

Publishing in Australia – Legalities & Options¹

There are 4 completely separate systems, which cover different aspects of publishing:

1. **Legal Deposit** – putting copies of publications in libraries.
2. **Copyright Registration** – ensuring payment for use of publications.
3. **ISBN** – an international numbering system for major publications.
4. **ISSN** – an international numbering system for ongoing periodicals.

Legal Deposit

Did you know that when an organisation publishes **anything**, they are legally obliged to meet *Legal Deposit* requirements?

- Under the (Australian) *Copyright Act 1968* and various state/territory acts, organisations are responsible for legal deposit of **anything** they publish which is available to the general public, regardless of whether it has an ISBN or ISSN.
- It remains compulsory to send a copy of each of your publications, within 1 month, to the National Library of Australia and one or more state/regional libraries.
- For more information see: <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/ldeposit.html>. This page includes a link to an excellent pamphlet – *Legal Deposit in Australia*, August 2010 - which includes the different requirements in different States/Territories, and the addresses to which you should send legal deposit copies.

Advantages of Legal Deposit

- Your organisation has evidence (a dated legal deposit receipt) should anyone seek to abuse copyright of any aspect of a publication (e.g. text, artwork, photos).
- Your material appears in National Library catalogue searches. This functions to promote your organisation, maintain an historic record and provide data for researchers, etc.

Copyright

In Australia, the creator of a work automatically owns copyright over any work they create. An exception to this is in some situations where work is created in the course of employment, and the work is owned by an organisation. You don't have to do anything to claim this copyright – but it can be easier to prove copyright if you have relevant documentation (e.g. a legal deposit slip, or the date you got an ISBN for the material.)

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Understanding Copyright

- For basic information about how copyright works see <http://www.copyright.com.au> – click on “About Copyright”. (Website of the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) - a not-for-profit company, set up by authors, artists, etc. to collect and distribute monies owing on use of copyright materials e.g. by universities, TAFE’s or governments.)
- For more detailed information about copyright see: http://www.copyright.org.au/admin/cms-acc1/_images/1889836124c8dbfe7b2fba.pdf (Published by the Australian Copyright Council – another not-for-profit organisation which focuses on community education and advocacy for copyright owners).

In order to find out if you/your organisation are owed anything, and to automatically receive future copyright payments, you need to become a member of CAL at http://www.copyright.com.au/Quicklinks/Membership_Application/Membership_Application.aspx. (If you own some of your work yourself, and your employer owns some, both need to be separately registered as members.) Membership of CAL is free. A small percentage of any payment due is kept by CAL to cover costs.

ISBN (International Standard Book Number)

I’m not sure whether it’s worth getting an ISBN for major publications. I have a sense that the emphasis of ISBN’s has changed. Prior to 1997, there seemed to be more encouragement to register all publications; now, I sense a more commercial focus. There is no doubt that having an ISBN adds credibility to a publication and ensures its appearance in a range of international bibliographic sources.

- ISBN’s used to be allocated, free of charge, by the National Library. This function was privatised in 1997, and Thorpe-Bowker is the ISBN agency in Australia. For a basic overview of the ISBN system see: <https://compay.com.au/ThorpeBowker/isbn/>.
- Any NGO (or individual) can become a publisher, and request an ISBN number for publications. An ISBN can be allocated to printed books and pamphlets, educational videos or online publications (and many other categories of publication).

ISBN Costs

- It costs a once-off fee of \$55 to register as a publisher.
- You can buy either one ISBN for a single title (\$40) or, it’s much cheaper to purchase a block of numbers (10 ISBN’s - \$80; 100 ISBN’s - \$435).
- It is possible purchase a barcode for any ISBN number (\$45 per title) BUT this is unlikely to be relevant to NGO’s or self-publishers – it’s most relevant when your publication will be in bookshops.

Only apply to become a publisher when you have at least one definite title (it doesn’t have to be ready to print) at <https://compay.com.au/ThorpeBowker/isbn/PublisherDetails.aspx>.

ISSN (International Standard Serial Number)

- ISSN's continue to be provided (as far as I can see, free of charge) by the National Library.
- ISSN's cover serial publications such as newspapers, magazines and annual reports. For further information see <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/issnabout.html>.
- ISSN application forms are available from the Australian ISSN Agency at the National Library <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/issn.html>.
- You are required to meet legal deposit responsibilities through sending a copy of your **first edition** with the ISSN number to the National Library.