

16 April 2010

The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Submission into the Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Inc. (ATSILIRN)**

In response to a letter from Mr Justin Baker to our organisation to comment on the terms of reference for the above Inquiry, we submit the following.

Melissa Jackson  
President  
ATSILIRN Inc

ATSILIRN, established in 1993, is a support and information network for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people working in libraries, resource and information services. Members include people and organisations servicing the information needs of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, with the majority of members coming from library and archival institutions.

The organisation has developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network Protocols (attached) and it is with the Protocols in mind that we comment against the terms of reference.

**The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

The changes to the bilingual education program in the Northern Territory has meant that school/community literature production centres can no longer produce material written in local languages. This will reduce the amount of relevant readers and stories for students. This may impact adversely on the interest and engagement of students and their literacy outcomes. (1)

**The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

The way that school libraries and librarians can contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is to:

- make sure there is a special focus on acquiring materials produced, written or directed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- collect material that is locally based
- make school libraries welcoming places for Indigenous students by employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in references and service points and as community liaison officers (2)

### **The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

School library services to Indigenous students could be improved if teacher-librarian training included units on working with Indigenous students and handling Indigenous materials in a culturally sensitive way. Professional development update seminars on developments in Indigenous students' needs would also be beneficial.

School librarians also need to be aware of Indigenous issues and current resources available for Indigenous Studies. Inclusion of Indigenous studies in the teacher-library training would allow librarians to feel confident about collecting and disseminating information on Indigenous peoples and cultures.

ATSILIRN holds a conference each year which is designed to inform and update its members and other interested people on Indigenous issues relevant to libraries.

If the profession was seen to be interested in providing for Indigenous students' needs then more Indigenous people might consider being a school librarian as a career option.

### **The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians**

Local community involvement in the school library makes it a more attractive place for Indigenous students.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs), operating in Queensland and (Library and Knowledge Centres (LKC)s) operating in the Northern Territory, have strong links with local government, communities and schools. In some cases, such as on Boigu Island, the Indigenous Knowledge Centre provides the Library time for the school. The IKCs in the Torres Strait run literacy projects and community publishing projects. (3). An example of a partnership is Erub Culture Love - The State Library of Queensland, in partnership with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council ran the school holiday program 'Culture Love' on Erub Island in June 2009.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTGOPfgD7Sc&feature=related>

The Northern Territory Library has an Indigenous Early Years Literacy Strategy for Northern Territory Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres. This strategy is aimed at early childhood literacy and complements the NT Department of Education's literacy strategy. (4)

### **The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

The production of online Indigenous material, and internet access to online material by Indigenous students both in the cities and in the country is critical. Both would enhance

and support the roles of school libraries and librarians. However some Indigenous communities do not have access to the internet. This is beginning to be addressed in COAG's "Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access" which recognises importance of the internet in education. (5)

## Notes

(1) Issues surrounding the changes to the bilingual education policy in the Northern Territory were discussed at the *Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory: Principles, Policy and Practice Symposium*, AIATSIS Research Symposium, Canberra, 26 June 2009, see *Audiovisual Recordings from the Symposium*  
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/symposia/bilingual09AV.html>

(2) ATSLIRN Protocols which apply here are: Content & Perspective, Accessibility and Use  
[http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atslirn/protocols.atslirn.asn.au/index6df0.html?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=0&Itemid=6](http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atslirn/protocols.atslirn.asn.au/index6df0.html?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=0&Itemid=6)

(3) See: Thompson, Lynn and Colless, Rose, *Indigenous Knowledge Centres – The Queensland Experience Six Years On*, paper presented at the Dreaming '08 Conference, ALIA, Alice Springs, September 2008, online at  
<http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2008/papers/pdfs/118.pdf>

(4) See: Northern Territory Library, *The Walk to School: an Indigenous Early Years Literacy Strategy for Northern Territory Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres*, Darwin, 2008  
[http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/handle/10070/172810/Walk\\_to\\_School\\_A4.pdf?sequence=1](http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/handle/10070/172810/Walk_to_School_A4.pdf?sequence=1)

(5) See information about the communities which are receiving funding and the COAG Partnership agreement on the website for the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Indigenous Communications Program  
[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding\\_and\\_programs/indigenous\\_communications\\_program](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding_and_programs/indigenous_communications_program)