

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing this short email to reinforce what I am sure you have heard from many authors and publishers.

I am extremely concerned that allowing the 'dumping' of overseas remainders in Australia just 12 months after Australian publication will have serious effect on the sales and viability of 'backlist' books – which, for children's and YA writers (whose main sales come through schools) constitutes their staple income.

As a novelist for young people, over 90% of my writing income derives from backlist sales in the education and library markets. A writer derives virtually no income from the sales of remainders – especially overseas remainders – and neither does the publisher, so Australian dollars are going overseas and weakening our balance of payments, just so that booksellers and wholesalers (who already get the lion's share of the cover price of any book) can make bigger profits on the pretence of supplying 'cheaper books'. As long as the backlist is 'ticking over', the books will be kept in print (as is the case with most of my 30+ books), but if cheap imports flood in, the publisher has little option but to delete the title from its active backlist – as it is considered 'unviable' and a waste of expensive storage space – and what happens when those cheap overseas remainders run out? The book ceases to be available altogether.

So, Australia is short-changed, and the creators and publishers have received nothing for their copyright and their hard work, the booksellers have sold out the country and pocketed a cheap profit, the overseas publishers are laughing, and another piece of Australian culture has been swept away – to be replaced, no doubt by the latest 'chewing-gum for the eyes' from the US teen-series mass-production machine.

Net advantage for Australia: NIL – at best.

I am well-established as a children's / YA author, and even I would suffer significantly from such a decision, but for new-comers, I fear that the lack of certainty created by removing the territorial copyright safeguards will force many Australian publishers to think twice about (or just give up on) publishing new, 'unproven' authors – and the long-term effect of this short-sighted decision could be catastrophic both for authors and for the Australian publishing industry – which will return to the 'Dark Ages' of being merely a 'clearing-house' for US and UK books, denying the Australian reading public access to uniquely Australian voices.

Brian Caswell

Author

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