

# Australian Coalition for School Libraries

By *Dianne Ruffles*

## Snapshot

SLAV President, Dianne Ruffles, describes the newly formed Australian Coalition for School Libraries – a new National voice for the profession.

The School Library Coalition was formed in 2015 following a meeting at ALIA House in Canberra involving all the bodies that represent those working in school libraries in Australia. The Coalition was formed because ASLA were no longer the representative body for school libraries in Australia as all of the State Associations throughout Australia had long withdrawn from ASLA, with the exception of South Australia. The new body had the objective of raising awareness of school libraries across all sectors and to engage in promotion and support for school libraries and the staff working in them. The coalition agreed to meet four times per year and collaborate on issues of national importance to school libraries. One of these meetings each year is a face-to-face meeting. This year, when we met in Sydney at the face-to-face meeting, it was agreed that the coalition be renamed and known as the Australian Coalition for School Libraries or ACSL.

## Why the name change?

There had been some concern expressed by several of the State Associations that the School Library Coalition needed to be identified as Australian. All of the State Associations: School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV); Queensland School Library Association (QSLA); School Library Association of New South Wales (SLANSW); School Library Association of South Australia (SLASA); Western Australian School Library Association (WASLA) and Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) agreed to form a new national body, the Australian Coalition for School Libraries or ACSL and become an ALIA Sector Committee. . SLAV chaired the Working Party meetings to develop the Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) and Terms of Reference. I am pleased to report therefore that in early in December 2023, all of the State Associations, ALIA, and at the last minute, ASLA, signed the Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) so that for the first time in more than 20 years in Australia, we have a united voice advocating for school libraries in Australia.



**ACSL**  
AUSTRALIAN COALITION  
FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

**The Australian Coalition for School Libraries (ACSL) is a sector committee of ALIA and advises the ALIA Board on policy for the school library sector and has a highly active role in school library advocacy and campaigns.**

ACSL provides a united and professional voice to advocate for Australian school libraries and school library staff. The coalition comprises representatives from the state-based school library associations and the Australian School Library Association.

# What is the Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) and Terms of Reference?

In developing these important documents for ACSL, I would like to acknowledge the tireless work of Jacqui Lucas (ALIA), Rebecca Murray (WASLA), Lyn Hay (SLANSW), Kelly Burrett (QSLA), Di Scott (SLASA) and Dr Susan La Marca (SLAV). The goals of ACSL are to be a united and professional voice to advocate for a stronger future for school libraries and school library staff in Australia in the interests of improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. ACSL is committed to the goal of universal access for Australian students to well-resourced school libraries with qualified and supported staff.

ACSL is one of several ALIA sector committees appointed by the ALIA Board to represent the interests of the sector and provide input into strategic discussions. As a sector committee, ACSL will advise the ALIA Board, so that ALIA as the national association for the wider library and information sector is across the important issues and needs for the school library sector, and can respond appropriately. As a sector committee, ACSL's activities will be covered by ALIA's Liability insurance, and ALIA will provide a mailing list, a separate website, and connections with other library sectors and ALIA Regional and Special Interest Groups. ACSL as a sector committee of ALIA will operate in a similar way to the [Australian Public Library Alliance](#) (APLA). Like APLA, the committee members will be the state associations, each of which retains its own identity, agency and members. ACSL is also based on a consensus model so every association has to approve submissions/media releases/statements/actions for these to go out under the ACSL brand. Individual members can continue to release statements themselves or in partnership with one or more ACSL members. Associations can also leave the MoC if they do not find the arrangement satisfactory.

## What does this mean for SLAV?

We will continue to run our association independently as we do now but when a national response is required, ACSL will be the national voice and body for this response. ALIA will also lobby on our behalf at a national level with the Federal Education Minister and federal bodies. The cost for each Association, including SLAV, is the equivalent of one annual membership to ALIA, approximately \$500 per annum.

ACSL has a new webs presence at <https://acsl.alia.org.au/>

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