

## ASLA (NSW) Teacher Librarians of the Year Award

### John Free & Di Laycock, Barker College, Sydney



**John Free** was a gifted teacher librarian who shared his insights and knowledge willingly in the pursuit of learning and teaching. As well as being a dynamic performer, John was also a writer. He used both these talents in outstanding ways to enrich the literature experience of the boys at Barker College.

His influence in creating a reading culture at the College was evidenced in the successful *Hear and Now*, where he invited members of the school population, to read their favourite book or tell their favourite story at lunchtime on Fridays.

As one colleague affirmed, '*the Library is overwhelmed with students from all year groups [during Hear and Now]. They are seeing adults in the school in a new light – and they see them reading*'. An executive contributed further to this observation by acknowledging that, '*It is amazing to see the library full of middle school boys hanging on every word of these diverse presenters.*' As a consequence of his energy and enthusiasm and his belief in the adage that *there is no I in team*, John earned this award in partnership with his teacher librarian colleague, Di Laycock.



Since **Di Laycock's** entry into teacher librarianship, she has not looked back in her cross-faculty approach to planning, developing, resourcing and evaluating units of study. This love of teaching is very evident in the manner in which Di works with students and teachers, both individually and collectively, to foster greater critical and creative thinking.

Di's research into the use of graphic novels to engage her students has led to an extensive graphic novel collection at Barker College. As one colleague notes, this research has provided '*invaluable support to the English Department's ongoing drive to improve reading literacy for boys*'. He continues that '*the findings also served as a useful tool for the design and implementation of graphic novel teaching and learning programmes in the English Department, as well as adding another dimension to the already extremely diverse and popular reading culture in the school*'. In pursuit of this interest and with a desire to share her knowledge, Di has delivered a number of presentations and has been published at the local, national and international level.

But Di goes beyond the printed page in her zeal to share her knowledge and to learn from others. Her outstanding innovative style, using emerging technologies for learning, empowers her colleagues to integrate these learning technologies in appropriate and creative ways learning and teaching strategies. This is evidenced in the numerous professional learning activities at Barker College to which Di is a major contributor. Di is an outstanding model for teacher librarians. She is an inveterate learner. Her interest in evidence-based practice has contributed to not only the enrichment of reading at Barker College but beyond as indicated by her role as Action Research Coordinator for the International Boys' School Coalition.

Not only is her enthusiasm for lifelong learning evident in the activities and professional learning she undertakes and shares with her students and colleagues, she is also an avid supporter of her professional association ASLA (NSW) in her role as Publications Officer, Councillor and Co-Coordinator of CARTL. Di also contributes to effective learning experiences of upcoming teacher librarians as a subject marker for Charles Sturt University. Di has taken to new heights the meaning behind the words teacher librarian, contributing to the school's music community and outdoor education programme. As one colleague remarked '*she is in every sense a committed, dedicated and enthusiastic professional. I look forward to a continued professional association with her as I can always be assured of her utmost dedication, initiative and support*'.