud to support Australian businesses and industries, which are resourced locally, benefitting local communities and the Australian economy at large. I think Australians would not think twice about paying a little bit more for a superior product that supports Australian industry, be it books or bananas. Shouldn't we be doing everything possible to protect, nurture and advance the successful industries we have in this country? Why is the government contemplating changing the copyright laws when they are so crucial to the welfare and livelihood of authors, illustrators, publishers, literary agents and printers among others? What does it take, to be heard in this country? The banana growers stood their ground and put their case forward for why bananas should not be imported from the Philippines, and now the future of Australia's very successful banana industry is under threat. Is the government truly representing the interests and wellbeing of the majority of Australians in their decision to allow the importation of bananas into a country which already has a healthy industry in operation? One has to question the motives behind such a decision as it does not seem to epitomize the Australian spirit of supporting what's Australian.

Australian writers and publishers work hard. It takes a long time to write a book and then go through the process of publication. My question to the commission is, 'Why would Australia travel down this route when America and Britain would not?'

Our home grown culture is worth preserving and building upon for the benefit of all Australians. May we stand proud and protect what is dear to us.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Griffiths

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