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Response to the Productivity Commission Discussion Draft into Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books, March 2009.

As a Melbourne based literary agent and member of the Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA) I endorse the ALAA response to the Productivity Commission Discussion Draft into Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books, March 2009.

I would like to add a few comments based on my personal experience as an agent working in Australia over the last 17 years.

1) A strong local publishing industry is important for the development of Australian stories and Australian culture.

I work hard trying to interest both Australian and overseas publishers in my clients' work. I represent authors of children's and adult fiction and non-fiction, poets and visual artists.

The first question I get asked by overseas publishers is, 'Has the work already been published in Australia?' Unless my client is already well known as either a best selling or award-winning author in Australia, there are not many situations in which an overseas publisher would consider his or her work. If the work has not been published in Australia, it would normally only be of interest overseas if the content is 'international'. With fiction, for example, fantasy is of interest but stories with a strong Australian focus are not of interest. Most non-fiction is not of interest as overseas publishers prefer a local person to write for their market, even if the topic is, say, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

I have a serious concern that the plans promoted in the Productivity Commission Discussion Draft into Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books, March 2009, will limit the strength of local publishers and mean that up and coming Australian authors will not have local publishers who will be prepared publish their work. Agents and authors trying to market their work to international publishers without a strong local Australian publishing industry will have great problems.

2) In children's publishing, cheap books often are cheap products for which authors are not properly paid.

Golvan Arts Management has been particularly successful in the area of Children's Publishing. The Productivity Commission Discussion Draft into Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books, March 2009 has a strong concern regarding the price of books. With children's books, cheap books from overseas are often merchandising relating to Children's Films, Games or Toys. Such books often do not even acknowledge an author and even if they do, the author is paid a very low fee to write a certain number of words, not receiving payment based on the numbers of books sold ie not receiving a royalty. Such books are mostly not suitable for use in literacy development and certainly do not tell Australian stories for Australian children.