

Submission to the Parallel Importation of Books Productivity Commission

Dear Commissioners,

As a writer of long standing within the performance poetry arena within Australia I would like to add a few points which I don't see expressed in other submissions I have skimmed.

The current plethora of writing courses around the country would be negatively impacted by any contraction of possibilities for local writers to find local publishers for their, often niche, work. A writer does not magically "make it" in a large pond without dipping into numerous and diverse smaller ponds first. The skills of good writers are honed by these smaller possibilities first.

While I appreciate the Commissions major concerns are around publishing and copyright issues, the impacts in parallel industries such as adult and professional education, cultural involvement and mental health, community connection and robust personal face-to-face interactions in cafes, pubs and community centres, are all impacted by the availability of a robust publishing industry and its more directly linked industries of printing and book-selling.

The Reservoir Writers and Reciters is a very recent group, launched through the Northern Notes Writers Festival of Darebin Council in 2008. Although regular meetings are still emerging, a major new annual event has already been launched through the Poets Picnic, and the site development of the Ruthven Storytelling Garden. Such efforts are not made in isolation, but are part of diverse networks interconnecting through a very local base, to offer opportunities for writers of all calibres to reach out to however large an audience they wish to reach. To grow too quickly, or stretch too far, is to doom such a beginning to only be a beginning. To mature requires consciousness of all the stages of growth, and the care and nurturance of each level in its appropriate place and time and context. Just as we have nurseries for children or young plants, and gradually expose them to more rigorous conditions over time, so we need to be aware of expecting an industry to thrive which only allows for mature players, but cuts off all scope for new players or varying abilities to enter and exit by their own choice and ability.

There also needs to be an awareness of the importance of diversity no matter how small the current audience. Many gems lie in the ground awaiting the fossicker to uncover and put them to greater use at a time or place far beyond their humble beginnings.

My personal history in writing has been to nurture beginning writers of all ages (from 4 to 104 years) through workshops and publication. I have run a women writers' festival – Luna Linx, for which I published an anthology in 1987. I have also initiated other magazines or one-off publications in a range of settings within the community. Many of the writers involved have gone on to be published elsewhere, and even begin their own groups or publications. Knowing that I provide an early stepping stone for others helps me continue the work I do. Knowing that I can direct others to the next step gently, rather than having to always make a huge competitive leap, is one of the things that makes the writing scene in this country so enriching. The comradery I

experience with other writers after over 35 years involvement has come from the co-operativeness, not the competition.

This is the spirit in which our current writing group continues. We hope the Commission remains aware of these cultural repercussions, and thank you for the opportunity to take part in this discussion.

S'hi D'Amour

Convenor

Reservoir Writers and Reciters