682. K Williamson

I have been writing science textbooks and modular materials for almost 40 years, with Macmillan Education Australia. I taught high school science for two years and during this time I became convinced of the need for something better than the science textbooks of the time—materials that would stimulate student interest and explain science concepts simply. From 1971–1973 I was seconded from the Queensland Department of Education to the Australian Science Education Project (ASEP) in Melbourne where I helped develop a series of activity-based modules published by the State of Victoria.

In 1974 I was employed by the Queensland Department of Education to develop curriculum materials for science teachers. At about the same time I began writing modular materials (*Man and Nature Series*) with Peter Stannard that were published by Macmillan. This series had limited success, due to the cost of publishing modular materials. At that time I had four young children and I was writing at night. Typically I would get home from work by 6 pm and be in the study writing by 7.30 pm. It wasn't until Peter Stannard and I wrote a textbook series (*Exploring Science*) that we began to see some reward for the long hours of researching, writing, editing, proofreading etc. Author royalties are generally of the order of 10%, which you have to share with your co-author(s).

When the educational statutory licence system came into being there was considerable confusion and anxiety in schools, but this soon settled down and teachers experienced the benefits of being able to photocopy and use material from a range of resources, rather than using a single textbook. This enabled them to offer high quality science courses at a reasonable cost—something not possible if students or schools had to buy all their own books.

Clearly I wasn't going to continue writing materials if teachers could use them for free, so the flat annual fee collected by Copyright Agency Limited was a small recompense on top of the publisher's royalties that made it possible to continue writing quality science materials.

In 1987 I decided to resign from the Department of Education to write full-time at home. This was something of a risk with a young family to support, knowing I would be paid royalties by the publisher only once a year. However, through hard work over many years I have managed to make a living from writing full-time, relying on the annual CAL payments to supplement my royalties and make it all possible.

School textbooks are generally written by teachers in their own time. Over the years people have asked me whether you can make any money from writing materials for schools. My reply has been that there is no guarantee that you will be successful, and even if you are, that you cannot expect to break even for several years. Certainly you are never going to become rich like J. K. Rowling writing school textbooks. I am one of the few teachers who has been lucky enough to have several successful science series and to be able to write full-time. This has been something of a struggle, with so much competition in the Junior Science market, and the CAL payments over the years have made it easier for me to continue my passion for writing quality science materials.

I have grave concerns about the recommendation of the Australian Law Reform Commission to dismantle the educational statutory licence system. While the majority of my royalties have come from the sale of textbooks, I am keen to see teachers continue the practice of choosing from a wide range of resources to tailor-make their courses. However, I see major problems with the ALRC's 'fair use' exception and I fear that this will end with my not receiving fair payment for the use of the materials I have written.

Without CAL payments I predict that many teachers will find it is not viable to continue writing high-quality materials for schools. The end result of this will be fewer and lower-quality materials, and greater use of overseas material not written specifically for Australian students. I therefore urge you to reconsider dismantling the statutory licence system

Ken Williamson

Co-author of current *ScienceWorld* and *Science Essentials* Australian Curriculum Editions