535. C Vella

29 July 2013

To whom it may concern

Melbourne University Publishing has a proud ninety-year history of producing critically acclaimed books that contribute to Australia’s culture.

We are a small, not-for-profit business that focuses exclusively on content creation, meaning that the primary source of our income is copyright-based. As such, Copyright Agency payments – of which MUP receives a proportion for the books we publish – play a significant role in sustaining our business and our important input into the Australian cultural landscape. They also go some way to compensate our valued authors for the material they have created, using their time, skill and experience. This is all in a publishing environment when it is becoming increasingly difficult to generate income from book sales, but not any less costly or time-intensive to make them.

MUP believes that the current licence system works very effectively – it is simple, streamlined and requires very little administrative effort from us. We are a small company of less than 15 staff, yet over time we have published thousands of books. We simply do not have the resources to manage the cumbersome process of copyright clearance on a case-by-case basis, nor to track down and prosecute every instance of copyright breach.

Piracy is already hard enough to monitor and manage without the introduction of vaguely defined ‘fair use’ exceptions. The biggest case of piracy before the US courts, the unauthorised scanning of millions of books by Google, is a key example of threats to income in such an environment. To introduce ‘fair use exceptions’ in this country exposes MUP and our authors to such infringements. How are authors and publishers to be compensated for this usage and for the resultant loss of book sales?

MUP completely rejects the repeal of the Australian statutory licence system, which we believe operates very effectively. Such a recommendation is an attack on our authors’ rights and a threat to Australian publishing.

Yours sincerely

Colette Vella

Executive Publisher

Melbourne University Publishing