

Spinifex Press opposes the draft recommendations of the Productivity Commission.

The recommendations are utterly unworkable and destructive to independent publishers in particular as well as to authors – and in the long run to booksellers and customers who will cease to have access to the broad range of literature currently available.

The recommendations are not based on hard, verifiable evidence. Indeed, they fly in the face of long experience across the book industry.

The Productivity Commission's central recommendation — limiting the life of Australian territorial copyright to just 12 months — is laughable. It feigns the retention of territorial contract while setting up conditions that would undermine and cripple the industry, meanwhile wrecking the Australian book industry, including consumers.

As an independent publisher, Spinifex does not expect to recoup our investment in a book or an author in the first twelve months – with rare exception, the only publishers with sufficient market clout to do this are large multinational publishers. The outcome will be a “monoculture of the mind” dominated by high-selling, fast-pulping books of the moment. This is not the way to create an identifiable and sustainable cultural industry. The works we come to treasure as a nation are those that are quirky, idiosyncratic, unexpected winners. No one knows in advance which books and which authors these will be, but 12 months is certainly not long enough for such works and authors to establish themselves. To then open them up to the steamroller of the global industry will result in a wildfire of destruction.

I, Susan Hawthorne, am also a writer. Wearing my writer hat, I am also opposed to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission as it threatens the value of my cultural production. If, as happens occasionally, one of my books is published in North America, the royalties on that book are always lower. If the book is then remaindered in the North American market and offered at reduced price to booksellers in Australia (such as certain chains who endorse the Productivity Commission's recommendations) then I will not receive any royalties on sales. This threatens my livelihood.

My publishing company, Spinifex Press and my writing self strongly oppose to any form of removal or erosion of the current territorial copyright regime.