



BOOK INDUSTRY CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO WRITE OFF PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT

Man Booker Prize-winner Richard Flanagan said, 'The Productivity Commission is like a deranged hairdresser insisting their client wears a mullet wig.'

Authors, publishers, booksellers, literary agents and book printers, united as the #BooksCreate Australia alliance, call on the Government to reject recommendations on copyright in the Productivity Commission's Report on Australia's Intellectual Property Arrangements that offer no tangible consumer benefits yet risk a \$2 billion creative industry. Internationally bestselling and acclaimed Australian author, Richard Flanagan described the report as 'predictable: an 80s ideology in search of a victim. The Productivity Commission is like a deranged hairdresser insisting their client wears a mullet wig. "At this time of economic difficulty I hope the government rejects the report and seeks to help the book industry, its 20,000 strong work force, and the creators who bring Australia global good will, pay taxes, and effectively receive no direct taxpayer subsidy." The Australian book industry invests in new printing technology, new Australian writers, creates culture and enhances national literacy. It employs 20,000 fellow Australians, contributing \$2 billion to our economy per annum. Distinguished Professor of Economics at Macquarie University, David Throsby AO said, "when it comes to books and copyright, the government should leave things as they are." President of the Australian Publishers Association, Louise Adler AM said, "The Productivity Commission has ignored more than 400 expert submissions in response to a draft report that was widely criticised as biased, based on narrow analysis and out-of-date data. "Look at the Christmas bestseller lists that star Australian books up there alongside international blockbusters. Australians love reading great writing by Australian authors," said Ms Adler. "Back in 1998, New Zealand used this exact proposal suggested by the Commission to undermine territorial copyright and remove Parallel Importation Rules (PIRs). New Zealand book prices have dropped by 14% while Australian book prices have dropped by 25% since then. The range of books available to Australians has expanded while in New Zealand the range has shrunk by 34%. In New Zealand the proposals decimated an industry and their nation's ability to tell the range of their own stories. "The US, UK and Europe have no plans to remove their versions of PIRs and territorial copyright. Why would we?" asked Ms Adler. "These proposals risk Australia's ability to publish great Australian stories by the next generation of talent. Imagine an Australian childhood without books like Diary of a Wombat, Possum Magic, the Treehouse series; or great Australian writing like Cloudstreet and True History of the Kelly Gang," said Ms Adler. Leading author, Thomas Keneally AO said, "I would like to invite my old friend, Malcolm Turnbull, to make this a bipartisan matter. Comparison with New Zealand, which has done away with PIR, shows the book prices there are no cheaper. But the range, oh the range! — it is gone." CEO of Australia's leading independent publisher, Allen and Unwin, Robert Gorman said, "Local publishers directly invest \$120 million in Australian writers and the promotion of Australian stories each year. The Commission's recommendations would jeopardise that investment and risk returning Australian writing to the days when London and New York publishers decided what Australians read." Australians enjoy access to the largest network of independent bookshops in the English-language market, including winner of the Best International Bookshop - Readings Group of Melbourne (London Book Fair 2016). Co-owner of Sydney's Gleebooks, David Gaunt said, "local publishers produce around half of the books we sell to our 200,000 customers each year in store and online. There is no way that the abolition of PIRs will benefit the Australian consumer interested in sustaining the health of Australian writing and the industry underpinning it. "Across more than 40 years in bookselling, the most significant and positive change in our industry has been the phenomenal growth in the Australian publication of Australian writers. We have seen a substantial increase in Australian published books, produced to the highest international standards, increasingly efficient pricing and industry commitment to fast supply of international books within 14 days," said Mr Gaunt. CEO of the Australian Booksellers Association, Joel Becker said, "The recommendations of the Productivity Commission report make no economic sense. To characterise PIRs as inhibiting price and speed of availability is not true, and we have the comparative data to prove it." CEO of the Australian Society of Authors, Juliet Rogers said, "20,000 fellow Australians signed our petition in support of Australian authors and the contribution they make to our cultural life. The Productivity Commission apparently wants to squeeze their incomes and devalue their work, without being able to demonstrate any tangible benefits from the changes that they are proposing. We hope that the PM and his Government will show more understanding and ignore this damaging and ill-considered report." CEO of the Print Industry Association of Australia, Andrew Macaulay noted "the local print industry has invested in jobs and cutting edge technology to become highly efficient and responsive in the fast-moving contemporary book market. Any government that cares about jobs or growth in Australia will not adopt recommendations that would threaten that investment and have no benefit for consumers." CEO of the Australian Publishers Association, Michael Gordon-Smith said, "The #BooksCreate Australia alliance is also concerned about the Commission's recommendations to import US legal frameworks around Fair Use. This is akin to importing American Toads to eat cane beetles and assumes that American ideas about fairness are better than ours." National Print Secretary, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Lorraine Cassin asked, "why would the Productivity Commission want to bet against the Australian economy and an Australian industry that employs over 20,000 people? Its recommendations would negatively impact up to 66,000 jobs, many in regional Australia, and damage Australia's chances to build a knowledge-based economy. There is nothing to recommend them." The Labor Party, Australian Greens, Nick Xenophon Team and independent federal politicians including Jacqui Lambie all declared their support for

our local book industry, and the importance of copyright in response to this report. The #BooksCreate Australia alliance now calls on the Government to confirm its support of Australia's book industry and its intention to uphold internationally recognised standards for all copyright holders. For interviews with authors and industry leaders, photo opps and more information please contact: Emma Rusher, Books Create Australia T 0423 213 626 | E emma@houseofrusher.com ABOUT #BOOKSCREATE AUSTRALIA #bookscreate Twitter, Facebook, Instagram bookscreateaustralia.com.au The peak national associations of the book industry are strategic partners of #BooksCreate Australia and include the Australian Booksellers Association, Australian Literary Agents Association, Australian Publishers Association, Australian Society of Authors, The Children's Book Council of Australia and Printing Industries Association of Australia. The alliance advocates industry-led initiatives to respond to consumer needs and the changing demands of today's digital world. We're for great Australian writing, our local book industry and all the wonderful things #bookscreate.

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