

Dear Mike Woods and Louis Sylvan,

I am writing to you to add my voice in defence of retaining our Australian territorial copyright. I am horrified by the fact that if the introduction of parallel importation goes ahead, I will see, within my lifetime, the withering of our own unique Australian publishing industry, together with the erosion of the quantity and quality of our Australian authors' output: two fundamentally important aspects to the building and maintenance of our culture.

These will be the certain consequences of the implementation of the parallel importation proposal. After 12 months, as the proposal suggests, overseas editions of Australian books will be allowed, including overseas remainders. Remainders, by definition, are books that are not selling. Thus the decision is made to lower their sale price, so that the book that last month sold for perhaps 20 dollars will now sell for three. Cheaper books coming in from overseas – the exact same books that Australian authors have spent perhaps years of their lives writing and Australian publishers have spent enormous sums selecting, reading, editing, publishing, distributing and promoting – will demolish sales here in this country where the book was born and nurtured. In this case, the Australian publisher will be punished for spending the time needed to produce a quality book, and the author will be punished by drastically reduced sales. It's hard enough to make a living as an author as it is – even with the wonderful gifts, occasionally, of literary grants and the essential, more continuous PLR and ELR.

I am an author of children's books, and books for young adults. My series, 'Tashi', of which there are now 16 books, together with a picture book, have sold into 21 different countries. Nonetheless, the main source of my income has always been, naturally, from the Australian public. Tashi has become a well-known little character here, thanks to the unceasing promotion and show-casing of the series by my publisher, Allen & Unwin. I have published around 46 books altogether now, novels and picture books, and thanks to this Australian industry, I am able to write full-time.

Even though I feel the Australian public is loyal - being faced with a Tashi book for 3 dollars as opposed to 15, especially in this difficult economic period - it is not hard to imagine which would be quicker to sell. I just cannot imagine the US allowing their authors to be compromised in such a way. So why on earth should we?

In the last seven years I have been writing a book for adults, my first. I've been writing it around the edges of my life and in between writing my more well-known children's books which keep me alive, (which is something most authors have to do, unless you are J.K. Rowling, and there is only one phenomena like this allowed each century, I think!) The book has taken much longer to write than I had originally thought, and was in a very long, rather bewildering state when first presented to Random House Australia. I feel very lucky that they had faith in it, and decided to accept it, allowing for the large sum needed for extensive editing. Altogether, the process of editing, of back and forth, of rewriting and rethinking has taken about a year, and I feel I have learnt so much about the craft of writing, as well as the deeper nature of what I have been writing about! My editor must have spent months of her working life on this book, and I have benefited enormously from the combined years of experience and wisdom and time put in by Random House Australia.

I am devastated to think that this book, such an expensive book in terms of precious thought and labour and money invested, could, after 12 months, be sold back here for vastly less, because a market overseas was perhaps never fully cognisant of it – not having had the major promotion and media releases that happened here. I

would be devastated for myself, and for Random House Australia. It would be a punishment for having invested in producing a book of quality, rather than rushing something through for a purely commercial, initial gain. That is not the way a culture is built, or maintained.

I urge you to understand fully what the writing life is about from the authorial and publishing aspects,, together with the longer, deeper rewards of cultural integrity, before you make any decisions. Please, please let's make sure we can be proud, and always prouder, of our Australian literary culture, and not look back, rueing the day that we gave over our power to a market disinterested in anything other than a cheaper product.

From the point of view of readers, I am sure that a book-lover would prefer to read a book that has been polished and loved and brought into the world with the best possible care. I am certain that paying just a few dollars more for a work of exceptional quality, if it came down to that, would be a better investment for a customer than paying chips, for chips.

Thank you for your time and I hope, consideration, and I hope, empathy for this industry and what it takes to grow our culture.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Fienberg