

MacLean's *BOOKSELLERS*

17th April 2009

Dear Commissioners

We are a small general independent bookshop in Newcastle. We are extremely concerned about the effect your draft recommendations will have on our business and on our community, and on other independent booksellers and their local communities.

Independent bookshops are a distinctive and vital part of the Australian book industry and the local communities in which they exist. They offer readers expert advice and service, are leaders in range and product knowledge and are passionate about the books they read and sell. Having access to a diverse range of bookshops means that Australians have access to a diverse range of books.

As a bookseller we read books. We talk books. We are proud of what we do. And Independent booksellers make up around \$500m of the total book market in turnover. As an independent bookshop we feel under direct threat from the removal of the PIRs.

The impact of the draft recommendations on booksellers and our customers will have dire consequences for our business and our industry.

The Australian Booksellers Association, of which we are a member, has drawn to our attention the following conclusions that were made in your draft recommendation:

- There will be less independent bookshops;
- The price difference between the local and overseas markets is effectively zero if the average exchange rates for the last ten years are used; and
- That even if there were to be fluctuations in price you have determined that there would be little, if any, increase in book sales and little, if any, effect on literacy rates.

With these factors taken into consideration, and given our lack of resources to provide you with the type of data needed to make a proper determination on the issue we submit the following:

- The closure of independent shops will have a direct impact on the local community through:
 - Loss of jobs and income to the surrounding community
 - Loss of access to authors and promotions in local schools and libraries

- Reduced access to a wide range of titles as department stores do not supply a full range
- In looking at the cultural value of the book industry no regard or estimation of value was placed on the role a bookstore plays in their local community through its partnerships with libraries, schools, reading groups, kindergartens, day care centres etc. This role cannot be replaced by a department store.
- Any recommendations that reduce the amount of backlist titles available through local suppliers will harm independent booksellers who rely more on backlist titles than other booksellers.

We ask that the productivity commission takes these issues into account in its final report.

Finally, I would ask the productivity commission – is it worth sacrificing Australian independent booksellers, Australian jobs and Australian community ties for the unproven and very arguable proposition that **some** books **may** decrease slightly in price?

Yours faithfully

Max Shirley
MacLean's Booksellers