867. J JEFFES

Dear Law Reform Commission

I write as a documentary producer very concerned to learn that the copyright review could lead to the free use of film material and loss of rights of content producers over our printed material.

From what i understand the Australian Law Reform Commission’s review of copyright including the proposal that suggests, amongst other things, the repeal of the Statutory Licence seriously challenges our rights and income.

As you should be aware documentary film-makers find it hard as it is to make a decent living and the royalties we receive from the Copyright Agency and Screenrights represents an important revenue stream that enables us to survive. The proposals I understand to be on the table would severely undermine what for most is already a fragile and relatively paltry income.

I trust the Law Reform Commission will honour and protect our rights and acknowledge the many little people who are creating and As you will be aware documentary film-makers (of which i am one) find it incredibly hard as it is to make a decent living and the royalties we receive from the Copyright Agency and Screenrights represents an important revenue stream that enables us to survive.

The discussion paper seems heavily influenced by those who argue that free and cheap distribution of content is a characteristic of the digital age and the future and therefore should be enshrined in law. They have set the evidentiary bar incredibly low for the proponents of change and at the same time are making recommendations that would reduce the incomes of writers and publishers and have the potential to create chaos and litigation in the industry and education sector.

I understand that out of the $10,000-$13,600 that the Gonski Report says it takes to educate a school student every year, less than $17 is spent on copied and shared content (and similar numbers apply to universities and TAFE). The new recommendations would reduce this and put the onus on creators to protect their rights and prove abuse. This onus is frankly both ludicrous and utterly disrespectful given the meagre earnings most documentary producers exist on.

Further, I understand that the Statutory Licence is supported by teachers who find its invisibility and ease of use beneficial in their working day.

The Statutory Licence means there is neither misunderstanding nor illegal usage and is a system worth maintaining and a system that fairly compensates content-makers for the content they create.

Australia has a fair and efficient system in place already, one that benefits both the user and the creator. Changes in technology have already been taken into account by this system. The ALRC is trying to use technological change as an excuse to erode or remove the rights of those who invest time, money and skills into creating material that others wish to use.

I trust that the final recommendations of the ALRC on these issues will show that the work of writers, artists and publishers is highly valued and not to be undermined or eroded. And that it is nothing other than appropriate and right that they are afforded the same rights as any other group looking to offer intellectual property to the education community.

Sincerely

JANE JEFFES

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