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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

The International Association of School Librarianship on the Value of Teacher Librarians and the Situation Facing Australian School Libraries

Issued by Dr. Corinthia Price, President, International Association of School Librarianship (IASL): September 2026

Every child, in every school, in every country, deserves access to a qualified teacher librarian. This is not a luxury or an optional extra; it is foundational to a child's right to read, learn, and think critically about the world. On behalf of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), I am writing to express our strong support for the Australian Coalition for School Libraries (ACSL) and its member associations as they advocate for teacher librarians and school communities throughout Australia.

IASL has watched with growing concern as qualified teacher librarian positions have continued to disappear from Australian schools, in the absence of any national staffing mandate. This concern has sharpened in recent weeks with the news that Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle plans to eliminate teacher librarian positions in primary schools across the Diocese's 50 schools. The decision would affect more than 21,000 students and remove expertise that, once lost, is difficult and costly to rebuild. IASL stands with the teacher librarians, students, and families of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, and with every Australian school community facing similar proposals.

This situation is unfolding at a time when Australia can least afford it. Recent NAPLAN results indicate that about one in three students is below basic literacy and numeracy levels. Additionally, the 2022 OECD PISA assessment revealed that nearly half of 15-year-olds in Australia did not meet the National Proficient Standard in reading. Eliminating certified teacher librarians, who are crucial for developing foundational reading skills, teaching information and digital literacy, and collaborating with classroom teachers, risks worsening this decline at a time when evidence-based interventions are most urgent.

The importance of teacher librarians is widely recognized, not just locally. IASL collaborated with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to develop the IFLA-UNESCO School Library Manifesto 2025, which UNESCO's Information for All Programme officially endorsed in April 2025. The Manifesto reflects a global consensus, developed with input from school library associations worldwide, that a qualified school library workforce is essential to delivering inclusive, high-quality education that fosters literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and global citizenship in every school. Australia's advocacy efforts, such as ACSL's Statement on School Library Staffing and Funding and Resource Provision, clearly align with this international consensus.

IASL is proud to stand with ACSL in this work, and we will continue to support this advocacy in whatever way is most useful, whether through further correspondence, through our international network, or through the evidence and experience of school librarians worldwide.

Dr. Corinthia Price
President, International Association of School Librarianship (IASL)

About IASL: The International Association of School Librarianship is the global professional body representing school librarians, connecting practitioners, researchers, and advocates across more than 20 countries in support of quality school library provision for every student.

Sources: NAPLAN 2025 results, as reported by the Institute of Public Affairs; OECD, PISA 2022 Results (Australia country note); IFLA, "Updated IFLA-UNESCO School Library Manifesto Endorsed by the UNESCO Information for All Programme" (April 2025); "Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle: Staff Face 2027 Job Changes," Newcastle Herald (September 2026).