

JENNY DARLING & ASSOCIATES

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The Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA) is not surprised by the findings of the Productivity Commission in their report on the Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books into Australia released today.

Nonetheless we reject their conclusions outright. Australian writers must be able compete with international writers under the same terms. Australian publishing must be treated with the respect that is due to it as one of the country's most successful export industries. It is an industry admired throughout the world for its efficiencies and successes; let's build on that strength and not turn a flourishing industry into a subsidized, state-approved little domestic cottage industry.

The Commission has chosen not to listen to the stories of our success, but to privilege the commercial interests of retailers over those of Australian writers and ultimately Australian consumers, whose choices of what they will be able to read will narrow if these recommendations are implemented.

If the Government is persuaded by this report it will be a sad and tragic day for Australian writers and Australian culture. We are finally coming of age as a country but if the publishing industry is diminished, and along with it our Australian writers, Australia will ultimately become a country without a culture. Is this what we want for our future? And that of our children?

The Commission is guilty of what Oscar Wilde attributed to cynics – they know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. ALAA hopes that the Government will not fall prey to the same short-sightedness.

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The Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA) represents more than 50% of published Australian writers and its members are responsible for licensing and selling all types of rights – book, e-book, film, television, audio and others - in Australian writers' work throughout the world.