



COOKING — FOR — COPYRIGHT

FREEING CAPTAIN COOK, JANE AUSTEN AND BANJO PATERSON FROM THE COPYRIGHT CLAMPDOWN

Through the campaign for Freedom of Access to Information and Resources (FAIR), ALIA and the Australian Libraries Copyright Committee (ALCC) ran Cooking for Copyright Day on Friday 31 July. We used vintage Aussie recipes for lamingtons, canteen biscuits and carrot marmalade to help drive the copyright reform agenda – but the action didn't stop there. INCITE reports.

Copyright law in Australia is a muddle. The ALCC, of which ALIA is a founder member, has lobbied long and hard for change, but the challenge has proved either too great or too low a priority for successive governments. The task of untangling the copyright regime currently lies with the Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, who has yet to provide a satisfactory response to the findings of the Australian Law Reform Commission report of February 2014 into Copyright and the Digital Economy.

Following the apparent reluctance to overhaul copyright law, the ALCC decided to introduce another approach – tackling non-controversial issues that could be easily fixed, while continuing to have the broader conversation with politicians and bureaucrats. One of these issues is the perpetual copyright in unpublished works. ALIA activated FAIR supporters and launched Cooking for Copyright to raise awareness of the issue. The campaign provided an opportunity for active engagement from our members and generated media coverage.

Our story went like this:

The National Library of Australia has approximately two million unpublished works in its collection, including letters from Jane Austen, Prince Albert, Captain Cook, Charles Darwin, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, Dame Nellie Melba, Henry Lawson, Elizabeth Macquarie, Christabel Pankhurst and Banjo Paterson.

Yet none of these can lawfully be digitised and shared with Australians on the web because of our archaic copyright system. Unlike Canada, the US, UK and all of the EU countries, which have copyright terms for unpublished works that are in line with those for published works (70 years after the death of the creator), in Australia copyright for unpublished works lasts forever.

And it's not just the National Library; it affects every library, museum, archive and historical society with items from before the 1950s. For example, the Australian War Memorial has diaries, letters and sketches from soldiers who died in World War I. Often publication on the web is the only way to make these family records available to descendants. The State Library of South Australia's collection includes the records of the Holden motor company, including correspondence and engineering design drawings from 1853. These national treasures are trapped by Australia's outdated copyright laws.

We would like the same copyright terms for unpublished works as for published works. Then our libraries, museums and historical societies could put these treasures on the web for family historians, researchers and everyone else who is fascinated by our social history.

Cooking for Copyright received incredible support from National and State Libraries Australasia, archive, museum and historical society colleagues, who provided dozens of recipes, ranging from perfect morning tea fodder through to weird medicinal products. We posted more than 20 handwritten recipes to the FAIR website – effectively contravening the current copyright law – and asked Australians to cook one of these recipes, perhaps an old favourite, and post a photo to Facebook (facebook.com/cookingforcopyright) or tweet with the #cookingforcopyright hashtag.

Within two weeks of launching we had a strong presence on social media. More than 500 people actively shared recipes, ideas, and the promise of events in libraries up and down the country. This fun approach to a serious subject not only galvanised the sector, but it also attracted the attention of the media – radio, print and online – helping to spread the word, not only about perpetual copyright in unpublished works, but also about the need for fundamental copyright reform.

Now that Cooking for Copyright Day is behind us, watch this space for news of how this campaign is received and further developments on the copyright front.



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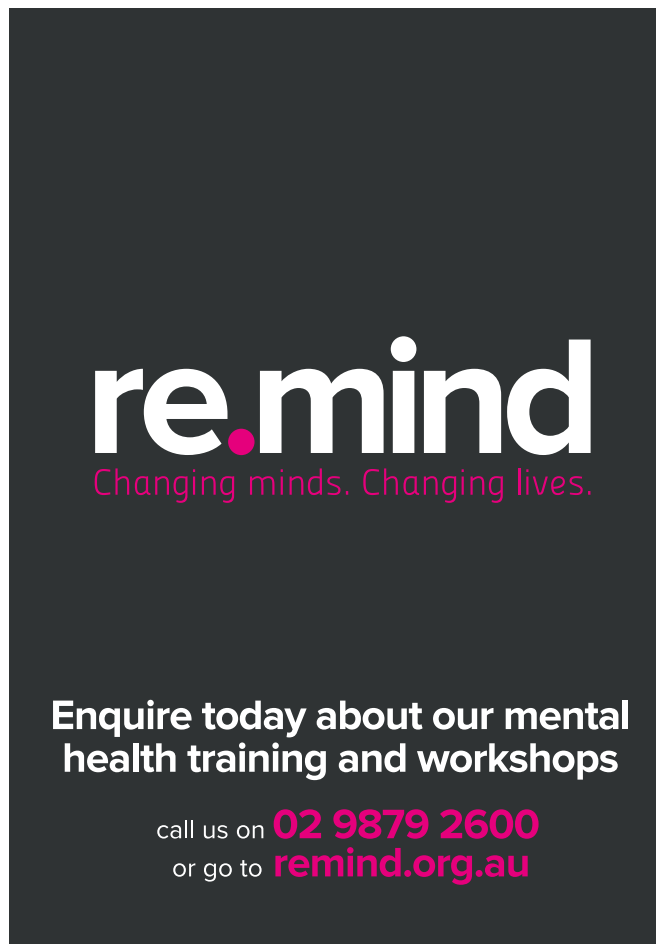
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