

As Managing Director and founder of Eleanor Curtain Publishing, and someone who has worked in the publishing industry for thirty years, I am completely opposed to the draft recommendations of the Productivity Commission.

The recommendations are not based on verifiable evidence. The arguments, such as they are, are based on a notion that cheaper books for consumers will result from reducing the length of copyright protection. New Zealand has adopted this policy. What has been learnt from this experiment? A reduction in choice is the result, and not cheaper books.

All the arguments focus on international mass market titles. These books are one segment of what is published, and not the area that needs any special intervention. The range and variety of Australian produced books has not been acknowledged, and their value to the community has been totally ignored. One white T shirt is much like another, and we may as well source them cheaply from China. But books are not interchangeable white T shirts.

We have a small market in Australia. We have to be very efficient to survive and we do so without much in the way of government assistance. But we have to export, and territorial copyright is central to our business. I am an educational publisher of early literacy materials. It is a highly competitive market. The programs are meticulously researched, carefully produced and illustrated by top quality illustrators and photographers. The programs are high investment, have a long development and take at least two or more years to return what is invested. Export is imperative. The quality of our materials in this area of publishing is acknowledged throughout the major English speaking countries. Export subsidises the programs and allows them to be put on the Australian market. It gives great choice to our teachers and schools. Our children get top quality materials because the publishers can export these programs and by license give security to the publishers who take on the programs in other countries. Has this sort of publishing been considered at all?

Limiting the life of copyright to twelve months does not retain territorial copyright. It is a pretence that will do great harm to authors, publishers and consumers.

I remain opposed to any form of removal of the current territorial copyright regime.

Eleanor Curtain