

# ALIA names Australia's first public library ambassadors

In an earlier edition of *inCite* (March 2009), we talked about our new Public Library ambassador program. This month, we can announce the appointment of our first two Public Library Ambassadors: Barry Heard, the award-winning Australian author, and Bruce Miller, one of New South Wales' most active local government leaders.

It is a strong beginning for ALIA's national Library Ambassadors campaign, which is similar in concept to UNESCO's goodwill ambassadors. By seeking out high profile champions for the role of libraries in the community, we aim to influence public opinion about this vital service and keep libraries at the forefront of discussions about community, resources, education, services, and funding.

Barry Heard, the author of *Well Done, Those Men, The View from Connor's Hill, and Tag*, has been chosen to be the public face of East Gippsland Shire Library. He says that his favourite place to visit in Bairnsdale was the library: "I browse, I borrow, I smile at the children enjoying a story and, during my travels as an author, where possible, I contact the local library and am happy to give a talk and attract locals."

Councillor Bruce Miller, who has served on the Cowra Shire Council for nearly 20 years, 14 of them as mayor, is also the president of the Shires Association of New South Wales. A keen advocate of libraries,

he was delighted to accept the invitation to become Cowra Library's ambassador. He explains, "It's hard to over-state the importance of public libraries on so many levels. They are places where everyone is welcome, supporting our desire for a fair and equitable society. They are places that are full of exciting ideas, inspirational words, and pictures, and they act as a gateway to new worlds of knowledge and information. They are also places where local government meets the people, on neutral territory. For all these reasons, they are simply indispensable."

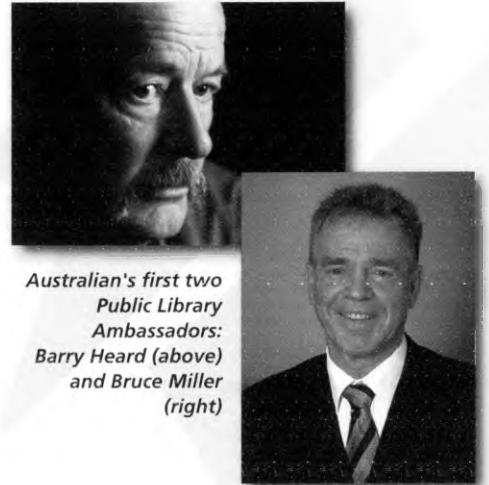
ALIA President Jan Richards comments, "Our first two Public Library Ambassadors come from very different backgrounds, but both are passionate about libraries. Over the coming months, we will be inviting other well-known, well-respected personalities, including writers, thinkers, sports people, and media celebrities to participate in our Public Library Ambassador campaign."

ALIA is assisting with a dozen pilot Public Library Ambassador projects around the country, including East Gippsland and Cowra. Jan Richards again, "We realised that while public library teams are really keen to participate in the Library Ambassador program, they don't always have the time or the know-how. By helping to set up examples of how it can work, we will be able to post case studies on the ALIA website showing how easy it can be. We

have also developed a toolkit, including a project planning chart, sample letters and press release, and a set of key messages, all of which is already available on the website."

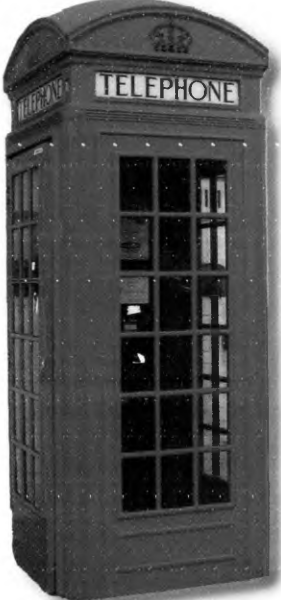
The Public Library Ambassador campaign will be officially launched at the ALIA Public Libraries Summit <http://www.alia.org.au/summit09> on 16 July 2009. For more information, contact ALIA Project Officer Sue McKerracher on 0404 456749 or [sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au](mailto:sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au).

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**Australian's first two Public Library Ambassadors: Barry Heard (above) and Bruce Miller (right)**

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