

**CREATE a kids' book****Assessment and Workshops****Dr Virginia Lowe**

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The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Education and Training  
House of Representatives

**Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Of course children need books – they need stories as well as non-fiction books, and knowledgeable people to introduce them to them at just the right time, and enthuse about new ones – and to keep the books classified so that they can find them, But I presume all these points have been made eloquently in other submissions.

What is often overlooked, however, is how important a healthy school library system is, to the publishing industry. With a population as small as ours, we need schools (and others) to buy Australian titles. The representatives that go round to schools, naturally want to sell the ones they will make the biggest profit on – which are unlikely to be the quality Australian titles. An inexperienced, uninterested or unknowledgeable teacher or administrative staff member working in the library is unlikely to know what they should be even asking for.

About twenty years ago, the acclaimed British novelist Aiden Chambers was speaking out here, and commented on Australia's vibrant book buying culture, and the brilliant state of our publications for children. He put both down to the quality of the school library service, as compared to the one in the UK. Sadly, of course, this is no longer.

The curriculum is now so crowded, many teachers cannot find time to read aloud to the students. How are children supposed to master the long and difficult process of learning to read, if they don't see the pleasure it will give? The argument that they won't be able to get a good job if they can't read, will scarcely hold water at age six. They need to want to read for pleasure – and the librarian is the one to give this help – who can read to them and enthuse them – and guide the teachers in selecting relevant materials also.

Libraries are a vital part of a school, and have also been shown to make an appreciable difference to the academic outcomes of the students.

Yours sincerely,  
Virginia Lowe.