



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

MEDIA RELEASE

May 21, 2008

Literacy is for everyone; school libraries essential to delivering Government's promise

With Library and Information Week under way across Australia, two peak groups in the sector have joined forces to add their support to a national focus on literacy and numeracy following last week's budget announcements about a National Action Plan.

The Australian Library and Information Association and the Australian School Library Association both welcomed the Government's intentions to work more closely with schools, governments and non-government school systems but added that it is essential future action plans take note of the pivotal role of school libraries in delivering literacy skills.

Australian School Library Association President, Mr Rob Moore, said the ever-widening range of forums for communication available to children and young adults only increases the need for effective skills in resourcing and evaluating information. He said the role of the school library in supporting the development of these skills could not be overestimated.

"Because school libraries play a significant role in literacy development and contribute vital resources and services to student learning and achievement, the school library is central to everyone in the school community," Mr Moore said.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey results in 2007 showed Australia has slipped from second to sixth place in reading literacy, out-performed by Finland, South Korea, Hong Kong, Canada and New Zealand.

Mr Derek Whitehead, President of the Australian Library and Information Association said reading literacy is internationally recognized as an essential skill.

"Reading literacy underpins an individual's ability to succeed," he said. "Therefore there has to be an emphasis on developing critical skills amongst young Australians and that means a strong focus on how – and where - those skills are actually taught," he said.

"The Rudd Government has allocated \$10 million to research and develop an evidence-based approach to literacy and numeracy programs and teacher professional development. In doing so, it must consider the context of the school library in delivering that learning.



“School libraries are integral to the learning environment and are staffed by qualified teacher librarians who understand not only how to locate and evaluate resources but, importantly, also how to impart those skills to children.”

ENDS

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Issued on behalf of

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The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional association for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. ALIA represents the interest of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

<http://www.alia.org.au>

and

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The Australian School Library Association Inc (ASLA) is the national authority and peak forum in the field of teacher librarianship and school library resource services. Its aim is to maximize opportunities for students to obtain independent lifelong learning and decision making skills.

<http://www.asla.org.au>