

SUBMISSION

I write privately as one who has worked for over twenty years with many talented Australian writers, chiefly as a book publisher and more recently as a literary agent, to express great concern about the changes proposed by the Productivity Commission.

These changes would effectively see Australian writers stripped of the opportunity to earn Australian income on Australian editions of their books for perpetuity. This would be so whether the books were backlist editions (which, for many, constitute an ongoing and significant income stream) or new projects, in which Australian publishers will surely find increased difficulty investing, faced with the fact they would have but 12 months to establish the work in this market before it was potentially undersold by imported, (possibly) cheaper editions.

Quite apart from the devastating economic and intellectual effects the proposed changes would wreak on our authors, I seek to draw your attention to the impact these changes would have on the book publishing and associated industries, including literary agents, printers and booksellers.

Australian book publishers in both trade and education sectors are internationally recognised as uniquely talented and energetic, and they are devoted to the development and publication of our writers. The craft and dedication of our book editors, the imagination and drive of our publishers, and the commercial nous of the professionals who market, distribute and sell our books cannot be overlooked. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our colleagues in calling for the ongoing protection of these key rights.

In April 2008, we were excited as a nation by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2020 Summit, with one of its key recommendations being that Australian cultural output should double within the next 20 years.

Almost exactly one year after the 2020 Summit, we can take it 'as read' that if these changes were to occur that, with the severe diminution of backlist income and the associated difficulties of ongoing local investment in frontlist, the output of the local writing and publishing industries would be more likely to *halve* than to double.

Surely, too, the likely effects on our writing and bookpublishing industries will have deleterious longer-term implications for our Australian film, television, theatre and radio industries, starved as they will be of vital fuel in the form of Australian novels, memoirs, children's books and cookbooks, history, science, polemics and poetry.

On top of all of these important issues, the APA's research indicates that the proposed changes will not fundamentally or permanently ensure lower book prices for the consumer, one of the starting points of the Productivity Commission's inquiry. I ask, therefore, that the Productivity Commission retain the current Parallel Importation regulations, and let Australian writers and book publishers continue their work under the same terms as their counterparts around the world.

Clare Forster