

# The (digital) price is not right

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A leading expert on intellectual property and consumer rights at The Australian National University has called for a range of legislative and regulatory changes to help stop unjustified price discrimination against Australian consumers of digital products.

Dr Matthew Rimmer from the ANU College of Law argued the case for reform in a submission to a House of Representatives Inquiry into IT pricing and in an appearance before the Committee.

"There is a growing body of evidence to show that Australian consumers are being gouged, ripped-off and exploited in respect of pricing for IT products," Dr Rimmer said.

"Australian law has failed to keep pace with [technological advances](#), indeed copyright law has been a factor in allowing for price discrimination.

"Of equal concern is the way in which copyright law unfairly discriminates against [Australians](#) with disabilities, creating a book famine and denying them access to knowledge.

"It is time the legislation was amended to put an end to these discriminatory practices."

Dr Rimmer urged policy makers to repeal all remaining parallel importation restrictions in order to promote consumer choice, competition and innovation and to broaden the jurisdiction of the

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

"As the regulator, the ACCC should build on its success investigating cases of misleading and deceptive advertising by IT companies by also considering issues of price, the terms of access to a particular product or a particular service and the need for international warranties," he said.

"In light of alleged overseas conspiracies involving price fixing by Apple Inc. and large multinational publishers, there is clearly a need for the ACCC to investigate whether there have been any such restrictive trade practices in respect of information technology products in Australia."

In addition, Dr Rimmer emphasised the importance of ensuring trade agreements, such as the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, do not harm the interests of Australian consumers in obtaining a fair price for digital products.

"This inquiry offers legislators a valuable opportunity to implement policy solutions that put an end to discriminatory practices but it requires an integrated approach that combines [copyright law](#), consumer law, competition law and trade law," he said.

The submission is available at [works.bepress.com/matthew\\_rimmer/121/](https://works.bepress.com/matthew_rimmer/121/)

Provided by Australian National University

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