

CENSORSHIP IN SCHOOLS!

As *InCite* was going to press a phone call was received from a school librarian who had bought for the school library the books on the short list for the Children's Book Awards. She read them and was impressed by the high standard.

One title, *Eleanor, Elizabeth*, by Libby Gleeson (published by Angus and Robertson), has now been removed from the shelves by the principal of the school as it contains some 'bad language'. The librarian, who has read the book, says that it is not used in a sensationalist sense, but in a natural way as the thoughts of a 13-year-old girl. The person who removed the book has not read it.

The fact that this book was published by a publisher of the standing of Angus and Robertson suggests that it has literary merit; its appearance on the short list for the Children's Book Awards confirms this, yet the prejudice of a single individual, who has not read the book, may prevent the children from at least one school from having the opportunity to read it and decide upon its merits for themselves.

How does a librarian deal with this problem? Have other librarians had similar problems, either with this particular book, or with other titles?

InCite would like your views and experiences with this problem. Write to Brenda Pittard, Editor, *InCite*, LAA, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW 2007.

The LAA Policy Statement on Freedom to Read is reprinted below.

The Library Association of Australia, believing that freedom can be protected in a democratic society only if its citizens have access to information and ideas through books and other sources of information, affirms the following principles as basic and distinctive of the obligations and responsibilities of a librarian:

1 A primary purpose of a library service is to provide information through books and other media on all matters which are appropriate to the library concerned.

- 2 A librarian must protect the essential confidential relationship which exists between a library user and the library.
- 3 The functions of the librarian include: to promote the use of materials in the librarian's care; to ensure that the resources of library are adequate to its purpose; to obtain additional information from outside sources to meet the needs of readers; to cater for interest in all relevant facets of knowledge, literature and contemporary issues, including those of a controversial nature; but neither to promote or suppress particular ideas and beliefs.
- 4 A librarian, while recognizing that powers of censorship exist and are legally vested in state and federal governments, should resist attempts by individuals or organized groups within the community to determine what library materials are to be, or are not to be, available to the users of the library.
- 5 A librarian should not exercise censorship in the selection of materials by rejecting on moral, political, racial or religious grounds alone material which is otherwise relevant to the purpose of the library and meets the standards, such as historical importance, intellectual integrity, effectiveness of expression or accuracy of information which are required by the library concerned. Material should not be rejected on the grounds that its content is controversial or likely to offend some sections of the library's community.
- 6 A librarian should uphold the right of all Australians to have access to library services and materials and should not discriminate against users on the grounds of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, economic condition, individual lifestyle or political or social views.
- 7 A librarian must obey the laws relating to books and libraries, but if the laws or their administration conflict with the principles put forward in this statement the librarian should be free to move for the amendment of these laws.

Adopted: 1971
Amended: 1979

AUSTRALIA POST COMMEMORATES CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

Australia Post has issued a special set of stamps for Children's Book Week.

A first-day cover carrying the set-tenant strip of five stamps and a souvenir pack were released on 17 July.

The stamps carry the best-loved illustrations from Australian children's classics: 'The Little Witch' from *Elves and Fairies*, illustrated by Ida Rentoul Outhwaite; the familiar cover illustration of *The Magic Pudding*, surely the wittiest and most delightful of all Australian children's books and in the view of many, Normal Lindsay's supreme achievement; comic strip character *Ginger Meggs*, who has become one of the world's longest surviving comic strip characters (he first appeared in 1921); *Blinky Bill*, who made a timely entry on the literary scene when the survival of the koala was threatened by wholesale slaughter for the skin trade. And of course the series could not be complete without *Snugglypot and Cuddlepie*. Artist May Gibbs developed the gumnut babies after producing a number of nationalistic posters and cards to echo the mood of the First World War. One of the cards she drew featured a gumnut corps — a line of gumnut characters armed with leaf shields and stick lances. These eventually became the gumnut babies, and their popularity has never wavered.

The collection of stamps must rate as one of the more attractive yet produced by Australia Post and their appeal will reach well beyond philatelists.

The publishers of these Australian classics, Angus and Robertson have joined with Australia Post to present a special offer of the five books, the first-day covers and special bookmarks.



WOMBAT STEALS THE SCENE

Thirty children from Darlinghurst Primary School attended the launching of Thelma Catterwell's book *Sebastian lives in a hat*. The launching on July 8 was arranged by Monica Joyce of Tower Books and took place in Sydney's Botanic Gardens and two special guests were a very domesticated wombat called Cuddles and Grant Dodwell from the TV series 'A Country Practice'.

Sebastian lives in a hat is the story of a tiny wombat named Sebastian who was hand-reared by the author after the death of his mother. Sebastian was discovered by the side of the road when he was just four months old. Near death and small enough to fit in the palms of the hands, he was carefully nursed to full maturity and finally returned to the wild.

Thelma Catterwell lives in Fraser National Park in north central Victoria (where her husband is a park ranger) and has physically hand-reared seven wombats of various ages back to the wild. She is a passionate conservationist. Thelma's story is complemented by the delightful illustrations of Kerry Argent (of *One Woolly Wombat* fame) which capture the character and spirit of this tiny creature.

Guests included Maurice Saxby, Walter McVitty, representatives from the Children's Book Council, and librarians from many different libraries.

Pictures at left show Grant Dodwell with Cuddles and children from Darlinghurst Primary School, reading the book.

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK
July 19-26, 1985