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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: School libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

WEDNESDAY, 28 APRIL 2010

SYDNEY

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Wednesday, 28 April 2010

Members: Ms Bird (*Chair*), Dr Jensen (*Deputy Chair*), Ms Collins, Mrs D'Ath, Mr Irons, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Sidebottom, Dr Stone, Mr Symon and Mr Zappia

Members in attendance: Ms Bird, Ms Collins, Dr Jensen, Mr Symon and Mr Zappia

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

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Committee met at 10.05 am

CHAIR (Ms Bird)—I declare open this first public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training as part of its inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools. This inquiry was referred by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP. Well over 300 submissions have been received to date from interested stakeholders both in Australia and overseas. Once authorised for publication, copies of submissions will be available on the committee's website. I refer members of the media who may be present at this hearing to the need to fairly and accurately report the proceedings of the committee.

I welcome our witnesses from the Australian School Library Association and the Australian School Library Association New South Wales to today's hearings. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses.

Thank you for your attendance here today. The quality of the submissions received by the committee indicates to us the great interest in the profession. It is very encouraging to know that we are looking at something that has such a level of interest and concern. I invite you to make an opening statement after which, as the committee is generally very keen to ask questions regarding the submissions, we will go into a questions session.

[10.06 am]

BONANNO, Ms Karen Suzanne, Executive Officer, Australian School Library Association

BROCK, Mr Kenneth, President, Australian School Library Association New South Wales

WALL, Ms June, Vice-President, Association Operations, Australian School Library Association

Ms Bonanno—Thank you, Ms Bird. I have some other evidence to present to the committee. I have a pack of information for each member of the committee, which I will hand to the secretariat.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that the documents entitled *ASLA presentation to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education and Training Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools, 28 April 2010*; ASLA's executive summary from Michele Lonsdale, *Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research, Report for the Australian School Library Association*; the Australian Library and Information Association brochure *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians*; Select policies of the Australian School Library Association; the ASLA strategic plan for 2008-2010; and, *Access* magazine, volume 24, issue 1, 2010, presented by Ms Karen Bonanno, be taken as evidence and included in the committee's records as an exhibit? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Ms Bonanno—The Australian School Library Association—or ASLA, as it is commonly known—welcomes the opportunity to appear at this public hearing. ASLA is the peak national professional association representing school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools. Our aim as an association is to maximise the opportunity for every young Australian to obtain lifelong learning and decision-making skills. ASLA works closely with the Australian Library and Information Association, who is the representation for the library and information services sector.

A major focus of our submission is that every school library be staffed by a fully qualified teacher librarian to ensure that every young Australian becomes a successful lifelong learner who is confident and capable of active and informed participation in Australia's future. The Lonsdale report on the impact of school libraries on student achievement clearly indicates that school libraries have a positive impact on student achievement. Whether such achievement is measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, school libraries that are adequately staffed, resourced and funded, can lead to a higher student achievement.

The qualified teacher librarian is a person who holds a recognised teaching qualification, has classroom teaching experience and holds a qualification in librarianship or teacher librarianship. The teacher librarian has three major roles in a school community. As a curriculum leader, they work collaboratively with other teachers to integrate digital information literacy and relevant technologies into an information-rich, resource based classroom learning program to support an

inquiry approach to teaching and learning. They maintain literacy as a high priority, to engage students in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, for understanding and enjoyment.

As an information specialist, they provide access to relevant and appropriate learning resources to support the curriculum and learning needs of a school community. They provide specialist assistance to students using technology and information resources in and beyond the school. As an information services manager, they develop and apply policies and procedures for the selection and evaluation of resources that meet the curriculum, informational and recreational student needs. They manage the day-to-day operations of the school library and provide a safe and stimulating environment as a learning hub for the school.

ASLA acknowledges the government's investment in providing world-class libraries in primary schools through the Building the Education Revolution and the computer rollout for years 9 to 12 through the Digital Education Revolution. New and refurbished school libraries and computers alone will not make a significant difference to student learning. To ensure the best return on this investment, there are two issues. Firstly, it is crucial that school libraries are staffed by qualified teacher librarians who can address the learning and thinking required in the use of ICT tools through the development of digital information literacy capabilities in students. Secondly, it is crucial that school libraries are resourced to meet the learning needs of the school community and, in particular, the implementation of the national curriculum.

We as an association acknowledge that there is currently a shortage of qualified teacher librarians. The teacher librarianship profession is not immune to the effects of an ageing workforce. There are at least two options that need to be investigated to address this shortage: firstly, the retraining of teachers to attain teacher librarianship qualifications; and, secondly, retraining of librarians to attain teacher qualifications.

ASLA's main recommendations to the inquiry are, firstly, that the Australian government commit to the coordination of the outcomes of this inquiry and allocate personnel in the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to implement the outcomes and establish a unit to be responsible for school libraries in Australian schools—and the Australian School Library Association and the Australian Library and Information Association are willing to assist the government in the implementation of that recommendation; secondly, that the Australian government coordinate the collection of national statistics on personnel working in school libraries, including the funding allocation to school libraries and the scheduling of staff duties in the delivery of the curriculum; thirdly, that governments commit to sponsoring the retraining program; in partnership with the Australian School Library Association, the Australian government fund the development of a digital literacy learning continuum as a support document for the Australian National Curriculum and the development and delivery of a parent program on digital literacy and cyber safety to help parents to support their child's learning; and, lastly, that the ministers for education establish an Australia-wide formula for staffing of school libraries by qualified personnel and an Australia-wide formula for funding the resource collection of school libraries.

In conclusion, ASLA, as the national professional association for teacher librarians and school libraries, looks forward to working with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to implement the outcomes of this inquiry's recommendations—in particular to assist in addressing the issues of developing digital information literacy capabilities

for every young Australian; resourcing a world-class national curriculum, and enabling students to be active and responsible citizens in the 21st century.

CHAIR—Thank you. Ms Wall, did you want to add some comments to that opening statement?

Ms Wall—No, that was a joint effort. Chair, Mr Brock would you like to add some comments?

Mr Brock—My submission is pretty much along the same lines; however, I think that at the school level—and I have this in the submission—support of the principal is essential for these things to happen, even if it is global policy. That is where it often falls down and other duties are provided for the teacher librarian to perform which rob them of the time to do the thing that they are there for, which causes a great deal of frustration. The management role of the teacher librarian should be looked at structurally in all schools and the principal be accountable for that role existing and being a role that is not robbed of its time and expertise through other non-teacher librarian duties.

CHAIR—Thank you. First of all, could you give us a snapshot nationwide? We are conscious that we are dealing with issues that vary by employing bodies, whether it is state governments or private sector. So could you give us a bit of a snapshot about what the variations are nationwide between states and between sectors in this area?

Ms Bonanno—It is very difficult when we are dealing with the way that the data is collected, as you said, across the various government and non-government agencies. At the very first level when we are looking at school census or we are looking at national school statistics, the statistics basically indicate that teachers are lumped in together. So it is very difficult to look at the detail of whether the teacher librarian numbers are there or they are physical education teachers or music teachers. So there is inconsistency in how that data is collected and how it is then reported and it is very difficult to identify the number of people who are actually employed in schools in the capacity of a teacher librarian.

The other inconsistency is in the staffing allocation formulas across schools and how they allocate teacher librarian staffing to the particular primary school and secondary school sectors. That is an area which causes confusion, particularly with the mobility of the profession across various jurisdictions and various states and territories. There is also the issue that, when a school is allocated its staffing numbers, it is basically at the discretion of the principal or the school administration to then allocate or deploy those personnel to various tasks at the school. That is dependent a lot on what the projects of the school are or what state government initiatives are being projected at the time.

Ms Wall—As a snapshot, it would be fair to say that in secondary schools Australia wide there are teacher librarians. The issue is more in the primary sector.

CHAIR—Is that across sectors as well as states?

Ms Wall—That is across sectors. That is across states and across sectors.

CHAIR—It was a comprehensive submission, and I thank you for that. I think it was a good one to start with—to give us the context within which we are looking at. You touched on the evolving nature of information learning. Many of the submission, including those of both your organisations, indicate that there has been a withering of the role of the teacher librarian—I think most of you would say since the eighties. There has also been quite a lot of expression—following on from Mr Brock’s comments about it being the case that, no matter what policy or procedure you put in place, a lot of it will be affected by the principal and their use of those. Could you give us some insight into why you feel, as we have developed into a world with a massively more information to be managed, understood and utilised, we have actually seen a devaluing, if you like, of the role of the teacher librarian in schools and what might be contributing to that? Ms Wall, would you like to start?

Ms Wall—Thanks, Ms Bird, I would like to say up-front that I do not know whether the term ‘withering of the profession’ is actually accurate in this sense. The profession has changed drastically over the last 20-odd years, so from that point of view the change process itself has made it difficult, as it does for anyone in any career structure. It would be fair to say, though, that because of the input and the amount of information that is around especially in a digital sense nowadays, the information overload is so great that it has been difficult for people to manage that change.

As for a teacher librarian in a school—and this would be nationally—most of them have managed that change quite well. They are still delivering the information literacy services, they are still delivering digital capability to their students, they are delivering literacy capabilities, and they are doing that extremely well. The perception from some sectors is the problem; it is actually not the job.

CHAIR—That is exactly the point I was making when I said ‘withering’—it was our valuing of the role—

Ms Wall—Yes, it is our valuing of the role. It would be fair to say that because the role has become so multifaceted it is very difficult for a teacher at the school—and that is mostly who we are talking about—to encapsulate what a teacher librarian does. When a role is too large it becomes a matter of how you decide what that person is doing and, therefore, how do you value that person’s role. I think that is part of the problem.

CHAIR—So in many ways we have not managed the development of the role particularly well in both identifying it and resourcing it, and that ambiguity has led to a lack of understanding—

Ms Wall—A lack of understanding and a lack of an ability to articulate what the role is, yes.

Mr Brock—I would agree with that. I do think the role has diminished over time. I think also that the quality of the education of many teacher librarians has improved over time, and therefore so have the expectations that they have—and I refer to a paradigm shift in what the universities are producing—and I do not think that many school principals understand the value that they have in many of the teacher librarians, the vast majority of them.

I think the pressures on schools and the workload for teachers is so high that there is a presumption that teacher librarians do not have face-to-face classes on the timetable and therefore they are a resource to be exploited not for their original and specific purpose but for a whole range of other things that other people may not want to do in schools—like handling open high school students, distance education students, or senior classes in the library. These are the issues that are draining people of their time and energy from the specific job that they have to do. I think that there is a presumption that now schools have large numbers of computers—though they may not always work all of the time and they may be very slow—the text is not needed any more, and promoting the use of text is difficult.

In my submission I refer to the difference between Catholic systemic schools and government schools and many private schools where perhaps from the boards or the parent bodies there is an emphasis on improving student achievement. They have actually taken on board the research that says that teacher librarians and the school library can contribute to student performance, so they have invested heavily there. The same level of investment has not happened in the other sectors and the library is seen as a place to hold functions, to house students if there is no teacher for them, and to provide a space for senior students, rather than a learning centre. I think that is where the role has been diminished over time. Probably a lot of people who have retired over the years were just worn out by that whole process.

Certainly, if you want to see excellent school libraries, many government schools and many Catholic systemic schools provide them, but in some of the private schools where we really had that investment you can see what the role is. It is not possible for one person in a government school of 1,200 students, with the same staffing plus one teacher librarian that you would find in a school with 600 students, to provide the same service. It is just physically impossible to do the same amount of work with one SAS staff, ancillary staff. That is one of the draining things.

CHAIR—I have one more question to follow up on that. I will ask my colleagues to join in with their questions. One of the consistent themes—and I think there is quite a bit of evidence from what is happening in the US under the Obama administration’s program around school libraries—is the focus on the importance, in the new age of information, of collaborative teaching. This committee, in the previous parliament, did an inquiry into teacher education programs. I have to be honest, I do not remember getting any evidence about learning teachers being taught about the use of libraries. As a former teacher, I think I did one session where we talked to a librarian. Would you like to make some comments about the problematic approach to understanding the importance of the library and the teacher librarian and whether that has developed from teachers themselves not being fully trained to make the most use of it or perhaps not having the opportunity to do so. It would seem to me that, if you are going to have collaborative teaching at the base of the role, then there are two partners in that. It is not just about recruitment and training of teacher librarians but also about the teachers in the school. That, I would imagine, would feed up to the principal if teachers in classrooms are saying, ‘We value this and we want it,’ and so forth. I would be interested in your observations about the importance of that part of the process.

Ms Bonanno—The preservice teacher training is, to a certain extent, prescribed or limited to the requirements for teacher registration. The number of subjects, courses and structures that are taken tend to address the particular area of the importance of someone coming in at a qualification level and then a proficient level eventually. To fit in a component which is looking

at the relationship of a teacher with other personnel within the school and how they can be of service to them tends to move into the continuing professional development area. In many cases where there are teacher librarians in schools, they undertake some of that professional learning delivery to introduce new teachers to the way that they can work with them collaboratively in the preparation of classroom material and resources and how they can utilise the library and their services. It really is a case of moving on from the perception of the role of the teacher librarian and connecting that with what is actually done in the school library and learning that at the time of need, when a teacher commences their early career.

CHAIR—It is quite optimistic. I have severe doubts about how often that actually goes on. The pre-formal service period, the induction period, is a very informal thing in most schooling systems. It can be quite ad hoc. I am wondering whether you have a good example of where there is a more formalised induction process where those sorts of things can be ensured rather than leaving it to the school leadership and what they provide for beginning teachers—remembering that the vast majority of beginning teachers start as casuals; they do not have formal relationships with schools and so forth.

Ms Wall—We are in a rapid change process within education in general—the move to a national standards framework for teachers et cetera. In looking at the draft standards for teachers at this point in time, the whole issue of collaboration is further down the continuum in the sense that it will be expected that graduate teachers come out with that type of skill base and competency base. In time, the preservice education will incorporate that need and the philosophical basis of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is not just about school libraries; it is about digital literacy, the digital information literacy rollout, which we are also involved with. The whole issue about how we collaborate as a collegiate group of people within a school is more important and will be so. The national teaching standards will pull that out. That is one level that it will come at. At another level, when we look at the teaching standards in the accomplishment area, where collaboration is seen to be more important as an indicator of how accomplished a teacher is, then we do need a mentoring role and roles within the school as to how that can happen. I have done that in schools. I know many people in similar positions have done that as well. Part of your role with new staff who come into a school is about getting them to understand what collaborative learning is about and how that can help them use that process.

Mr Brock—I was a classroom teacher up until five years ago. I did not use the library a lot of other than occasionally to take a class along. I really think it would be good if it was part of the preservice training, that there be a requirement that teachers use the library as one of their assignments or whatever. I looked at the national standards only last week. Perhaps part of the evidence for the new teacher could be acquired through working with the teacher librarian in a class in the library. From personal experience I have found working with first year out teachers that they really get a lot out of coming and working in the library with me; in fact, some of them cannot wait to get back. Then there is a balancing act. But with the vast majority of teachers it is difficult to get them to work collaboratively with you. Time is the other issue.

CHAIR—The teacher librarian's allocation?

Mr Brock—Yes, and the teachers as well, the time to come and collaborate. We have in New South Wales the information skills process, which is actually not called that, which is one of the better ones. That has been around since 1987. That should be part of all New South Wales

universities teaching education, that that be taught to them or shown to them. All teachers should have it on their desk and be using it or referring to it. Whist it is mandatory, it is not the same sort of thing as in an inspection or audit of practice that would be ticked off on that each teacher has used it at some stage. With a syllabus, they have to follow the syllabus. Because it does not have the same weight as a board of studies document, and only a department policy document, somehow it misses out as well. That needs to be strengthened.

Dr JENSEN—It strikes me that there is a problem with the issue of the definition of the role of teacher librarian. Some teacher librarians are almost all librarian and very little teacher, and vice versa. I do not know but I guess that would vary considerably from state to state as well in terms of the emphasis that might be placed on some of those roles. Could you explore that a bit more on perhaps how we obtain a bit more consistency across that? The other thing I want to lead into is the issue of professional development and career structure where it strikes me that for the role of teacher librarian there is very little in terms of moving beyond that role in advancement of your career. How can we bring together a structural definition of what exactly constitutes a teacher librarian and how we facilitate furthering the professional development of those teachers/teacher librarians?

CHAIR—And you might want to clarify for the committee that as I understand the registration bodies themselves do not always recognise teacher librarians.

Ms Bonanno—I will lead off by indicating that we actually do have a national document called *Learning for the future: developing information services in Australian schools*. Within that there is a clear definition of the teacher librarian, how they are defined and that they are defined in essence that they are eligible for membership at a national level. So that is a document that has been identified as a standards document and a guidelines document. The difficulty is allowing that to then be consistent, and be consistently accepted across every state and territory, when it comes to the employment of people into the schools in the allocations. This is where a decision is made, at the school-based level and a school-based management, as to whether they employ a teacher librarian or they employ a librarian or a library technician. So there needs to be a national position on that, and hence our recommendation is for a national census of the profession, a clear delineation of the qualifications of those people at that particular level and the duties that they undertake, and that that data is available and is consistent and is collected nationally, not in a hodgepodge way across every state and territory. If that is in place there would be a clear definition of the role or the position and the title and the definition of the teacher librarian.

CHAIR—Could you clarify for the committee to status of the document? It is not a departmental document, is it?

Ms Bonanno—It is not a departmental document; it is a joint publication between the two national associations representing the profession in Australia: the Australian School Library Association and the Australian Library and Information Association. Elements of the document have been used by various state and territory governments where they see they are able to use that—in particular, for the development of school libraries and the development of resource collections.

Dr JENSEN—I would like you to address professional development advancement as well, particularly given that these days, with measurement systems in place right across education, teachers undertake assessments, you get kids doing NAPLAN so on, so you get some idea of how the teachers are performing. How is the role of the teacher librarian then assessed in terms of the efficacy of the teacher librarian, and what about the furthering of their career—if they do not want to, say, be stuck in a library at a school their entire professional lives?

CHAIR—You might also want to touch on some of the indications we have from international studies, that some of your report outlines, about the difference to literacy scores and so forth that a properly resourced functioning library has made.

Ms Bonanno—You have actually given us in your statement there several different questions, which to a certain extent are difficult to answer in one response.

Dr JENSEN—Sure.

Ms Bonanno—To discuss things about the professional advancement and career paths, I believe that Ms Wall identified that in her previous comment about the Australian national teaching standards. The draft at the moment is talking about four levels. The last two levels are voluntary levels: one of accomplishment and one of leadership. If that particular framework is adopted, accepted and implemented, that is a career or professional development pathway for teacher librarians to undertake—to attain an accomplished status within a school and to be in a lead position within a school. At that lead position level there is an expectation that not only are you mentoring other people within the school but you are actually contributing significantly to the curriculum development of the school and also beyond the school you are contributing back to community, you are contributing back to professional association. That allows for a career development and career pathway. Even within schools, and to a certain extent Mr Brock identified that, when we are looking at particularly the independent private schools, there are career pathways there where you could have a head or director of the library, you would have the teacher librarians, you would have librarians—you would have a team of personnel employed in that. So there are career path for this that are identified through the private independent sector but not replicated at a state government level.

CHAIR—Ms Bonanno, there was some evidence—I think in your report or it may have been one of the others—about people, because of those difficulties, actually going over to the private sector to get promotional opportunities, even the private sector non-school area: big company libraries and so forth. I would be interested in you expanding on that.

Ms Bonanno—That is attractive for people. In particular, we are having a drain of our profession over into the international schools overseas. People who are going into international schools, particularly in Asia, are getting significant pay increases and are also benefiting from less taxation. They have indicated to us that that is a reason why they are going: they feel that the schools in those locations actually value them more for the contribution they can make to the whole school learning process of the students within those international schools. The same is happening in other locations: teacher librarians are moving out of the profession because they feel more valued in other locations, not just in monetary reward but also in the contribution that they make. We have people moving even into the general library section: moving into the

National Library of Australia and state libraries. That is a concern. To a certain extent it goes back to the perception and the value of the role within the school.

When we look at the research that is coming out from overseas, some of that research has actually been replicated in Australia. The Keith Curry Lance research, which looked specifically at test scores in the United States, indicates quite clearly that a well-resourced school library, and having qualified personnel, makes a difference to the reading scores and student achievement under those tests that they do in regard to schooling in the United States. When we return to the Australian scene and we have testing done for NAPLAN, in schools where teacher librarians are actively involved in supporting literacy programs and also then tracking and monitoring students through that literacy development through the school library program, schools are indicating that they see a difference in the second NAPLAN testing for literacy as a result of that contribution. So there is evidence. Admittedly it is only spot evidence—it is only in pockets that it is happening. But it is happening because of people who are dedicated and passionate about what they can contribute to the education of young Australians.

Other research that has been replicated in Australia is basically listening to the student voice. These were studies that were originally done through Ohio by Dr Kuhlthau and Dr Ross Todd, and that was replicated here in Australia in Queensland public schools and Victorian public schools. It indicated again, quite strongly—in fact, it mirrored the results in the United States—that, where there was a well-resourced school library and a teacher librarian, the students indicated that both the environment and the personnel actually contributed to their learning and supported them not just in their academic learning but also, in particular, in helping them to prepare their work, to prepare presentations and to complete research tasks and assignments.

Mr SYMON—Mr Brock, I read your submission and took some special points out of it about the resourcing side of things and the changing of demands. The one that particularly caught my eye was this. As we all know, as every year goes by we have more and more computers in schools and that is a great thing. But your submission noted that it is, in many cases, falling to the teacher librarian to also be the IT support and tech person. That obviously takes time away from the job of teacher librarian. Could you expand upon that and let the committee know how big a problem that is and whether you expect it to grow into a larger problem over time.

Mr Brock—Some teacher librarians have that as an extra responsibility. I certainly do not. And I would not be capable of doing it. I do not know that I would have emphasised it as much as you perhaps have taken it on board.

Mr SYMON—I suppose I should say that, locally, I have seen examples of that in my electorate. So I jumped on that one and thought, ‘It is common, so I will ask you about it as well.’

Mr Brock—That role, of the computer coordinator, is very time consuming. I would think that it is to do with a lack of perception of what the teacher librarian is there for. I have a diploma in information studies, and the number of people who assume that that is information technology is quite interesting. I think that that is an assumption made because they think that that is what I have been trained in. I suppose it is because we have been early users of computers, with the circulation desk, that we are seen as having a greater knowledge than others. That is a confusion of the roles.

Some teacher librarians like doing that particular role. How the school manages to balance the time that they spend on that, away from the library, I do not know. It seems to happen in a lot of primary schools. Perhaps they have less relief from face-to-face teaching. I am not sure how they would manage it.

Mr SYMON—I have certainly seen it in some of the smaller primary schools. I think that is a straight-out resource issue.

Mr Brock—It is probably also because the teachers there get very little release time for preparation, and most teachers in a primary school just would not have the time to run off and fix a computer or the switches in a server or something like that.

CHAIR—I want to follow up on that. There was some evidence—I do not remember where I read it—that a lot of the systems put in place to manage the laptop rollouts, such as where they are checked in and checked out and so forth, have fallen to the task of the library. That may be what is increasing it.

Mr Brock—It is located in the library because the library is seen as a secure space where there is somebody at the desk all day.

Ms Wall—I too know exactly what you are talking about with technology in the library. I think that it does create an issue time wise for teacher librarians, and I also think that many schools do not have an alternative. What they are looking at is equitable access to the technology for the students. When it is in a classroom, under duty of care, students cannot be in there outside of class times. So we are looking at how students can get access outside of class time, at lunch time, to do assignments, projects et cetera. Consequently, many schools place some of the laptops, or just desktops, in the library. What it means in reality, though, for the librarian is that, once it becomes part of the ‘collection’, they have to maintain it. They have to know enough about it and they have to circulate it. I am in a secondary school and I can say that in each period that I lend out a laptop I would probably use 10 minutes of time to do that. That is not taking into account that in many schools—I do not have to—you also have to maintain them. The other part where I think we get lost in worrying about the management side of the technology is the actual time spent by the teacher librarian in helping the students to use the technology, in helping students to find information, manipulate the data and then present it in some type of digital media. That is where it has burgeoned time wise from a straight-out management of the equipment into a teaching and learning resource that was perhaps not understood at the first time they were placed in the library.

Mr SYMON—That leads to my next question, which is, as noted in Mr Brock’s submission, the devolution of management of schools to principals and what they do with those funding resources. I suspect, and I am happy to hear some comments on it, that there is probably not enough recognition by some principals of the job that is now done by teacher librarians in picking up all these other, newer functions that have not always been there and then allowing sufficient resources. I noted in your submission, Mr Brock, that the Australian School Libraries Research Report entitled *A snapshot of Australian school libraries: report 1*, which did a survey of over 680 individuals, said that 86 of the schools recorded an annual library budget of less than \$1,000, which to me it seems would not really pay for the paper.

Mr Brock—That was not in my submission.

Mr SYMON—It was not in yours?

Mr Brock—No. Mine has the ASLA logo on the front.

Mr SYMON—It must be in the other ASLA submission, in the national ASLA submission. I am getting confused between the two. But we have the right people here to answer that. May I hear a greater explanation of whether it is not regarded sufficiently by some schools as a budget priority to put money in that area? It would seem that, in some cases, teacher librarians are picking up far more workload in areas outside what might be described as their former core functions? They have now moved across into other areas while still being expected to do what they were there for in the first place.

Ms Wall—It is a fact of life that every position and every career structure has broadened. I think I mentioned that earlier. Because of their expertise in information literacy—that is, ICT, digital literacy, reading and literature, and management; they are four core skills—teacher librarians tend to get all these additional tasks put upon them. Sometimes it is because we are the only person in the school who is able to manage that. I think the schools that do that do value their teacher librarian but they do not consciously think about what they are doing at the time they are doing it. Because of their staffing formula, and this is national in scope, they are unable to give more time to the teacher librarian to do that, nor are they able to give additional support staff to do it. As teacher librarians we could be our own worst enemies. We are really good at what we do. We are excellent managers, really good teachers and we know what we are doing with the digital literacy capabilities, consequently we get all these things. We love it and we do it because we are passionate.

CHAIR—I am conscious of the time, so we will move on. Ms Collins.

Ms COLLINS—My question goes back to some earlier comments. Many of the submissions call for a teacher librarian in every school. We have 9½ thousand schools in the country, I think, and we talked about a shortage earlier. I wonder if you could give me some figures on what you think the shortage would be if that were to happen overnight. Also, you talked about the retraining of teachers and librarians as teacher librarians. Could you say how long that retraining might take?

Ms Bonanno—I would be able to give you a rough guesstimate. If I go right back to what I said at the start, I talked about the inconsistency of the way data is collected at a national level, the way staffing formulas are applied, and the fact that the allocation of teacher librarians is not consistent across Australia. In looking at those figures, the 9½ thousand, and looking at the enrolment spread, and then looking at staffing formulas and overlaying those on top of that staffing environment, effectively we could say that in Australia there would be the potential for several thousand positions, because in a school where there are only 60 students, it is 0.1 allocation if you are in a particular state. Once it gets to 300 or over 360—that is the range across Australia for the allocation—it is one full-time, but there are part-timers before that. Then when you get into high schools, 500 seems to be the magic number where you have a full-time allocation. Then it goes up to 1,000 and so forth, but there are 1.2 and so forth. Applying

those formulas over the national school census of 2009, where the 9½ thousand schools come from, it is 7½ thousand positions.

Looking at our membership makeup across Australia—and membership to school library associations is not compulsory, it is voluntary—and looking at the number of people who do not join their professional association, we probably have a rough estimate of a shortage of around 2½ thousand or 3,000. When we start looking at doing this as a quick fix, it will not happen. It has to be a three- to five-year implementation program. We actually have a model in one state that is being used, but not to the full qualification of a teacher librarian. It is being used to get a graduate certificate in teacher librarianship, which makes the person employable. The state I am talking about is here in New South Wales. It makes the person employable.

CHAIR—Could you clarify: that is added on top of an existing teacher. You are a teacher and then you do the graduate certificate in order to become a teacher librarian.

Ms Bonanno—Yes. You are a teacher and you are appointed into a library, and as a part of that you undertake this graduate certificate in teacher librarianship. That is funded to the amount of \$8,000 approximately, which means that if we are starting to look at 2½ thousand to 3,000 people being retrained, we are looking at an investment of \$25 million to \$30 million, but over a three-to-five-year period of time. If we say, ‘Let’s break that down so that every state and territory contributes to that,’ that is something like \$3 million to \$4 million over that period of time. I believe it is achievable; I think we just need to be a bit smarter about how we think. But then also we are not creating the ideal situation that we would prefer, and that is to have a fully-qualified person. But at least it is addressing an issue of getting people who have an understanding of the profession, who have developed further skills in respect to digital information literacy, in managing a school library, in doing policy and development issues for getting the resources, even—going back to Mr Symon—in knowing how to put a budget together to present to a school to indicate the investment that needs to be made into that environment. Even though there is a shortage, and it is embarrassing to know that that has been allowed to happen, it is not the end. There are ways and means, and it is just rethinking about how governments and organisations get involved in sponsoring that retraining program and getting people into the workforce in that sense. In particular, we have got over 3,000 new and refurbished school libraries being built under the Building the Education Revolution plan and we do now know how they are being staffed.

Mr ZAPPIA—I have a question following on from Julie’s question about the shortage. Can you identify what you think are the key factors as to why there is a shortage—given that my understanding is that there is not necessarily a shortage of teachers in the general sense.

Ms Bonanno—Could you repeat that question for me, please?

Mr ZAPPIA—My understanding is that there is not a shortage of school teachers as a profession but there is a shortage of librarians or teacher librarians. What do you think are the critical factors as to why there is a shortage of people who are prepared to work in the school system as librarians?

CHAIR—I would clarify that I think that would be a primary school focus. We are producing an oversupply of primary school trained people and we need to look at what we might do to encourage them to look at library qualifications to expand their employment opportunities.

Ms Bonanno—I believe that there is a lot of pressure on schools. There are constant educational initiatives that schools are being asked to address, and that requires staffing allocations. One example is: there has been pressure over the years for reduction of class sizes. That means that your ratio of teacher to students needs to be in a manageable or identified number range. It is below 30 in most states and territories. As a result of that, principals make the decision to allocate their teaching people to bring those class sizes down. Then they have a position where they have got limited human resources to allocate to other projects within the school.

Mr ZAPPIA—Sorry to interrupt you, but the question I am seeking an answer to is: can you identify why students coming out of high school and going on to different professions are not choosing to be librarians? Is it a salary issue? Is it that they will then find it difficult to get a job? What are the critical reasons as to why they are not pursuing that as a profession?

Mr Brock—With respect to Dr Jensen's question earlier about promotion, I did refer to the fact that teacher librarians perform many of the duties in the hierarchical structure of schools that would carry a higher salary, an allowance for head teacher, and a seat at the executive table. That is not answering your question either; but if I go back to that, to get to that level requires a postgraduate year of study. The graduate certificate is a six-month, four-unit course, which does not meet ASLA/ALEA accreditation.

A payment usually goes with better qualifications; it does not in teaching. I think that probably overall the number of teachers going for master's degrees may have dropped; I do not know. Teachers once were great holders of second degrees and higher degrees. But that is probably one of the factors. I have myself started library courses, twice, and have given up, because to try to do that with full-time teaching was really very demanding. I have done other postgraduate degrees whilst teaching and managed them quite successfully. They are not easy courses, and I think it is probably daunting for some people to actually sit down and do it. I had a woman ring me almost in tears once. She just did not know how to manage the assignment load, so I told her to do one subject per semester, which would have taken many years to get through.

The other problem is: are you really going to get a job? Although there are jobs out there, how well equipped are you to get that job? People do miss out on those positions, and they might give them to somebody who is already in the school who then agrees to go and do the training. So it is probably that additional study which is necessary, and it would be good if people did upgrade from the graduate certificate level. There are a lot people still as teacher librarians who did other training programs in the 1980s and 1990s which did not carry any accreditation. There has been no incentive for them to actually complete at least graduate diploma level.

CHAIR—Ms Wall, did you want to add some comment?

Ms Wall—Yes, I would like to answer that because I think the motivation is different. No. 1, the Australian School Library Association takes the stance that a teacher librarian needs to have classroom experience to start with, because that is the core of what they do. They need to know

what the curriculum is about; they need to have that practitioner bent. That means that, to get new teacher librarians into the profession, we are asking a teacher to leave a classroom position that 99 per cent of the time is a full-time position to go into, in a primary school, 90 per cent of the time, a part-time position. So, No. 1, it is sheer economics. They are not going to move from a full-time position to a part-time position.

On top of that, we are asking—and we expect, both at system level and at association level—that they do a master's course on top of that. I think that is a concern for them. We would love to think that we could have some young blood in the profession, but it is difficult for first-year-out teachers to get full-time positions at the moment. There may be a lot of teachers around, but they do not have the type of experience they need to make it valuable for them to become a teacher librarian, so that part-time nature of it is an issue.

CHAIR—We will have to move on due to time, and I apologise to the committee. I think we may in fact, further down the track, invite you back, because there are a whole lot of other issues in your submission that I would like to discuss, particularly around digital literacy issues. I have been completely oblivious about subscriptions to online resources, which I would think would be critically important for modern learners, being beyond the budget. As Mr Symons said, some schools are getting terribly low per-head budgets for libraries. There is a whole range of other things that we would be very interested in exploring but we are conscious that others have arrived for the next session. Could you give an indication of whether you might be interested in coming back again to explore those things further?

Ms Wall—Yes.

CHAIR—That would be great. Thank you for your attendance here today. I do not think we have asked you to provide any additional information. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Again, thank you very much. You have been the first in our public submission process, and I think we have a great deal that we are interested in exploring across an area that is, I think, quite profound for the future of our education. We really appreciate your time in making your submission and your time today.

[11.04 am]

FOGARTY, Ms Jennie, Vice President, NSW Primary Principals Association

HAGAN, Mr Mark, Chair, Curriculum Reference Group, NSW Primary Principals Association; and Principal, Greenway Park Public School

HANKINSON, Ms Lenore, Acting Assistant General Secretary, Research and Industrial, NSW Teachers Federation

RICHARDSON, Mr James Alfred (Jim), Industrial Officer, NSW Teachers Federation; and Teacher Librarian, Byron Bay High School

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives of the New South Wales Teachers Federation and the New South Wales Primary Principals Association to today's hearing. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective Houses. We have the NSW Teachers Federation submission but we only received the NSW Primary Principals Association submission last night, so please excuse the committee as they will not have read it yet. We might start with the submission we are familiar with, and invite you to make a few comments. We will then get the Primary Principals Association to give us an outline of their submission and we will then go to questions.

Ms Hankinson—The NSW Teachers Federation warmly welcomes the interest that the inquiry is showing in the position and status of the profession and, in particular, teacher librarians. Teacher librarians have, as you know, the dual role in schools of both teacher and librarian. The success with which they have managed that role has to a large part contributed to the success of New South Wales, if I am not being too parochial, in terms of literacy and in other areas of the curriculum. I have been a teacher librarian for about 24 years, and so has Jim, so we speak from experience.

In our presentation and submission to the inquiry we feel that we have attempted to faithfully represent the concerns of our members. To that end, we have outlined in our submission the various areas of concern such as, as has previously been very well canvassed by the previous witness group, the impositions on their workload that have over time eroded the success or the effectiveness with which they can operate in the school. As you know, schools are very busy places, and at the moment education is undergoing rapid change and there are various reasons for that. Teacher librarians have had to accommodate, reflect on and change their role and have a range of skills within the school.

Before I embark on that, I have some amendments to make to our submission. Appendix D was a contribution by Ms Jacqui Hawkes, the teacher librarian at St Clair High School. There is an erratum on page 4; the line commencing:

Teacher-Librarians demand a one to one ratio

should read:

Primary teacher librarians demand a one to one ratio ...

In respect of the inquiry's terms of reference, due to the impact of recent policies on and investments in school libraries and activities, we see as of great concern the development under the national partnerships for the local staffing trial and the decision by some primary schools to not replace their teacher librarian or to use the staffing mix so that the teacher librarian is replaced by a school assistant. We have also mentioned the diminishing nature of library budgets and we have tried in the submission to take into account the sorts of pressures that are on principals. We see this as a product of devolutionary tendencies within the department. Over time these have eroded as principals feel more and more under pressure to allocate budgets, and the library has been seen as a soft target; I think I said that in the submission.

A successful teacher librarian is often a result of a good partnership between the principal and the teacher librarian. Principals are effective advocates for their teacher librarians in schools, and it is sometimes difficult for them, given shrinking budgets and the sorts of pressures that have devolved from the region and the district back onto schools, to act in that role. I used a quote there from a teacher librarian.

There has been a change over time in the way release from face-to-face teaching has been organised in schools. The fact that primary teacher librarians have to provide up to an hour of release from face-to-face teaching for classroom teachers is a major impost on the type of cooperative program in planning and teaching that that they are required to do as part of their dual role. Many primary teacher librarians report to us that they would be more effective in their role if they did not have that additional impost on their time.

The teachers federation is often asked to point out to school executives that administration time is necessary. In the appendices in our submission is a letter from Mr Peter Riordan. It is a DET memo that was part of the negotiations that we had with the DET over the provision of administration time. In that DET memo there are a number of aspects that the teachers federation has had to negotiate with the department in response to further erosion of teacher librarian entitlements.

With the introduction of vocational education and training and TAFE, schools are very busy places. There is nonscripture and distance ed et cetera. There are a number of times when students are effectively not in front of classroom teachers, so they are directed to the library to be supervised. While the teachers federation has warmly welcomed the expenditure on school libraries and the laptop rollout, there also needs to be a recognition that, as I have said, these facilities will be warehouses if they are not adequately staffed and adequately resourced. Digital literacy, information literacy, is an important part of every teacher librarian's role, and the laptops have provided an extra avenue for that; but there is sometimes a view in the school that the library is the place where you go for recharging your laptop and that the teacher librarian is the technical assistant, not the teacher. They take on a workshop role if the laptops are cracked or faulty, which is a workload issue. There are workload issues surrounding the laptop rollout that need to be taken into account.

Of major concern to our members is the lack of opportunity for professional development. Most schools have a professional development committee, and teachers come to that committee with their varying professional needs. Because of the overarching role of the teacher librarian, they are the ones in the school who have the whole school perspective, and that is what makes their role so valuable. They know the needs of the students. For example, I have taken on the role in the past of a year adviser and, while your role in welfare has been supported, it is sometimes not seen as appropriate for you to attend professional development in that area, because your role is with the school library. How you can be successful in accessing those funds depends on the degree of awareness of your role that the school executive has. Some principals are fantastic and they know exactly where you are coming from, but others, in the same way as the general community, still see you as the repository of books—the bun and that whole stereotype. I do not dare to resurrect it, but you know what I mean.

Professional development is an avenue of renewal. It is an avenue of professional resurgence that you get. Jim and I come from a time when you were given 12 months leave without pay to retrain as a teacher librarian. When you talk about that now to young teacher trainees, they look at you as though you are on drugs. They look at you as though that idea is from another world. The leave gave you a professional learning space—a time that you could reflect on where you were in the profession and where you were heading. Am I allowed to refer to earlier questions?

CHAIR—As long as it is in your submission.

Ms Hankinson—It is later on. In relation to the lack of a career path, I will just make the blank statement that many teacher librarians report to us that, when they present for promotion, when they go for merit selection, there is not the same understanding amongst the panels of their dual role. I think I mentioned in the submission that classroom experience and teacher librarian experience are not always seen as being commensurate. That is regrettable but it does exist. In fact, people have been taken aside and told that the reason they were not successful at interview was that the teacher librarian experience was not seen as being commensurate to classroom experience. Obviously the career path in primaries is different from secondaries. We would welcome some sort of tracking, some sort of data, on how many teacher librarians go on to become principals, primary principals and APs. I do not believe that we have that data.

Dr JENSEN—You have just put the question that I was going ask.

Ms Hankinson—In secondaries, for example, there is now the role of Head Teacher Teaching and Learning. Some teacher librarians have approached that. There is the role of Head Teacher Administration, but you can rarely do those roles in the school library. You have to transfer out of the school library and into the classroom and approach it that way. The sorts of skills that teacher librarians have around financial management, resource management and student welfare can still be used in the role but they are exercised in the classroom rather than through the school library.

Also of great concern to teacher librarians is that their dual role is hampered by the fact that they lack adequate clerical or school support. In New South Wales schools that support is allocated by the principal. It is of great concern to the federation that it hears of some school principals who have the responsibility for allocating that time being remiss and not allocating any time to the school library. Again—and I am not being critical of school principals—the

problem is that the devolutionary tendencies from the centre have meant that more and more regional and district responsibilities have been placed on schools and they are under stress in terms of trying to allocate resources, and so teacher librarians are told: 'Resource management can be left. Train the kids, train parents, train other community members who might like to come and participate.' That is all very well, but you have already heard the sorts of demands that are being made on teacher librarians to provide that sort of on-the-spot training where a parent who may come for three weeks or four weeks but then have problems. Families are busy and cannot always commit to something like that.

The provision of school administrative and support staff is shrinking in schools for school libraries. You can see in one of the appendices a DET memo where we have requested that DET reaffirm to principals their responsibility in allocating assistant staff across the school so that the curriculum needs of various classrooms can be met. I was very heartened to see the recommendations in *Scan*, the DET journal, under the 21C. We have listed there the types of changing technologies that school libraries and teacher librarians are coming to grips with. However, I would just impress again the idea that it is not just about technology; it is also about digital literacy and about teaching students that information needs to be assessed for its accuracy, its currency and its authority. It is important how we present information for its persuasiveness. It is important how we evaluate the information—whether it has satisfied our information need. Teaching those sorts of skills is just as important in the digital era as they were in the text era. Teacher librarians do that job magnificently because they are so close to those resources and to the broad span of the curriculum.

I mentioned in the submission that the impact of the national curriculum will be to provide teacher librarians with an even wider role. I also mentioned in one of the responses in *Insight* that while ever teacher librarians are tied down to timetabled classes, while ever they are dragged down by being the computer technician and while ever they are the person who is stumbling around trying to do networking and recharging laptops that role will not be fulfilled.

There are occupational health and safety issues over hubs and routers. When I am on phone duty, I often get phone calls from teacher librarians about equipment that has been placed in libraries and no risk assessment or safety assessment has been done on it. Teacher librarians are carrying huge loads of books across schools or campuses. It is all very well to say that we should have classroom services but we also have to supply people with the correct ergonomic equipment to fulfil that sort of role.

On recruitment and development of school libraries, as I said earlier, I think our submission talked about the brain drain. When Jim and I were training, many of the other trainees went on to positions of leadership. Many went to the state libraries and others to legal firms. Their career path in schools was blocked and they could not see that they could do the dual role at a head level, and so many of them went outside. However, those who did stay have been a major force behind the drivers of this inquiry, if you like, and are looking at what has influenced the profession to bring it to the watershed that it feels it is in now.

The federation is charged with reflecting and with making sure that our members have their entitlements. We have produced web material—I have copies of that for the inquiry—and campaign material to try and get an understanding of the role of teacher librarians within schools. With all due respect to Library Services—it was fantastic; it helped many teacher

librarians—its staff numbers have been cut dramatically and in some ways the federation has had to step in to help teacher librarians articulate their role and create positive relationships with principals in schools.

CHAIR—Lenore, have you got much more to say? We are running very short of time.

Ms Hankinson—All right. I also have some policy on community and public libraries, if that is an area that the inquiry was going explore.

CHAIR—I am presuming that members have read the submission.

Ms Hankinson—The role of teacher librarians as agents of change in schools is also very important. Technology should not be programmed learning. It is mainly in independent schools where you see rows of cubicles and kids moving through program testing. That is something that we are totally opposed to. It should not be encompassed in the role. There is the contribution that teacher librarians have made to literacy through the Premier's Reading Challenge and sustained silent reading. I think it was Roald Dahl who said that he would be an unknown if it were not for teacher librarians. In relation to joint library use, I think child protection issues have to be considered. Copyright issues, cyber-bullying, plagiarism and digital citizenship are all part of the vital role that we see teacher librarians playing.

CHAIR—Thanks, Lenore. Sorry to rush you along there. Who is going to speak on behalf of the primary principals? It looks like it is you, Mark. Would you like to address for us the issues that you have raised in your submission.

Mr Hagan—Thank you. Firstly, the New South Wales Primary Principals Association appreciates the additional time that was afforded us to get this together. We had a vacation period, which meant that people could not get things to us. So, apologies, but can I also express our appreciation.

This submission is a collection of 88 different points of view from all over New South Wales, from the most remote schools to the larger schools in Sydney. The views are those of principals as they have been related through their teacher librarian as well as the views of principals themselves. I will try to pick out some main points in each of the items but will not dwell on all of them unless you have a particular question about them.

The first question relates to recent policy on investment. The responses received indicated in general terms that, because it has come from various agencies, both federal and state, the investment has been ad hoc—that is, there has been a provision of buildings but not necessarily something to do within those buildings. There has been the provision of books for a particular purpose but not necessarily something that genuinely followed on from that. So, while the investment is appreciated, there has not at this stage been what we can see as a coordinated approach towards the useful investment of funds in libraries and teacher librarians.

As far as policy is concerned, the last library policy—or what we would genuinely call policy—is 23 years old. It does not necessarily capture the events of the last 23 years. I would not like a doctor to be operating on me using things from 23 years ago—

CHAIR—Sorry, Mark. Could you just clarify: is this a national library document as opposed to a state document?

Mr Hagan—This is a state document.

CHAIR—So are you talking about all states?

Mr Hagan—No, I am talking about New South Wales. We are really only representing the views of New South Wales primary principals.

CHAIR—That is just what I wanted to clarify. Thank you.

Mr Hagan—The policy responses that we received fell into a couple of areas. Firstly, the general New South Wales policy does not necessarily capture the large advances that there have been, particularly in the area of technology. Other policy documents that were mentioned talk about the impact of staffing agreements between the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales and the Teachers Federation, which represents the majority of public school teachers in New South Wales. Some of those have had a negative impact on the teacher librarian role, in particular agreements that took away part of the face-to-face teaching entitlement from the general allocation to a school and placed an hour of that within the library, making it the teacher librarian's responsibility. In other words, they became increasingly a teacher librarian but they were teaching not necessarily the library skills that we may have hoped for in the policy statement but, rather, other things that were required within the school. While they were still based in the library, there was no guarantee that what they were teaching directly related to information skills or digital literacy et cetera.

There is a policy, perceived as an inequitable one, where the majority of high schools—in fact, I believe it is all public high schools in New South Wales—receive a full-time teacher librarian but a primary school of similar numbers does not receive a full-time teacher librarian position. Sometimes teacher librarians are spread over a couple of schools to fulfil a full-time role. There are also policies relating to preservice and transition training that, in the views of principals across New South Wales, seem to devalue the important role that teacher librarians play in schools. There is a limited range available. Most are by correspondence. The New South Wales Teachers Federation makes reference to training in yesteryear, and that is something that we also see as being true.

As far as the potential of libraries and librarians goes, we as primary principals are not aware of any Australia-wide research that would help us get an idea of what best practice could or should be. There are some studies across the world, which have been referred to in the submissions that you heard this morning. The common themes addressed by item 2, which was the potential of school librarians and libraries to contribute to educational improvement, were things such as the fact that teacher librarians are skilled professionals, not only one area but in a series of areas, so their contribution to schools is highly valued by principals. They often inspire lifelong interests, traditions and success amongst the students that they touch, remembering that in almost every school the librarian would see each child, more than likely, on a weekly basis. No other person gets to touch each child's learning to the same degree.

The effective use of technology and the great demands that technology has placed on teacher librarians is something that needs to be explored and needs to be taken into consideration when we talk about the improvement of literacy standards and that sort of thing. The evidence is anecdotal, but we would confidently say that teacher librarians do have a major impact on all of the learners, whether it be through literacy or anything else in the school, pending what it is that they are charged with the responsibility of teaching. It may not simply be in the area of literature or literacy.

The factors affecting recruitment and development are all things that would be common amongst all of the people who have submitted, I would imagine. They are: limited career pathways, which has been mentioned already; minimal retraining opportunities; and the additional roles that have been placed on the teacher librarian in recent years. Again, there is mention of teacher librarians being used for the release from face-to-face teaching of other classroom teachers at the school. Equally, the professional isolation of teacher librarians is something that a person who is skilled in teaching first and who wants to go to the role of a librarian may find different, because in a school there is one teacher librarian. It is very rare that there is more than one, particularly in primary schools. Therefore, there is one of them in a school. That isolation can often be a restriction to their interest in recruitment and development.

I will briefly mention the other two areas. The impact of digital technology, which is item 5, is significant and probably would take a significant amount of time for us to describe here. That is probably one of the biggest challenges for our teacher librarians. It was also mentioned that technology can sometimes overshadow the other key roles that teacher librarians play. While technology is critically important and while we would love access to all sorts of collections within schools, teacher librarians are doing more than just working with digital technology. We look back at those things such as books and the love of books and the interest in creating new worlds and being able to find things out and explore new opportunities. All of those things teacher librarians do as a matter of course. We would not like to think that technology will override that important role that they play.

Item 4 was one that was of concern to us. The responses were minimal to the question of how communities and teacher librarians within schools could work together. It seems so varied between Sydney and country areas and even remote areas. There did not seem to be any common themes that we could draw together. I will leave it at that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We might just focus on following up a few of those areas. One of the things we heard this morning which is consistent throughout the submissions—and I invite both parties to make comment—is that, no matter what policies are put in place, unless they are very dictatorial, generally speaking they can fall apart at the school level if principals do not value the role of the teacher librarian and the library. A lot of the evidence indicates the potential for inconsistencies between schools. One of the examples—I cannot remember whose submission it was—was public school budget allocations for libraries. There was a huge variation within the one sector when it came to how much per head was allocated to libraries. So, while I take on board that there are overarching pressures on budgets and resources across the board, there is quite clearly, from the evidence, a very varied view and understanding amongst principals of the role of the library in the school. We asked the previous witnesses about this, and I would ask you also. To me, it is culture.

The previous witness talked about some of the private school sectors where the library is seen as something of a prestige item in a school; it is well resourced and well staffed. In some of the Asian international schools to which our librarians are being cherry-picked and finding a better outcome, again the culture is that it is a prestige thing within the school; it is highly valued. I am interested in whether you have got an insight into where we have run off the track in Australia with understanding and appreciating the role of the library within our school system.

Ms Fogarty—I would like to make a comment. It is not necessarily a culture we want but a culture that is driven by dollars. The dollar allocation—I only speak from a primary school perspective—can be dependent on how much money a P&C can raise, therefore affecting the budget of the library. Dare we get into a discussion about the funding of private schools compared with public schools, we would probably be here for a very long time. If you perhaps looked at the budgets that private schools are paying and even the physical infrastructure of private schools and then call that culture, I would argue that it is not only about culture but about resources.

Over the years RFF has been mentioned. In the late 1980s, as referenced in our submission, we had what we call the Metherell years. A significant change happened in libraries and that was the introduction of the RFF policy in primary schools. The collaboration that librarians were I think beginning to have in a very meaningful way with teachers changed, and that is actually all about resourcing, about dollars, about how many staff members are funded to be in a public primary school. I would argue that the culture of libraries in schools still is, on the whole, a healthy culture but one that is dogged by the lack of resources and dogged by a policy that means that decisions have to be made which draw on resources, and they become very economic sorts of arguments.

Ms Hankinson—We would say to an absolutely large extent it is funding driven, and the federation and the AEU have a large campaign based on lobbying for more funding for public education. Principals and school executives are our members too and we appreciate the sorts of pressures that they are under in making school based decisions. I have already referred to the devolutionary tendencies that have driven these shrinking budgets. I can quote from my own experience, where I arrived in a school with a budget of about \$24,000. Over five years, despite my best efforts and lobbying, that got reduced to about \$4,000 to \$6,000 to service a school community of about 900. It went to technology. I can provide the inquiry with our funding submissions and our objections to the socioeconomic status funding mechanism and the previous benchmark adjustment under the Howard government. It is quite detailed and I appreciate the time—

CHAIR—I know there is a whole other debate to be had around funding, but at the end of the day governments respond to what communities are demanding, and communities are not out there, I think, with an understanding of what it is a modern library is about and why it is so significantly important in their school. I am really keen to not beat around the bush in this inquiry and to get to grips with some of those issues. You did not want to raise the stereotype, but I think it is alive and well out there—that libraries are places that are becoming irrelevant. There is some expression around technology. Why do you need a librarian when you have got Google? Those are things that I think profoundly reflect a lack of understanding of digital literacy and the role of the librarian. But we are not having that conversation. We have got wonderful submissions to this inquiry, but from within the sector. I am really concerned about

the level of conversation and understanding. Some of the submissions talked about resourcing the teacher librarians to engage with the parents in the community about things like cyberbullying, ethics online—all of the issues that are going to be challenging our young learners.

I am not underestimating the issue of resources. I understand that. But I am interested in exploring your direct experience—because you have both got members who deal with this every day—about that appreciation of what it is we are trying to come to grips with here and whether we need to be broadening that conversation. Mr Richardson, do you want to comment on that?

Mr Richardson—Yes. I would not disagree with you at all. In my current school I have been particularly fortunate in that—again, it is a resourcing issue; we have to come back to that—the P&C has been very supportive of the library over the years. But I agree that we have had a change in that personnel in the P&C and whereas before there was a fairly standard formula that they used in terms of guaranteed funding to the library, that is now contestable. There are parents saying, ‘Maybe we need to spend money over here, because the library has some computers and we have the digital laptops, so everything is solved.’ I agree with you that we need to engage there. I think that needs leadership from the very top of our education sector. I will be there engaging with the parents at the ground level. That is fundamental. I have been very fortunate in having principals that have supported the library and I recognise what we do in there. That will be fundamental as well. But, as well as that, we need to have people like this committee out there identifying—the government needs to identify—the critical importance that school libraries are going to play over the next 20 years.

CHAIR—Parents will often say, ‘I do not need to take my kids to the public library at night to do their assignments because they can now sit at their laptop and do it.’ What profoundly worries me is the level of knowledge of what that information is that they are accessing. I think Ms Hankinson referred to the original things about searching—

Ms Hankinson—The research shows an example of where students are given a bogus website, and I can remember in my own teaching experience using the velcro harvest statistics. There is a bogus website and a valid website and the students will always go to the bogus website because of the banner headline, because of the visual presentation and because it looks more persuasive. Teacher librarians work through those markers to look at, as I said before, the authority of it and the currency, and those are the sorts of skills that we can impart. I know you talked about the stereotype. I have spoken before about how people came out from those teacher librarian courses and changed their name to ‘information manager’. A lot of private schools have done that and have created a position of ‘director, information management’ or something like that. But the perception that you are still about books and that books are not as important is a whole argument in itself.

Ms Fogarty—Can I add a comment about professional learning and, again, funding. From a principal’s perspective I have had many a conversation with the P&C and with parents who find a real conflict in the notion that a P&C should fund the professional learning of teachers, let alone librarians, as one person in the community because they see it very much as a system responsibility, not a parent responsibility. Within those discussions, of course, as a principal, I put the perspective that, ‘What you are really doing is investing in the learning of your children’ and presented research on how the two connect. That is a problem and perhaps a cultural

problem with schools. The perception around libraries is, 'Let's go and fund something else because the library is all in place.' The library physically might be all in place but the learning, including the teacher librarian's learning—connecting with children—might not be in place and, yes, I feel it has been neglected.

CHAIR—Dr Jensen, did you have some questions?

Dr JENSEN—Mr Hagan, I think you said something today that was quite profound and cut to the nub of the issue. This was the fact that teacher librarians have contact with every student in the school. That is actually a very valuable insight because I think just about everyone around this table—and, indeed, probably everyone in this room—can point to individual teachers who may have inspired them with something or another. So it strikes me that it is critical that, if you have one teacher in the entire school who is inspirational, it should be in that teacher librarian capacity because of the fact that they do have contact with all the students. How do we go about ensuring that that person in that capacity is actually an inspirational person?

Mr Zappia asked a question earlier about there being an oversupply of teachers in primary schools but a lack of supply of teacher librarians. How do we turn that around so that the teacher librarian is in a position that people want to aspire to actually getting into? Do we need to have greater financial incentives? Do we need to, in terms of career development, have that position as a senior position so there is some executive say there almost from the word go, so that this is going to be a position that the very best of teachers are going to aspire to? I do think this is critical. If we are wanting to inspire our kids, we need to make sure that every kid has a good experience with at least one teacher or teacher librarian.

Mr Hagan—Yes to all of the things that you just mentioned. I would say this much: the term teacher librarian is true. It really is a teacher and a librarian. If it is the teacher librarian that does that inspiring, that is wonderful. However, there are a great many teachers who can bring that same level of inspiration to a child or children but, as I mentioned before, not necessarily touch every child. What do we do about getting the best people for that job? There are some significant issues with that. Firstly, a great many of our public schools across New South Wales are in the position of having fewer than 160 students. In fact, I believe probably about 600—perhaps even a little bit more—of our schools have below 160 students. In those schools you might be lucky to get a day a week as a librarian. In those circumstances it is highly unlikely that you are going to necessarily get that inspiring person that is going to lead the way at the school level, because that job holds only one day a week for that particular person. They may work in other capacities at that school at other times or share their role across a couple of schools. I think it is much easier when we are talking about a school such as Greenway Park, which is where I am at the moment, that has 800 students. We have 1.2 librarians—in other words, a full librarian and one who works one day a week. In a school such as that it would be easy because there is a person there all of the time that has a role to play in the school planning. Every teacher that has their children come and go from that library also has a say in the negotiation of what things become vitally important, such as acquisitions to the library for the grades that they work with. So the sentiment is excellent and we would very much appreciate further consideration. However, because of the discrepancy between the smaller schools which might have six or seven and the larger primary schools that may house 900 or more, there is not one solution for that.

Can I make the comment, though, that if I had my way—and this is a purely personal view—an excellent teacher to begin with, who could be a teacher librarian, being encouraged to take another role which is a leading learner within the school would be greatly appreciated. My experience with teacher librarians—I have been a principal in five different schools—has been that they have all been tremendously inspiring. However, there are others that have not had that experience because they have not had that opportunity in the school environment in which they find themselves. I think a lot of it is a product of the environment at that particular school and the way it is forced to be set up, because of some of those policies that we mentioned earlier.

Ms Hankinson—I would like to add to that by saying that librarians, as all teachers in the school, are assessed under the TARS process. That is a professional dialogue they have with their supervisor about their professional needs and their professional direction. They sometimes take on a mentoring role for the teacher librarian. That is a sort of professional conversation that they have in schools that enables them to improve, to constantly learn, and to assess their professional needs. They are also subject to the standards assessment of the quality teaching framework. Those are the sorts of standards they can have and use as a framework, if they like, for some sort of dialogue. Getting the best from teachers is investing in them—investing time and investing professional development—and teacher librarians are no exception to that.

Mr SYMON—I would briefly like to go back to the accuracy of digital information. It is one of my pet subjects, and I am glad that both your submissions have brought it up today. It is a really time-consuming task, I expect, to be able to teach students what they take for granted, whereas once upon a time the school library was the quality control, if you like. They brought in various books and they were then on the shelf of the library and students could go there and do research. But in some ways they had already been checked, whereas now the student grabs hold of the information and then it has to be checked afterwards. It happens with my own kids. They are in primary school and they are probably not up to that level yet. The first piece of information they see—as you mentioned before, Ms Hankinson—is generally the piece of information they use. I do not think that has really been explored enough in that we now have a different area from which kids and the general population can learn, but they do not necessarily know how to do it and how to get accurate information that can then be used to truthfully beyond that.

CHAIR—Just ask GPs about that.

Mr SYMON—I would like you to expand more upon what has to be done at a school level, or what is done now, in order to assist students going through a digital channel to get to the level of accuracy that they would have got from a textbook.

Ms Hankinson—I will throw to Jim, if that is okay. But there is just one little joke I heard the other day about cyberchondria, where you type your symptoms into the internet and it always comes out ‘cancer’. Bogus information is an issue.

Mr Richardson—It is so heartening to hear that understanding about that issue. I have subscribed my library to World Book Online encyclopedia as a counterbalance, in a way, to the Wikipedia issue. That quality control argument that you have put about us selecting our materials when it was print material is one that I put regularly to students when I am talking collaboratively and teaching in the library with teachers who have assignments. It is quite

heartening sometimes to later on hear the teachers using the same arguments with their classes. You overhear that sort of thing and think, 'The message is getting through.' One of the key thoughts that I have around this is that it is to do with that collaborative work between the teacher librarian and the teacher so that when you were hear a teacher saying, 'These are the problems with Wikipedia'—six months ago that teacher was not saying that—then you know you have had an effect and it is not just an effect on the class that you have taught; that teacher is now going out and spreading that sort of message.

CHAIR—Jim, can you indicate for us how much it costs you to subscribe to that, because one of the things we have got a lot of evidence on is that e-subscriptions are very prohibitive for schools.

Mr Richardson—I acknowledge straight up the National Library's program, which subsidises subscriptions. That is how we do that, and it is in the order of \$600.

CHAIR—Is that an annual subscription?

Mr Richardson—Yes, and it is dependent to a degree on the enrolment of the school. The National Library has that program in place along with a number of other online journals and I think that is something worth exploring. An argument we have had is that that sort of stuff should be resourced centrally wherever possible to reduce the pressure on school budgets.

CHAIR—I would imagine bulk buying or if you had a central purchasing process would get you some benefits.

Ms Hankinson—That is to be resisted in some areas. When a box of resources comes out to a school, it is centrally classified, and the problem with that is that one of the special skills of teacher librarians is that they select material that is suitable for their school community, that meets the curriculum needs and that is relevant to the school community rather than something that is centrally selected.

CHAIR—But there would be some common subscriptions.

Ms Hankinson—Procurement policies have had a certain chequered history.

CHAIR—I appreciate exactly what you are saying. Sorry to interrupt, Mr Symon.

Mr SYMON—That is all right, Chair, my next question was on procurement. I can understand why it is done centrally because the department would look at it to get cost savings. I do note in, I think, the submission from the Teachers Federation that it does not allow schools at the local level to take advantage of book sales or book fairs. We see it all the time. There are various places that want to offload materials from time to time which are cheaper than wholesale, and you lose that local opportunity. Is there a better way of having a system where we get the benefits of a discount at a central level and also have some flexibility to allow that to occur at your local school level?

Mr Richardson—I think that is to be explored. What is to be avoided is a completely centralised system. Where you have the capacity to leverage that purchasing power is great, but

you also need the capacity at the school level for the school to identify resources that will meet its particular needs. At Byron Bay High School we have a big demand for surf related books that might not apply somewhere else. So we need that type of flexibility. In connection with the digital selection of material I will reflect briefly on the fact that we have in place some fairly restrictive policies in terms of what students can access in our system at least. It is all filtered. Those decisions are not necessarily made at the local level or at the teacher librarian level and that is something to be explored further.

Mr Hagan—It relates to the acquisition of resources as well as procurement and so on. I think, from a primary school perspective, one of the beauties of school libraries is their potential uniqueness, that is, the matching of the particular need of that area or that particular community to resources. Equally there is an equity issue and I think uniqueness is great but there should be something. In our submission we say it would be great to see the students at Wombat Public School have similar access to those at Wahroonga. At this stage there must be some core resources that can be provided that would allow that equity but, equally, we want to keep the uniqueness of libraries. There would not be a similarity between libraries across the state. In other words you walk into one and you would find exactly the same as you would in another. I think that is something to be highly valued.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. It reflects the fact that we know that we have run out of time. We are very interested in the submission, so we are appreciative of all the work that you have put into it and of the opportunity to talk to you about these issues. I thank you for your attendance today. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. As Hansard may wish to check some details of your evidence, usually just proper names and so forth, could you check with the reporter before you leave that they do not have any questions of you. Once again thank you so much for your time and energy today. It was very useful to the committee.

[12.02 pm]

BECKETT, Ms Cherry Louise, Member, Central Coast Teacher Librarian Network

COOPER, Mrs Margaret Anne, President, Illawarra School Libraries Association

JEFFREY, Mrs Lidia Teresa, Teacher Librarian and Head Teacher Secondary Studies, Central Coast Teacher Librarian Network

MAYNE, Miss Janine Maree, Listserv Manager, Sutherland Shire Teacher Librarians Network

RIDLEY, Mrs Diane, Secondary Representative, Illawarra Schools Libraries Association

YATES, Ms Cecilie Anne, President, Sutherland Shire Teacher Librarians Network

CHAIR—I would now like to welcome representatives of the Central Coast Teacher Librarian Network, the Illawarra Schools Libraries Association and the Southerland Teacher Librarian Network to today's hearing. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses.

I hope you will forgive me if I say that your presentation here epitomises the point in some of the submissions about the gender domination of the industry, which is perhaps an explanation for some of the undervaluing of its work. We might explore that with you shortly.

Dr JENSEN—I am sure you will!

CHAIR—I absolutely will, having just finished the pay equity inquiry by another committee of the House. We have submissions from all of you and I thank you very much for that, first up. I will give each association the opportunity to highlight two or three things from your submission that you really passionately feel we need to hear the message about. You would appreciate that there have been some very common themes that appear in almost every submission we have received. Certainly, we have got the message and we will be exploring those. So if there is something that you feel is very specific to your submission or observations that you would like to highlight to us I think that would be very useful. Then we will go to a question and answer session.

Mrs Ridley—I wrote a little statement but I would just like to say thank you very much for inviting us to this inquiry. I think it is really important for the future of the profession in New South Wales particularly. I think many teacher librarians view this as an opportunity to rescue the professional from sure extinction.

I made some points and a summary of our submission. The teacher librarian is fully qualified to teach students in information, literacy and critical thinking skills, which are essential in our information age. A teacher librarian manages the whole of school resources effectively,

particularly in high school. Teacher librarians are increasingly being used within schools to catalogue text books, with a very old, DOS driven catalogue system.

The policies of New South Wales DET do not support the continuance of qualified teacher librarians in this state. The pilot scheme allows principals to cash in on teacher librarians. The choice of teacher librarian is easy for principals because we are not allocated a class as such—so we are an easy person to get rid off from a school. Teacher librarians are frequently used for RFF in primary schools and as a stopgap for timetable issues in high schools. That particularly affects high school teacher librarians in this state, increasing their timetable. There is little cooperative teaching within the school and therefore teacher librarians are undervalued in the school.

Funding for school libraries is not guaranteed by the state government but is at the mercy of individual principals. New South Wales DET displays a fundamental reluctance and/or inability to understand the role of teacher librarians in schools in this state. Principals rarely understand the role of teacher librarians in schools. Teacher librarians are not mentioned in the diploma of education course at our local university, the University of Wollongong.

Teacher librarians play an important role in seeking out new technologies and demonstrating the same to all school staff. This has a positive impact on the integration of ICT in the classroom and the use of the DER laptops.

Mrs Cooper—Having listened to the previous witnesses, I think that the teacher librarian's role in a school is the most misunderstood role in any education system. I do not think there is any principal or staff member who really understands what we actually do all day. The other really important thing is that, in primary schools, you may be in a school that has a teacher librarian for one day a week or for five days a week. There is no equity between schools because the appointment of teacher librarians is based on a number system. The real crux of the problem is that teacher librarians are being appointed to schools that do not have proper qualified training. They are not sure of their own role in the school. I think if anything should come out of this inquiry it is the need for a clear role statement of what a teacher librarian is and what roles they need to perform and for the opportunity to develop in that role.

Ms Yates—I will not reiterate what has already been said. Loftus Public School is a member of our network. It is part of the national devolution project. It has used its funding to not replace the teacher librarian for the two years of the pilot but rather for other innovative educational programs. That has caused a loss of angst in our society amongst P&Cs. I think parents in our area generally support teacher librarians and think they are important.

The other thing I want to bring to your attention is the staffing allocation for support students. In a primary school with a support unit or support class, they are not included in the allocation of the teacher librarian. So the teacher librarians in those schools just teach them in their own time; it is not allocated. And support students really should be allocated time.

CHAIR—For people who are not from this state, please explain the nature of support units.

Ms Yates—A support unit could, for instance, be for students who are emotionally disturbed, have a learning difficulty or have autism. In the Sutherland shire, at my own school we have a support unit, so we take those students in, but in the allocation of teacher librarian time in

primary schools those students are not entitled to have a teacher librarian lesson. In our area, all the teacher librarians still teach those students, but they are giving that time themselves. Surely, those students should be entitled to teacher librarian time.

Ms Beckett—We have prepared a short statement. There are three concerns that we would like to raise in particular. Firstly, students now have access to an overwhelming amount of information at the touch of a button and it is vital that they are taught the information literacy skills to navigate through this information to become critical thinkers with an emphasis on knowledge construction. The teacher librarian is pivotal to ensure these skills are embedded in all KLAs.

Another key concern for us is equity for all students. Many private schools have a team of teacher librarians, well-funded libraries and access to online databases. In many public schools teacher librarians' positions and roles are being challenged with some schools not having access to a trained teacher librarian and budget cuts which impact on collections and student access to optimum resources.

Finally, school principals hold a major key to the role and position of teacher librarians. The vision of the library as the hub of the school where the teacher librarian's practice and effectiveness is seen as a collaborative process of integrating information skills into KLA research tasks makes a difference to student outcomes. A principal's view of expediency in the use of the teacher librarian in subject timetables, providing release of teachers elsewhere, is damaging and short-sighted. All of these issues impact on student achievement.

CHAIR—Thank you. I am going to rebate a little anecdote to you and invite you to comment on it. I have had one media call since we announced the public hearing—one media call on this issue. It may interest you to know that it was not an education writer; it was an IT writer, and what he said to me was, 'So are you expecting this inquiry will find that with online information libraries have become redundant?' Now this is someone who is a journalist so one would presume that research, information analysis and so forth are the foundation of the profession. Yet his presumption was—as you were saying, Margaret—it is a very common misconception out there about what happening with new forms of information and access and utilisation, and the understanding of it. I got a great deal of excitement about it from all the submissions in terms of the capacity in our schools even when under-resourced and under-utilised, and I think we can look at those issues. But I do not think that we will win the battle if we do not first get to grips with an understanding in the modern community from working out why this is so important in the modern age. I would like your observations from your own school communities' experiences about whether you think teachers themselves are really able to come to terms with researching cut-and-paste plagiarism or the myriad of issues that come out of this sort of information. Are principals yet coming to an understanding of that and, more broadly, your communities? I am interested in your on-the-ground experience with this sort of stuff.

Mrs Ridley—This is a really big problem area, cut-and-paste plagiarism, and I would hate to think of children's assignments completed by cut and paste—

CHAIR—It was bad enough when you had to hide the magazines—

Mrs Ridley—It is a really big issue, because it is easy for them to do, and some of the kids are so blatant at it that they grab stuff from different places on the internet and they do not even fix up the font, so what they have done is blatant. I think that one of the fundamental issues is that the job of the teacher librarian, or part of the job, is teaching information skills. But that is not embedded in the syllabus, so where is the time allocation for that? You try to find time allocations within the high school and you find the faculties saying, 'I have got so much content to teach, what classes are you going to take from me to teach it?' So it is a game within high schools to get teachers into the library so you can teach that as assignments, and that is very difficult. So it is not something that all teachers naturally want to do, and teachers often say that they do not have time to do it because of the content of the high school syllabus. So you have a big quandary there in how you are going to teach all this and you try to get teachers to embed criteria within assignments for students.

Even our local university is having trouble with students. We have had sessions with Wollongong university over students not being able to find information. For first year assignments at that university, the majority of them cannot use the internet; they have to use databases or journals because of the lack of information skills coming out of schools. This comes from primary school to high school to TAFE to university.

We are not teaching critical thinking, and that is also an issue here. What are we going to do: teach to test or teach critical thinking? What kind of culture do we want this country to have? What kind of future do we want for our children? What kind of future do we want for this country in the area of globalisation? We are not just competing in this country; we are competing with the world. What kind of country do we want? All of those are fundamental questions that surround the issues with teacher librarians within schools. That might sound a bit odd, but it is all connected. I try to use that argument, but it is very difficult to convince people of that. So where do you start and where do you end?

You asked why people do not know about teacher librarians and where the will of the government is to take action when there has been no lobbying. I asked myself: do I want a government of leaders or do I want a government of followers? I do not think it is up to the profession to make ourselves known. I think it is up to the government to be strategic thinkers, forward thinkers, and for you guys to make up your mind. We voted for you to lead. We want you to lead; we do not want you to follow.

CHAIR—Thank you. I would say we want to get re-elected. That encompasses the dichotomy of the problem. I hope we are giving the opportunity for some discussion here. Janine, do you want to talk about your area.

Miss Mayne—If I may. You were asking about what we have seen in recent times. We are doing our job in terms of promoting ourselves and doing whatever we can to get into classes. I have been in the school I am in now for nearly 13 years and have seen considerable change, not only with the amount of information, especially digital information, that is available but also with teachers and their perception. Classroom teachers have extremely limited time. More and more of them, thank God, are coming to me for help in choosing websites. When I first got there, it was: go to a computer, get onto the internet and find information on the said topic. Now with a whole lot of other initiatives in the school and within our network group, based on the professional development training we try to include, teachers are designing tasks that require

students to use more critical thinking skills. We are trying very much to avoid that whole cut and paste situation. That is certainly something that has come through ASLA's professional development for teacher librarians as well as our local network groups. They all look at activities and ways we can help teachers design better assignments so that children can then learn—

CHAIR—So it is not just the research; you actually assist them to design the assignment to avoid the trap in the first place?

Miss Mayne—Absolutely. So it has gone from the blanket, 'Go to the internet and get such and such information.' Teachers are now spending a little more time either coming to me to getting help to do that or choosing particular sites they want students to get their information from because that is something they already know so they will recognise any cut and paste plagiarism. There are penalties for that. We also teach kids how to reference and cite. That is now becoming a more important part of the marking scale for particular research tasks. I hope that helps.

CHAIR—Yes, that is really useful.

Mrs Jeffrey—I would like to agree with everything that has been said, but I would also like to say there are increasing challenges in the digital age with computers and the Digital Education Revolution and the Laptops for Learning program. We put this in our submission. Often the computer labs are remote from the school library and year 9 and 10 students have their own laptops now so they can do research away from the school library. This can create a gap between the teacher librarian, the students and the teachers. We have a more difficult role in ensuring that information literacy skills and designing questions that require new construction of knowledge, instead of the low-order thinking skills of Bloom's taxonomy—where is Egypt and talk to me about the different levels of society there.

I am in a new school at the moment, so it is a different context. You have a harder job to reach the teachers. You have to reinvent yourself in how you are going to reach the teachers and ensure that information literacy skills embedded within the research task and the type of research tasks that are being set will construct that knowledge and will have all those things that we want to see in there. I am at a new school this year. We have new head teachers, so we are starting from the ground up. There is a science head teacher on his first appointment, and he has not been teaching for very long, but when I spoke to him about the sorts of research topics that his students were going to be doing—we were talking about book resources, online resources and what will meet the students' learning needs most—he said, 'I wouldn't get them to go to the library; I would do it all online.' I now have to reach him in a different way. So it is breaking down those barriers as well.

There are challenges associated with the digital world in that we have to reinvent ourselves and how we ensure that these things are within our school. That brings us back to whether we, as lone teachers in secondary schools, are the custodians of this huge, monumental task. I think I am going off the track here a little bit, but you asked what the culture is within each school that allows a teacher librarian to be marginalised and that allows a teacher librarian in secondary schools to be put on subject timetables to the detriment of teaching collaboratively. I think it is the isolation and marginalisation. I do not know about the other ladies' experience here, but who is the head teacher in charge of a teacher librarian in a school, how do they become an advocate

for the teacher librarian and do they know the teacher librarian's role? If the teacher librarian is subsumed by, say, the English head teacher, what do they see as the role? When the teacher librarian goes to those English faculty meetings, what is the agenda there? What role do they have?

CHAIR—Not to mention the message it sends to the science department.

Mrs Jeffrey—Yes. I look at this advocacy of the teacher librarian within the school because on your own you cannot do your job completely, being everything and doing all the information literacy across the school. One teacher librarian for 1,300 students and teachers who are overwhelmed by the need to deliver their content—and, again, as was raised before, the data of external tests drives some of the things that are happening in schools as well.

CHAIR—Okay. Margaret, did you want to make a comment?

Mrs Cooper—I want to tell a little story that might explain the difference between what we can do and what other teachers in the school can do. In our school, which is a primary school, we have a computer lab which all our children visit as part of the relief from face to face program. In my library I have just six computers which children can use for research. In the computer lab they are taught a proper program. They are taught all the basic technology skills to use computers, but they are only ever asked to cut and paste material when they are answering questions. So when they come to the library I always set a task where they cannot just answer a straight question. The children type that whole question in when they are doing a search and get huge numbers of responses. I can show them simply to put the key words in a phrase together to reduce the number of hits they get in a result. I have had teachers who are there with the children saying, 'Wow; I didn't know I could do that.' Even though teachers are using computers all the time, they do not know all the search skills either.

I was demonstrating another aspect of Google, called the Wonder Wheel. It makes a knowledge map of the search terms. When I showed this to children on the digital whiteboard, the teachers went, 'Wow; I didn't know you could do that.' This highlights that, even though they have had their classes for a long time, when they come to see us we can give them something useful. The other thing is that the few children that get to use the computer can come back after half an hour's research and have nothing written down on their piece of paper. The ones that have gone to the books or some other source may have a page of information. In primary schools, we do not in our library use the computer as the basis for everything. We believe that we need to teach the skills just in text form first and then relate that to digital information. But we still use both. Sometimes you have no choice, because the information you want is only on the internet, but there is a huge difference between the way classroom teachers use it and the way teacher librarians use it.

Ms Yates—I have been at Engadine High School for 12 years, so I have been there a long time. I have a vibrant principal. She believes in research. Our school does our own action research on learning. Over the years we have got over this idea, and our students do not cut and paste. Our teachers know how to write assignments. Everyone was so supportive of me to come here and say that they need me to teach the students digital literacy and to help them. Everyone is quite knowledgeable now in our school, but every year we get some new teachers. We have two new head teachers this year, so I am going to have to work hard with them. In our school we

are teaching about cyberbullying, using me a lot. But I do not have lunch any day. I do not have recess. I get to school early and I stay, most days, till five o'clock. So for me to have this sort of impetus in my school requires me to be really active and to really put so much energy in. A lot of people say, 'How do you do it?' so probably I do need more support.

CHAIR—I think somebody said earlier that you may be your own worst enemies in some ways.

Ms Yates—Yes. The other thing I would like to say is that I have a daughter who got something like 98 in the HSC and is doing advanced science. It is her first year. She is at Wollongong university. Over Easter, she had to do an assignment and she was crying and crying. I said, 'What's wrong?' She said, 'I can see the information there, but I can't get it. How do I get it?' I said, 'Lucky you've got a teacher librarian for a mother,' and it took me 15 minutes to show her how to access that information. I do that at my school with all our seniors. I show them how to use databases. I would like the school to get databases, but I make all my senior students join up to their local library and then I teach them how to use the free online databases through the local library. But I know the private schools in our area actually have access to those in their school.

Dr JENSEN—Are things getting better or worse for teacher librarians and in the teacher librarian area more generally? Secondly, if you could do one thing to improve things in the teacher librarian area, what would it be?

Ms Beckett—Certainly within our network there is concern about the fact that a lot of secondary teacher librarians are being used to cover classes for teachers, and they have been given timetable classes. That is definitely a step backwards as far as the role of the teacher librarian is concerned. I am actually very lucky in my school—I have a very supportive principal—but in some schools, if I am at another class covering a lesson for a teacher, I am not able to be in the library working with the class that is in there or helping the senior students that need help looking for some resources et cetera. That is something that is certainly worse within the profession.

Is there something I could do to change it? I would like to ensure that all schools have a well-funded library with access to extensive databases, for example. The gentleman in the session before said something about \$600. World Book online costs \$1,100, I think, if you buy it yourself. For ProQuest or JSTOR, which I would love to have at my school—we are a selective high school and we have some very intelligent and capable students that could use those—we are looking at \$3,000-plus for each one. In some schools, that would be a third of their budget. So, if I could change anything to put us in a better position to help our students, that would be one of the areas that would be my concern.

Mrs Jeffrey—There are just so many things that I would say would make it better. I think that within a school a teacher librarian needs to have an advocate. If I look at what drives an English faculty or a science faculty to improvement, it is the head teacher in charge ensuring that the program is carried through and that the targets are met, and it is within the hierarchical structure. I am a head teacher as well as a teacher librarian—not very many people go that way, for lots of different reasons—and so, for example, in my previous school I could become a very strong advocate for teacher librarians, our role and what we do. But I know that, in a lot of schools in

our network, a lot of teacher librarians do not have that person who is pursuing what their role is, becoming their advocate at an executive level and supporting them in the fulfilment of their role's statement. This is something that needs attention. It is left to the vagaries of principals or leaders, and to an extent that then can fall back on the teacher librarian. This sounds a bit negative but you can be as good a teacher librarian as you want to, you can be a mediocre one or you can do little, because who is the person who cares for you and supports you and nurtures you and mentors you in that capacity?

CHAIR—Or challenges you?

Mrs Jeffrey—Yes, all of those sorts of things, so you become lost in the system. So many teacher librarians can lose that focus because the days are so busy with so many demands. This is one area where I think there needs to be improvement. How you would go about it in the competing demands of schools and all the business that attends to schools is an issue. A teacher librarian can become their own advocate, but it is a big job. You are working on your own, with everyone else. This is an area that I think can be improved.

Are things getting better or worse? I think our job is becoming more complex and more demanding. I do not know what other people's experiences are but in high schools there is the raised leaving age, to 17, and there are more senior students using the library in free study periods. Depending on your clientele, the sort of school and the context of your school, this can become a really demanding disciplinary thing, constantly with students not on task, with students told to go to the library because they are in a free period but they do not want to be there in the world of the library. The culture you want to develop in the library challenges those students and it becomes a sort of conflict, instead of the nurturing culture of learning that you want to establish in the library. I look at these sorts of things as creating new challenges and making our job much, much harder.

There seems to be a new wave of principals who are making our jobs more difficult, in that they want teacher librarians to have classes. I will give an example from my school last year. I was on leave for an extended period of time and another teacher librarian took my job. We had planned literature circles as collaborative programs in years 7 and 8, and one teacher had to abandon hers because the teacher librarian taking my place was taking extras and so she could not fulfil the program that was there. These are the challenges. The raised leaving age makes it harder. The digital world is making it harder, there are lots of demands and different ways you have to do things. I have forgotten what the third thing was.

CHAIR—The management priorities.

Mrs Jeffrey—Yes.

CHAIR—Okay. Cecilie?

Ms Yates—I think the role of the teacher librarian will always change as teachers change. It is always exciting and challenging. From the Australian viewpoint it is probably worse in the fact that lots of teacher librarians have been eradicated in some states, I would say.

CHAIR—Their positions, I hope!

Ms Yates—Yes, their positions; hopefully not the people! Their positions have been eradicated and they have had to teach something else. It is always going to change and it is always going to be an interesting job.

Dr JENSEN—What would you do to make it better?

Ms Yates—I think equity is one, that enough money is given even if there is a base rate. Some primary school librarians or even high school librarians get very small amounts of money but they still make do. Equity.

Miss Mayne—Better or worse: I would not say it is worse for me but overwhelmingly what I am hearing from other teacher librarians in our network is that it is getting worse for them, and most of them are primary school teacher librarians. What would I do? I would put a full-time teacher librarian in every single primary school and in every single high school. I understand there are repercussions of funding and all sorts of things for that. With that, however, the training and support, the mentoring, as has already been mentioned, to go with that so that the teacher librarian is seen as supporting primarily the students because they are our core clients, they are the people we need to build for our nation's future, but also for our teachers. I think teachers are increasingly overworked and under stress and having more and more external pressures put upon them, more and more expectations from the community for what should happen in schools, taking over the roles of parents in lots of situations. So teacher librarians possibly not on a timetable class but there with their expertise in both literature and literacy and information digital literacy training they can give.

Mrs Cooper—I would like to echo a lot of the sentiments that have already been raised. They have mentioned the lot of things that I think are important. I myself still think that being a teacher librarian is an exciting job, that it is changing, that it is challenging but challenging in a good way, that I am still learning. I have been a teacher librarian for nearly 20 years but I am learning things. I learnt something last week and I am still learning. That is what I want our children to do, to be lifelong learners. In a primary school I think one of our biggest tasks is to actually hook kids onto reading. Even though it is a digital age, the younger children need to be hooked onto reading. It is only through reading that you become learners. So I think we have to play an important role in actually hooking these digital kids into text. It does not matter whether it is an e-book or a real book but it needs to be a book and a story. I think that is really important. On the other hand, I think that in the system a lot of teacher librarians are looking very gloomily at what is going to happen in the future. They are not positive about the future of our profession. If there is one thing I could change, I would like to take a role in educating principals in what we can do for their children. I would also like to have more time in my day to actually spend with kids to excite them about reading.

Mrs Ridley—I would like to comment on whether we are worse off or not. I have been in the schools as a teacher librarian for probably a lot less time than a lot of people. This is my second or third career. How I see this is from a very short background, I suppose, but the issues I see, and this has been on the teacher librarians' Listserve and a few of the issues that come up in secondary schools time and time are that secondary teacher librarians are put on the timetable because the principals are being pressured to produce in the school, so they need to give time to the IT people in the school because high schools are not allocated any time to look after their servers and general IT, plus high schools have to compete with each other for pupils basically.

So to increase the elective subjects in years 11 and 12 the teacher librarian is an ideal person to put on a timetable to alleviate those timetable issues. They are fundamental issues within high schools that principals have to look at day to day, and because the teacher librarian is above establishment in New South Wales it makes us really easy game and a really easy way out for principals to basically compete for students and to deliver within their school community.

The other thing I see as important, and this is actually for the government as well, is that I would like the government to look at us as assets and not a cost. I think that is a fundamental change in the way governments think about things around them, to stop thinking about the things around them as a cost. We are assets to the education system, we are assets to the school and we are assets to the future of our children. Those are the things I would like to change.

Mr ZAPPIA—I have one question which picks up on a theme which has been referred to by a number of presenters today—that is, the question of principals. How do we get principals to better understand the role of teacher librarians?

CHAIR—Particularly given that there is the development of new national leadership descriptors around school leadership. You might have some ideas about what might be missing out of those descriptors. Some of you have executive positions. You may have some idea.

Ms Yates—I can only say that, from a personal point of view, I have a principal who is keen to be at the top of research and is keen to work with me. Therefore we work together and we develop together.

CHAIR—Is it unfair to ask you whether you have any insight as to why that principal is that way?

Ms Yates—She is a young female principal who is very keen about educational outcomes for our school and for our students.

CHAIR—So she is keen to drive reform in the school?

Ms Yates—Yes. Principals in general meet and have conferences. There is no reason why we should not be going to those more frequently and talking to them. That is another thing. Also, if there was equity in staffing for teacher librarians, principals could not say ‘Okay, I might be able to trade you off and get someone else.’ So within the framework of the time they have they could work together. At the moment in New South Wales, for a lot of teacher librarians there is not an equity of hours or allocation.

Mrs Cooper—This is something I feel very strongly about personally. Our association is meeting with our regional director next week to request a session at the principal meeting groups to give a profile of what we do in our schools and to let them know what sort of job a teacher librarian should be doing or could be doing given the circumstances they are in. To me that seems like a very small step in starting to get principals as our advocates. Unless they are our advocates, we are not going to have the impact in our schools that we hope to.

Mrs Jeffrey—It is like a double-edged thing here with the principals. What is a principal’s vision and why is that vision breaking down? Teacher librarians need to show the principal what

they can do in their program, how they deliver it and where they are making a difference. So if we start with year 7, we say that we have collaborative research units of work and we must become our own advocates. To some it might be a bit difficult but we have to show that this is what we do, this is how we do it and this is the difference we are making. The principal needs to be shown by the teacher librarian. This breaks down in various schools for lots of different reasons. You have to become your own advocate and show where you make a difference. And it is not only about information skills

Literature is vitally important. Literacy begins with reading and then reading becomes a love of literature with the critical literacies—reading between the lines and so many different things. A teacher librarian has to become their own advocate and show that they are making a difference, and says to the principal: ‘This is my plan. This is my vision for the library. This is how I am going to do it.’ So it is two-edged thing.

CHAIR—I suppose the evidence of why books and the traditional love of literature are important is that they have had to design e-books to look like books still in order to convince people to use them. So I think you are winning the battle to some extent still on that.

We are dealing with are a number of layers in this issue. First of all, it is an issue? Do people think we should be addressing this? What are the problems we are trying to address? If it is an issue and we do value this, then what are we doing about resourcing? Sometimes direct evidence from what is happening in regions and communities tells the story so effectively. I think that is what you have done for us to day. It has been really valuable information and we appreciate it.

I want to thank all of you for coming along and participating today. If you have been asked to provide additional material you, can forward it to the secretary.

Proceedings suspended from 12.46 pm to 1.22 pm

ARMSTRONG, Mrs Kate, Secretary, Catholic Primary Teachers Librarians Association

PREDDEY, Mrs Virginia Maree, President, Catholic Primary Teacher Librarians Association

GLEESON, Ms Libby, Former Chair, Australian Society of Authors

LOUKAKIS, Mr Angelo, Executive Director, Australian Society of Authors

McGUINNESS, Mrs Sharon, Member, The Hub: Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia

PHILLIPS, Mrs Georgia, Co-Founder, The Hub: Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives of the Hub: Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia, the Australian Society of Authors and the Catholic Primary Teachers Librarians Association to today's hearing. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, these proceedings are legal proceedings of the parliament and therefore have the same standing as proceedings before the House.

We might start with the first submission we have, which is the submission from the Hub. Committee members are generally very interested in asking questions, so we ask you to keep your presentations to about five minutes on the key issues of your submission that you want to draw to our attention. I assure you the committee members will all want to ask questions of you. It is useful to get as much of that dialogue going as possible. I do not know about other committees, but this committee is assiduous in reading submissions, and they all have their little pen marks and things all over your submissions already. I invite you to make an opening statement, highlighting the issues that you want draw to our attention before we move to a good session of discussion.

Mrs Phillips—First of all I would like to thank Sharon Bird in particular for facilitating this inquiry and I would like to thank you all for participating in it. It is long overdue. Twelve years ago I was writing about the same things that I am writing about now. I attached an article to my submission. It has not changed much. You may notice that I have an American accent. I came over in 1972 when they were trying to find a few teachers to fill the gaps. That is interesting. We may get back to that situation again.

Leonie Paatsch from The Hub is also here, sitting in the back with her kids. Peter McGuinness is also here from The Hub. He is short-listed for Non-Fiction Book of the Year, by the way. Leonie said to start with a joke. I do not have a joke; I have a quick anecdote. Years ago I worked for the online reference service of the American Association of School Librarians called Kids Connect. You answer their questions online. This was typical of what you get: 'Can someone please tell me where Einstein's brain is and what it's doing there?' or 'Are there any volunteers to help Mom with her bad roof and plumbing in Maryland? We used our savings to

buy me a computer.' Those are the sorts of questions that teacher librarians deal with all the time, getting them from either kids or staff.

Regarding my own history, I was lucky enough to come in 1972 when it all started to happen. I gave you a brief summary of the Commonwealth grants and programs that started off school libraries in Australia. It has made Australia a model for other countries: Canada, America, the UK and Europe. They look at what has happened in Australian school libraries. And now in the last bastion, New South Wales, they are seen as a model. I had the honour of working with Joyce Fardell. I want to name her in particular because she was a mentor. For 20 years she was the head of the School Library Service. She is the reason we have qualified teacher librarians in New South Wales schools. She was formative in getting the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education to have a one-year course to train teacher librarians and getting the department to staff schools with teacher librarians. I wish that we could have a prize in her honour. I am doing this partially for Joyce. I worked with her at the School Library Service for three years.

The other reason that we started this campaign in 2007—Leonie and I initially—was that at Charles Sturt I am an adjunct lecturer. I have worked as a lecturer and marked and coordinated courses and so on. The teachers who are doing the course are doing a masters level course, so they are teachers first and they are getting their library qualifications second. Many of them are from New South Wales and are sponsored by the department of education, which is another plus for this state. They submit papers for one of the subjects which requires them to discuss the obstacles in formulating and developing an information-literate school community. That is probably not a term many outside of the profession have heard of, but it has to do with everybody in a school community working together to make sure they have the skills to find and use information, to critically think about information and to learn and create new knowledge. That is what teacher librarians are really interested in. They are interested in learning across all subjects. That is why we love our jobs. We are interested in getting kids to read great books that are produced in Australia and other places. We are interested in all sorts of literacies.

If the Commonwealth government is going to put an emphasis on literacy, it has to have trained teacher librarians in schools to support teachers, to work with the literacies and to make sure that students are reading and loving reading, and then applying that reading to the computer laptops they are getting. They will not be able to learn from a screen. Kids do not read well from a screen. You will talk to Barbara Combes. I hope her work, her PhD, will be out there in front of you. I hope she has submitted some of it. Are the same people going to be there? Will it be different committee members?

CHAIR—It will be the same base but there are a couple who could not make it today, so there will be some extras.

Mrs Phillips—I am sure she will talk about her work with digital literacy. I have seen other examples where teachers have gotten kids to evaluate information off a screen and they cannot do it. They cannot decide if it is true or not. They want to just read the graphics. They do not want to read the actual words. Of course we can talk about picture books and literacy—and I am sure we will—with kids learning to read.

Besides coming here for The Hub, a group of 16 of us, we represent 2,239, as of this morning, signatories to our petition that I brought to you last year with 1,800 signatures on it. It is 100

more than I said on the submission, as of this morning. If you go through their comments—and it is a lot to go through—they are from parents, from people who are trying to run libraries and who have no qualifications, from teachers, from authors and from teacher librarians, of course. They talk about the need to have qualified teacher librarians working with teachers in schools and, because of what happened back in the nineties with school based management and giving principals autonomy and less money to staff, teacher librarians have been lost. Volunteers are trying to run libraries. You may have seen some of their words in the *Melbourne Age* article on Sunday about their frustration.

All those petitioners and their comments we bring to you and we ask you, in your report, to address the situation of the shortage of teacher librarians and the fact that we now only have three courses instead of the 15 we had to train teacher librarians, and to address the abysmal funding of school library resources. Quality teaching depends on quality resources. You may think teachers get up there with their chalk but they do not any more. They engage kids with information in all of its forms, not just digital—DVDs, CD-ROMs, learning objects on the net or whatever. They engage kids and they need those quality resources and teacher librarians who understand the curriculum, who have taught themselves, who understand student learning outcomes and who are the ones selecting resources. I just marked papers for that subject. They can be digital and they can be print—all sorts of resources to support quality teaching and quality learning.

Sharon will go on with some of the other recommendations that we will emphasise. I want to say to this committee: I hope that you can develop a vision for all of the educators in this country and hope that you can give some leadership and develop the leadership that we need since we have lost it in losing the tertiary institutions. We have lost that leadership in the school departments of education library services. We only have three of those left out of all the states. That leadership has to come from somewhere. We hope that you can develop it. I did want to mention the overseas witnesses and the questions you could ask them, but perhaps I will not.

CHAIR—We will explore opportunities and perhaps talk to them via technology.

Mrs Phillips—Hopefully, yes.

Mrs McGuinness—I am a teacher librarian from Wollongong. Like many other teacher librarians I hold dual professional qualifications in teaching and librarianship. I am from a primary school. I have had varied experiences. I have also worked in public libraries for a number of years. I have taught a library and information studies course at TAFE and I have worked in public schools for the last seven years. I was also fortunate to receive a New South Wales quality teaching award in 2008. I am extremely passionate about teacher librarianship and the students that I teach. I believe we really do make a difference to students' learning and their academic achievement.

As a primary TL—I will use that little abbreviation—I teach every student in the school every week. I know each child by name. I track their progress each year. I can tell you what they like to read and at what level. Together we really do explore the whole curriculum because, as a qualified primary teacher I am not limited to just one subject, although I regard literature and information literacy as my specialities.

I am really lucky to work in New South Wales and not another state where a primary teacher librarian may be rare or non-existent. We are constantly hearing about the importance of literacy in a child's early years, yet many primary schools do not have a qualified teacher librarian who is both an information literacy specialist and a literature link.

I believe that we can really lay the foundations by teaching reading for enjoyment and information plus, increasingly, digital literacy. We are often, also, a link between innovations in technology and the staff and students in our schools. I always believe that teacher librarians are pretty adept at practicing what they teach. We are pretty self-directed and we take responsibility for our own professional development. We are experts in networking. We not only keep abreast of innovations in technology but we have embraced it.

By teaching collaboratively with classroom teachers—and this is a real bonus for New South Wales—a teacher librarian shares their knowledge and expertise. My greatest compliment came from one of my colleagues at the school at which I work earlier in the year, when they stated to our principal that working with me was part of their ongoing professional development.

The resourcing of school libraries across Australia—in both government and independent schools—is very ad hoc. Many school libraries have budgets of between zero and approximately \$5,000. Yet it has been proved, both here and overseas, that a well resourced school library does make a difference to student achievement. Despite our skills, our expertise and our ability to remain relevant in a changing world, our numbers are falling as principals and education departments elect to use teacher librarians in the classroom, employ a cheaper alternative in the library and simply remain ignorant of our real value. In New South Wales we are fearful of this occurring more often as our numbers decrease due to retirement. Our principals are forced to do more with less and there are simply not enough teacher librarian training places in universities to take our place.

The federal government is building new libraries in primary schools across Australia, which we certainly appreciate—I am one of the beneficiaries of that; I am very much looking forward to it—but in several states there may not be a teacher librarian to manage or teach within that new library. An empty building will not make a difference to student achievement but a qualified teacher librarian will, in a library which is well resourced, in a school which encourages an information literate school community.

In closing, we at the Hub made 24 recommendations in the submission, but we have honed in on five. We would like to see more data on school library budgets and staffing, tied school funding to allow for the adequate resourcing of all school libraries, legislation to ensure the appointment of teacher librarians in all states, an increase in the number of teacher librarian training positions in universities, and a national curriculum to recognise the essential skills of information literacy and the role of the teacher librarian in student academic achievement.

Mr Loukakis—Maybe I could begin by repeating the opening paragraph of our submission to give you some context for what we have to say. The Australian Society of Authors is the principal advocate for and guardian of the professional and artistic interests of Australia's authors. Our role is to protect basic rights to freedom of expression, work to improve income and conditions, and promote Australian writing and literary culture. Towards these ends, our interests in the health of Australia's school libraries and their roles within education systems is

fundamental. Australia needs the words and works of its authors to be both held in and taught in the nation's schools. This is not happening nearly enough or well enough. As the key information site in schools, libraries are under-resourced in material and in human terms.

We are very concerned with what can perhaps be pulled together as the Australian story—getting it written and getting it read. Questions arise such as ‘Where?’, ‘By whom?’ and ‘When?’ There are many dimensions to the answer to ‘Where?’ Obviously in the broader culture, in the public library systems and commercially, books are available—there are different means by which the nation's culture can be accessed. But it must and has to start in schools. It cannot just be schools, but that is certainly the best place to begin to locate and support the effort of telling the Australian story. So what is the effort needed to get the Australian story understood at school level? Literacy, reading, and the practice of it—in small, perhaps halting, ways as children might do, but the practice of it nevertheless—with an emphasis on Australian works of fiction, nonfiction and history. It is critical that these works are written and read eventually.

We are keen on a national curriculum. We are looking for structures—physical, as in buildings, but also systems, like educational systems—pedagogical inputs and coordination that allows for the telling, the reinforcement and the spreading of the Australian story. These things need serious resourcing, particularly in teacher librarian training and in teacher training generally. It is in that context that we felt we could and should support the work of The Hub and others who are involved more particularly in school libraries.

We would like to see teacher librarians as having some charge of, some role in, the national curriculum as it unfolds. We would like to see links and integration. Libraries as much as schools are the central sites for education and therefore the health of the culture over the time.

Google is not the answer to declining resources in schools or anywhere else. It is not even a pale replacement for the serious organisation of knowledge that librarians and libraries do. Google is actually only a subfunction, at best, of real digital literacy. School libraries are, in the end, the last place before you enter the adult world where Australian books—our literary, scientific and cultural heritage—are free. It may not be the only place or the last place, but it is a powerful message for the young that things that truly matter may also be made available early and to everyone regardless of their situation, status and position in life.

CHAIR—Thank you, Angelo. Did you want to add anything, Libby?

Ms Gleeson—I would like to, if I may, just add a couple of things. First of all, I welcome the opportunity to be able to come and speak with you. And, like both Angelo and Georgia, I think this is an inquiry that is well overdue. I guess I am probably the only person in the room who writes material which sits in probably every school library in the country. As a result of that, I am like other members of the Australian Society of Authors in that I am a regular visitor to school libraries—not as a teacher librarian but as an observer, as a parent, as a citizen—and I am absolutely appalled at the inequity. I can go into one school—a small school in the bush—and discover that there is no teacher librarian. This might be outside New South Wales, I add. I can discover that it is very poorly resourced. Then I might go into an incredibly well-resourced private college in Sydney or Melbourne or somewhere like that where there is a genuine appreciation of the role of the library and the librarians and, as a result, there might be two or

more teacher librarians there. I do not begrudge them that. I just wish we all had it, in every school in the country.

As a result of my own passion about school libraries, because I see the difference that teacher librarians can make, I have become, first of all, a director of the Public Education Foundation, which has made a submission to you. But I am also the chair of an embryonic children's literature centre in Western Sydney because we realise that the children in that vast demographic in Western Sydney, as in Melbourne, have a real problem with literacy. There are huge populations of Indigenous kids, refugee children and socially disadvantaged kids. And we realise that the value of learning to read is fundamental.

As I am quite sure you are aware—you have seen the research—there is no argument that the way to get children into a high level of literacy is the voluntary reading and the regular encouragement for kids to be swamped with books. And it does not matter how much one wants to turn the whole thing digital, it just is not practical at this stage—although information literacy and the developing digital culture is certainly there. And we, as writers, welcome it, too; it offers us opportunities. But we are not going to see a library devoid of books for quite some time yet. And, as a creator of children's picture books, I actually do not think you are going to see one completely devoid of those kinds of books, if at all.

Angelo has mentioned the national curriculum. I was delighted to see that, in the draft of the English curriculum, literature has a major place. The only person in the average school who is really up, as far as purchasing and disseminating works of quality literature, is the teacher librarian. It is the quality text which we need, and they are the people who understand and who know it. So my recommendation to this committee and to the current government would be to mandate, in every school in the country, a qualified teacher librarian and a well-resourced library.

CHAIR—Thanks, Libby. And, last but not least—we are just going through in the order that they are in—we have the Catholic Primary Teacher Librarians Association.

Mrs Preddey—Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. These have been hard acts to follow! Probably how I can make my discussion a little different is firstly just to say that I absolutely love my job. I am one of the luckiest people. I have the ideal role in that I am passionate about my job; I love going to work; I am respected; I am revered by the children. And—and this is similar to what Sharon was saying—we are in the unique situation where, if we are in a school that supports our role, we do have this wonderful relationship with every student in the school and the teachers, and we are needed—if we are in an ideal situation. But I am here today to represent the state Catholic schools, and of course there are varying degrees of the job situation and the role. I am, as I said, one of the fortunate ones. There are many who have a similar story to me, but there are many of our libraries that are being resourced by assistants—by staff who are less expensive, if you like, than we are. And we have even looked at the statistics for our diocese, the Wollongong diocese, where we have only a third of our libraries with teacher librarians in them.

My story differs a bit from Sharon's in that I do not have dual qualifications at the moment. I have a degree, and I started my master's degree about eight or 10 years ago but I deferred halfway through. In the old system I could have had a graduate diploma with that but I deferred

because of the climate I was experiencing. I would go to network meetings. I would talk to colleagues who were more experienced than I, and there was this underlying discussion that our role would be eradicated. I thought: 'Why would I continue with a study course? I have four children. It is affecting my time, and there is the expense of it if I am not going to have a job at the end of it.' Hopefully, if this inquiry has a positive outcome, more of us will feel that we can continue with our studying and looking to see whether there are more opportunities to study online.

I was here to listen a little earlier and something that has not been brought up here today, apart from the digital age and the lovely literature situations we can offer our children, is the idea of the library being a safe haven. If there had been more time I would have loved to bring you a DVD today. I would have loved to film the children in my library and the libraries of some of my colleagues, not just during the course of their library lessons, per se, but during lunch times, when my library doors are always open. I sometimes have at least a third of the school in the library at lunch time. I come from a two-stream school which has 420 children. The lunch time atmosphere is almost as important to me as the structured lessons that go on. You can go to any space in my library. I have lounges. The children are there immersed in their reading. They are socialising with children from other grades. They are feeling safe. There are lots of activities for them to engage in. That is something that I have not heard brought up very much today.

There are also all the other activities that go on, not just the lessons. There are wonderful author visits. We had the pleasure of having Libby at our school. There is excitement that surrounds such an event. We have book parades. Last year I dressed as lion, with my face painted, and celebrated reading and literature with the children. It has become very much an institution. I am from Bowral, a country type of town, and the wonderful learning situations that go on outside structured lessons is very much talked about. I know that I am not alone in that. There are many other things that we can offer our students.

We can only repeat what representatives of the Hub have said. We feel the same way. We would love to have more opportunities for study. We see inequity in funding in our own diocese. Really, a lot of that comes down to the principals and their budgeting. A lot of them are ignorant, perhaps—I do not mean to be harsh in saying that—about the investment they can make by having such a qualified person in their school and by having these resources for their students. They are putting their resources into other areas of technology or new toilet blocks. Obviously they are things that we need but they need to look at the bigger picture and the investment they are making in the students of the future. Certainly primary schools are the foundation of lifelong learners, so the bigger picture really needs to be looked at. Thank you.

Mrs Armstrong—I am from St Paul's Primary School at Moss Vale. I want to add that, in our role, I think we really are the centre of the school. We relate to and work with the teachers and we relate to the children every day they are in our lessons. I think that gives us the position to understand the whole school community. Because we sit where we do as teacher librarians we can see the development of children from kindergarten right through to year 6. We can work with information literacy. We understand the curriculum and the topics being taught in the classroom so we have a really good picture of the school. I think not having a resource like us in the school to show that balanced and broader view of what is going on would be such a disadvantage. Our role is so diverse, and Virginia elaborated on a lot of the different things we do in our role. I have yet to meet in our group a teacher librarian who is not passionate about

what they do. Bringing that individuality to our role is also a plus. We can be the lion at the parade but we can also relate to the children in what we do, what we say and what we teach. I think it is great to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of teacher librarians. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thanks, everybody. As you would appreciate, the idea of these sessions is to tease out particular things from submissions that the committee members are interested in exploring a bit more. I just want to follow up on one issue. I do not know if it is so much the case in high schools—I suspect it is—but particularly in the experience of primary school teacher librarians, as many of you have commented, they actually know all the students, they engage with all the students. Are there formal mechanisms in place? When most parents think about the school, the first thing they think of is their child's classroom teacher. When they are worried or concerned about or engaged with their child's education, that is the first thing they think of—and probably quite rightly too, at the end of the day. But I can never remember being invited to talk to the school librarian about my children's progress or to hear back from them on their observations about my children's progress. Does that occur at all? Are there any examples? Do you think it should be part of the process, so that parents also understand the important role you play in the school's life?

Mrs McGuinness—I can speak to that a little. You are exactly right. That does not happen. It is an ad hoc thing where a teacher librarian may report on the progress of their students. I do. We send reports home to parents twice a year. I have an area called information literacy. It is not just about the borrowing of books. For our kindergarten students it is, because that is all they do—we encourage a love of reading with them. But for students from stage 1 up, which is year 1, I actually assess them on the tasks that we work on each semester, and there is a comment. Parents are always encouraged to come and see me, which they do. I see them in the playground or at cross-country or wherever we are. The parents always speak to me and I will talk to them. There have been occasions when they have raised an issue. I also award prizes at the end of the year, the same as all the other classroom teachers do. I see my role and position as being on the same level as those of the classroom teacher, or not exactly the same, because—

CHAIR—It is comparative.

Mrs McGuinness—Yes. But that is something that I have pushed myself, because I see our role as so intrinsically important. I am lucky I have the teachers' and the principal's support, in that they believe that the children should be assessed on what we do in our library sessions.

CHAIR—Is that a common experience?

Mrs McGuinness—I do not think so.

Mrs Preddey—You are quite right in what you said. In my situation, I do not even have the opportunity to contribute to the school report. Where I do have a lot of connection with parents is at both ends of the spectrum: with the children who are gifted and talented—the parents might come and see me with regard to extending their literature or what they are doing in class—and the special needs children. I offer a service where I can put books on audio, on iPods, for children to follow visually in a book. In those situations, I do get to engage with the parents, but it is not a formal situation, no. You are quite right.

Mr Loukakis—Teachers teach to texts, but librarians can inspire a love of books. It is not the same thing.

CHAIR—We did observe in an earlier session that even the new technologies—as in iBooks that are coming out—have had to be designed to look like books, because people still want to hold a book and have that experience.

Mr Loukakis—We have been wired to and for books for a thousand years.

CHAIR—Exactly. When you lie on the pillow, it has to be able to be held quite comfortably.

Ms Gleeson—We are talking quite a lot about literature. Children’s literature is one of the last areas to go digital, in the sense that there is a lot more money to be made at this stage from people who purchase their own titles, and the publishing industry is not yet set up for mass production of quality texts in digital form, although I have no doubt it will happen.

Mrs Armstrong—Regarding reporting, I am in a similar position to Sharon. It is a CEO structure so we are not in a position to change what is specified on the report. Where it is e-reporting I do not make a comment as a librarian, but when I am looking at how the children make the best use of the library as a resource I am in a position to make a comment, and that is something that I have advocated for my role in the school. So it can be done.

CHAIR—It is interesting, because some earlier evidence gave an example where a teacher librarian was told that they did not get a promotional position because the teaching of a teacher librarian did not equate to the teaching of a classroom teacher, so I was just wondering—

Mrs McGuinness—Unfortunately that view can be transmitted by the principal. If you have a principal with the attitude that the teacher librarian has that role and that what they teach is important then you are more likely to be able to report on them.

Mr Loukakis—I can give you an example of one teacher librarian who actually created a writer, and that was a teacher librarian in my own high school years who pointed me in certain directions. There was a space where I could sit in a corner and begin to write, and I actually began writing in the school library, because somebody said, ‘Have you read Hal Porter; have you read Martin Boyd or Hemingway?’ None of them were on the school curriculum. So I listened to Mr Buckley—I do not even remember his first name; it might have been Ken or Keith—and he certainly inspired this person to write.

Dr JENSEN—What I detect here is an awful lot of passion for your career. The problem that we have is that that is not obviously something that is known in the outside community. We have had evidence that, despite the fact that there are adequate numbers of teachers in primary schools, there are inadequate numbers of teacher librarians. How do we get more of the teachers to become teacher librarians? What changes to career structures do you see as being essential to attract people into those teacher librarian positions?

Mrs Gleeson—I will speak first and then leave it to those in the profession to add to. I think my final statement sums it up in that I think that if you can mandate other aspects of educating a culture in a community you can mandate the presence of a teacher librarian. You can

acknowledge the research, which is overwhelmingly positive, and I believe that this is something the federal government has to take some leadership on and give resourcing to and so on. The inequity from, say, schools in the Northern Territory through to the private colleges of Sydney and Melbourne is unbelievable, and the fact that the community is ignorant of it is not the point. The point is that someone has to take leadership and do something about it.

Mr Loukakis—You can mandate and you can also remind that the libraries are part of something far bigger. I do not know whether anyone has spoken about the public library system to date but the school libraries can be argued as being satellites of a larger system with a very strong public role. Who would want to reduce or destroy the public library system? For similar reasons you would not want to reduce, destroy or compromise the school library system. People can be reminded that this is part of some greater good. In practical terms, pay people more money and give them a meaningful title. It is easy to do. Then younger people will go around thinking, ‘That’s a great idea; I might be one of those.’

Mrs Phillips—Many teacher librarians leave the government system because in the independent sector they can be a director of information services with teacher librarians working below them—and librarians, archivists, IT technicians and all those jobs that somehow have to be done by one person or part of a person in a government school. If there were proper staffing in school libraries—for example, some large schools in Queensland are entitled to two teacher librarians but do not often get them; they get shunted off to the classroom.

If you had a structure where it was considered a service division of the school and a teaching division, and you have someone who is a manager—you have to manage your staff, your clerical assistants and others; it is a managerial position. The teacher librarian should be on the committee of the school with the heads of department and so on. They should be there. They should be involved with curriculum development, design and implementation. How you educate principals and people in the departments of education is going to be very difficult. We do not have those people in high places in Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and the ACT who are advisory people to promote and discuss the position and role of school librarians and school libraries within the department. We do not have principals, beginning with their pre-service training but then in their current leadership training, talking about how you evaluate a school library and why you need to include it in a report. It should be there in the school report. It tells you something about that school. The principals are not getting training about the research and how they can develop an excellent school library using something like the standards of ASLA, which tells you what an excellent school librarian should be able to do and can be used for a valuation. There are other documents that were developed back in the seventies by Joyce Kirk, which were for principals to use to evaluate the library and the teacher librarian—performance evaluation—to help them develop their expertise and their contribution to the school. All that is missing.

Mrs Preddey—There is another door that a teacher librarian can go through—working with other people. I have taken the approach of self advocacy and getting other people onside. You look within your learning environment, your school, for people that you could connect with who would come onside when you are doing particular work. The parent body are a huge part of that. You can get them onside by making yourself indispensable. I send home a term newsletter—no-one told me to do it—telling them what is going on in the library and what is actually happening in the library lessons. I have a one-hour lesson with each class. I am actually validating myself

publicly. I get children to do book reviews; I get them to interview teachers—what they are reading now; and what new books I have. Even when I had Libby come to visit I had a parent session. I invited them to come, made a cup of tea and some cakes and got her to speak at their level. So I am getting them onside. If your principal is not onside, there are other people to look at.

CHAIR—We did receive some evidence from one of the associations earlier that that is a really effective model, but again it relies on already overworked people.

Mrs Preddey—Yes, being very motivated.

CHAIR—We will acknowledge that as well.

Mrs Phillips—I am very curious to know how many parent organisations actually made submissions, because it was school holidays and they did not get notified till quite late.

CHAIR—We are working our way through far more submissions than we had anticipated receiving. When we previously did an inquiry into students who work while they are studying—the school, work-life balance—we got very little follow-up from parent organisations. They don't tend to be particularly good at participating in these sorts of conversations. We will have a look and hope.

Mrs Phillips—I was very surprised not to see them on the agenda for tomorrow in Melbourne. They have two parent organisations—I don't know why, actually—in Victoria. It seems to me that they should have plenty to say. As individuals they have had in the petition.

CHAIR—As I said, I have not looked through all of them yet to see how many we have had from parent organisations. But we heard earlier evidence about parents trying to supervise and assist their students, whether they are primary or high school, at home with projects and assignments and saying, 'I just do not know how to provide assistance and guidance when they are on the web.' In my day, we probably got run down to the local public library in the evening and there was somebody there to help you find what you needed and so forth. Nowadays, they seem to presume, 'We've got the computer at home,' so they can do all their research on there but with very little understanding of where they are going with it.

Mr ZAPPIA—I want to pick up on a comment made by Angelo. I do not mind who tries to respond to this question. Is it the perception of you folk that there is a shift in the community away from school libraries because the public library system has been improved to a level whereby it is now capable of providing the services that might have otherwise been provided in school libraries?

Mrs McGuinness—We do have some great public libraries but their roles are different. A public librarian does not teach and cannot truly teach the skills of information and literacy over time. I have worked in a public library. I have dealt with these kids of an afternoon—and 3.30 to five was always our horror shift, because you would get the schoolkids in who were doing their assignments and homework. Yes, you would try—because I was already a teacher—to help them at that point in time. But they will never compete with what we do.

Mr ZAPPIA—I can understand that they will never compete, but my question is: is there a perception, though, that they might be doing that? I pick up on some of the comments by Virginia about some of the programs she is running from her library.

Mrs McGuinness—Which many of us do.

Mr ZAPPIA—I am very much aware that almost identical programs to that have been provided through the public library services in the state where I come from. In fact, I will go one step further. The University of South Australia is working hand in hand with many of the public libraries to provide some of those services.

Mrs Preddey—Our collections are specific to our clients' needs—our clients being our students. So our collection is very much to the reading levels et cetera of our students. Mine actually have a wish list that they come and ask for. It is very much linked to the curriculum. Public libraries do not have that knowledge. They are not teacher trained and they do not have that understanding.

Mr Loukakis—I see the Australian story as crossing right over from school libraries at the lowest level to the highest. My sister is a librarian. She is right next door—one of the Mitchell librarians—and she echoes some of the things that you said. Public libraries can do certain things and school libraries can do certain things. They have a different client basis and respond to different needs. However, they are all part of a much bigger picture called Australia. So we need to be clear about where things are done best and when and how across the library sector, including school libraries as a very important part of the idea of the library.

I do not know if anyone has been following the story of the library at Alexandria, which was rebuilt a few years ago—the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. What a beautiful idea that this library thousands of years later would be rebuilt. Why? Because of an idea about the importance of a library as a repository of memory and value. That may be what the more senior and public libraries do, but where does that begin? It begins with the school libraries.

Mrs McGuinness—To respond to what you were saying about the public libraries offering other services—for example, homework help. That may be as a response to school libraries not having qualified teacher librarians and being underresourced.

Ms Gleeson—I am sure that is the case. As a regular visitor to public libraries, I would stress that there is also great inequity in the public sector, depending on where you are—city, rural, wealthy suburbs et cetera.

CHAIR—The committee is interested in getting to the bottom, to some extent, of why we face the dilemma we face. I take George's point about the golden era of the seventies. Your school library was suddenly a place where you could access information and items that your family may well not be able to afford and you may never see—such as beautiful books and wonderful novels. Nowadays, there is a whole range of access to images, texts, entertainment and information.

Mr Loukakis—Except the library gave you the Dewey classification system. It gave you an organisation that was not available online. Information organisation is absolutely a mess online.

Ms Gleeson—And there was massive federal funding.

CHAIR—That is some of what we are interested in exploring with you in your description of what are clearly vital roles in school libraries. I think the committee is very strongly of the view, having been so educated ourselves from your submission, that there is a level of lack of understanding of that in the broader community. I had a journalist ring me last night about this inquiry, the second one in two months. That tells you something. This one was an IT journalist, not an education journalist. They said, ‘What are you looking at? Libraries will be redundant in schools.’ This is a journalist. I said, ‘Why would you say that?’ They said, ‘You know, you have got everything on the net. You can go to the net.’ If you have got a very educated person in information, I would hope, being employed as a journalist, still having that perception, it says to me that there is something in the community at this critical period of change of how we manage information as a society that is not yet getting what it is you are talking about.

Mrs Armstrong—I think there is a link between information and information literacy. The wider community is not seeing that link. They are seeing information as absorbing knowledge; they are not seeing information literacy as understanding and being able to use that knowledge and be critical users of information. We have to get that point across somehow.

Mr Loukakis—If your journalist did not have the handy, old-fashioned, slightly fusty word of ‘librarian’ but if you said ‘the information manager of X or Y’, immediately the perception would change.

CHAIR—Isn’t literature largely to blame for these stereotypes of librarians?

Mr Loukakis—Call librarians information managers. Why call them librarians? They are not librarians, only in the more old-fashioned sense.

Mrs Phillips—Teacher librarians have not been good at using the media. Even our professional associations have not been good at using the media. Maybe they have not had the funding really to get out there and to produce a TV commercial. On Foxtel you can find the history teachers or somebody has got something out there, geography teachers. They do a little spiel about what they do. Why aren’t teacher librarians doing that?

Mrs Preddy—A *Top Gear* on books or something.

CHAIR—Back to Mr Symon with his mystery question.

Mr SYMON—It goes to the resourcing of libraries. Reading through part of your submission, I think 50 per cent of schools are surviving on less than \$5,000 a year to buy books, to buy journals, for IT uses, for all sorts of other things. I do not know how you do it with that sort of a budget. What I would like to draw into the discussion is that at the moment the federal government funds a small amount of recurrent school costs for both primary and secondary sectors. I would like to ask the group whether you think part of that should be tied into libraries, or maybe even extend the argument to say there should be an extra amount on top of that to go into libraries. It is a bit of a leading question but I would like to hear your views on that.

Mrs Phillips—One way is through literacy grants. If we really are big on literacy, how about involving libraries in the literacy program of the federal government? But certainly there should be tied grants to libraries. We used to have those. They started out that way. There were state tied grants. Those have disappeared into this general fund which now principals have to decide how to spend. So that is an excellent idea and we will talk to you later!

Ms Gleeson—If the federal government is able to mandate and to pay for literacy testing and various other literacy programs, there would be no better way to stimulate the development of literacy than through properly funded programs of literature. As I said earlier, the evidence is so clear and I am sure you have all had access to some of the studies that have been done overseas and in Australia.

Mrs Preddy—I can only support what the others are saying. Looking at resources, and I noticed the same in state schools, sometimes we are sent random resources from different organisations, which is welcome, but sometimes this strikes me as incredibly wasteful. Recently, for Anzac Day, I received some resources from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. It was a wonderful resource pack, but I received two of them. I can only think of what the cost of those must have been to go to every school. There needs to be more input into those kinds of resources. We are sent DVDs and manuals on how to do things from different government organisations, which are not always relevant for a primary school. They might be relevant for a secondary school, yet I still get them.

CHAIR—I am sure the Deputy Prime Minister would love to take the budget off all the other departments!

Mrs Preddey—It always strikes me how incredibly wasteful a lot of that is. If they saw that I am at a primary school, they would see that I would not be teaching these particular things. It does not fit in with my curriculum. That is just a point to add.

Mrs Phillips—I would like to ask the committee something. I do not know if you are going to have access, through the Australian School Libraries Research Project, to the data from the Northern Territory, but that is certainly the most damning. You should make sure that that does come through to the committee, because schools there function on nothing, as far as resources are concerned, and they have principals buying their resources because there is no teacher librarian. They will buy picture books, so where do the Aboriginal boys go after picture books? There are no chapter books, there are no CD-ROMs and there are no DVDs. There might be some internet connections now, but they cannot read.

Ms Gleeson—There is no question as to which state in that country has the lowest levels of literacy. In fact, the publishing industry—the writers, the booksellers, the publishers—are all bundled together to try to fund the Indigenous Literacy Project. We are all putting our own resources, time and energy into that, and sometimes you look around and think—

Mr Loukakis—Why isn't it a federal literacy project?

Ms Gleeson—Yes. It is so obvious—

Mrs Phillips—The literacy project is a little bugbear of mind. I admire Therese Rein and what she is doing. But, if those resources were actually going into schools where we have teacher librarians to keep track of them and circulate them, they could reach so many more children rather than just disappearing into the community.

CHAIR—We will have to wind up there. We get very carried away and interested, so we lose track of the time. Thank you for your attendance. This is the beginning of the inquiry. You can see that at this point we are very interested in the broader issues and discussions, but many of your submissions give us a lot of detailed ideas and many recommendations to look at. We really value that and want to assure you that those details will be something that we will also deal with. In public hearings we are particularly interested in the educative role of these processes by committees as well, so the discussion that you have here is important to the process in terms of what we are trying to find out in this inquiry. So thank you for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material, you can forward it to the secretary. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Thank you very much for your submissions and your time today.

[2.29 pm]

OLAH, Mr Ken, Acting Director, Curriculum, Department of Education and Training, New South Wales

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training to today's hearing. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings before the respective houses. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Olah—Actually, I am speaking on behalf of the department. My colleague is here to help me, if needed, with some of my responses.

CHAIR—Okay.

Mr Olah—My responsibilities as Acting Director of Curriculum for the New South Wales Department of Education and Training include the school libraries and information services support that we provide. My colleague Colleen Foley is the leader of that unit.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We do have a submission from the department; thank you very much for that. I will just indicate that we very much appreciate those states who have taken the time and interest to put in a submission—from which you may read there are some who have not and we hope that they will do so subsequently, so we do appreciate that you have put in a submission to the inquiry. Would you like to outline for the committee, in about five or 10 minutes at the most, the issues in your submission that you particularly want to draw to the committee's attention?

Mr Olah—Firstly, can I say how delighted we were to see the inquiry happening because it is such an important issue, as we identified in our submission. We in fact conducted in our own way an exercise like this last year; we called it 'School libraries 21C'. It was a sustained, online conversation that was facilitated by Dr Ross Todd from New Jersey and Dr Lyn Hay from Charles Sturt University. It was looking at the issue of what we need from our school libraries and teacher librarians, given the change in the information environment in which we are now working. We are conscious of the fact that, given the very substantial investment in school libraries and teacher librarians and the infrastructure and all of the other things, there are people out there who think, 'We can get everything we need off the internet.' Our view of that is that Australia would do so at its absolute peril.

I was contemplating this as I was coming to work this morning, and it seems to me that if we value democracy, if we value the economy, if we value a civilised society and if we value our children, then we would recognise, celebrate and build upon the role of teacher librarians and our school libraries. All of that sounds very dramatic, almost melodramatic, to say. But if you reflect on that you would say that, in a democracy, what we need are people who can ask the right questions, who know how to go about finding information, who can look at competing sources of information, who can critically evaluate information that is put in front of them and

who can use that information to make decisions and actions and to create information themselves. Similarly in terms of the economy, especially in the global competitive environment that we are in, we need a workforce that is flexible and is as skilled and able as it can possibly be, and that means that we would want to optimise the curriculum outcomes in the 21st century skills that our schools produce.

The cornerstone of any civilised society is an appreciation of literature and an engagement with literature. In terms of young people, while we can consider each of those areas I have spoken about from a societal perspective, it seems to me that we are about enabling and empowering young people in each of those areas to optimise their life prospects. That is the core business of school libraries and teacher librarians. It is not only their core business; we know from research—and this is one of the additional piece of evidence we want to put in front of you—that this is not simply an assertion. We know that, when there is good practice in school libraries and teacher librarians, it absolutely makes a difference—it improves student learning outcomes and educational outcomes. So it is terribly important.

In terms of the key directions that flowed from our own forum, and which I hope we have been able to communicate through our submission, there were four areas and I want to add a fifth of my own. The first of the four areas is that we do need to re-envisaged or re-imagine the role of school libraries and teacher librarians in the information age. Secondly, we want to place even more emphasis on the importance of instructional leadership. It has been a key role since probably the nineties, but our evidence would be that that is not happening to the extent that we would want it to happen.

Thirdly, we would want a strengthened, deep inquiry. In the good old days when you went to the library you found a couple of books and you looked in certain sections and you used that and wrote it up. Now kids can get on the internet and there is this mass of stuff and you can patch a bit from here and there and everywhere and throw it on with cut and paste and you think you have got an answer. That is really dangerous territory for us. We do want kids to really be able to investigate deeply and to evaluate the information and so on, as I was saying earlier.

The fourth area is evidence based practice. When we did our forum there were lots of people, especially teacher librarians, who kept saying, ‘This is really true because I believe it in my heart.’ We need more than that, don’t we. We need evidence that the research shows what good practice is and how it can make a difference to student learning outcomes. We need to be gathering evidence in the process of doing our work and we need to be able to provide evidence to satisfy those I think very few members. I heard you say earlier that there was a particular view in the community. I am not hearing that view. I am conscious of the fact that some people have raised it, which is why I mentioned it earlier, but I do not think it is a terribly strong view and I certainly do not think it is any thinking person’s view. A journalist who is looking for an interesting story may be asking that question.

The other area—and I suspect that I have been as neglectful as anyone with this—is the potential role of teacher librarians in change management and literacy. We have been saying for a very long time that teacher librarians are leaders of reading and that they should play an active role not simply in their own teaching within the school library but in influencing their colleagues.

If you take the whole lot of national partnerships that we have at the moment focusing on literacy and numeracy and low socioeconomic and so on, I do not hear the words ‘teacher librarians’ and ‘school libraries’ mentioned in that context very often, and I think they should be. They ought to be part of that school leadership team that is really focusing educational quality and educational improvement.

Further, there is the importance of digital literacy, by which I mean that we are talking about locating, understanding, organising, evaluating and creating information through digital technologies. Clearly that is the big game changer in terms of school libraries, particularly in relation to work. Those are the things that I think I would want to highlight.

CHAIR—Thank you. I am particularly interested in the fact that you had done the inquiry last year, which gives us a very good basis on which to progress some of what we are looking at. You refer in your submission to a range of international studies that show direct links between the existence of well-resourced and effective libraries, staff and teacher librarians and educational outcomes. Part of the federal government’s focus has been on what is called that long tail of disadvantage. We heard in evidence today that the more remote the school and the smaller the numbers in the school, the less likely they are to have access to the sorts of resources that you are talking about for a modern 21st century. From the state department’s view, I am wondering how you are trying to go about addressing those disadvantages that occur by geography within this state.

Mr Olah—There are a couple of things. The first is that the internet does help, potentially, to even up the playing field, because everyone has access to the same information. Part of the issue of course is how skilled the teacher and the teacher librarian are to be able to guide students in accessing that information and using it appropriately. That is the first thing. Otherwise, in terms of equity programs, the support that our school libraries and information services unit provides is very important in all of this. I will give you some examples of what I mean.

Firstly, one of the traditional roles of a teacher librarian has been to make decisions or facilitate a process by which there is a selection of resources to be used in the school. One of the things that we do is conduct thousands of reviews of resources. We—what is the word I am looking for? ‘Commission’ sounds a bit too fancy—ask teachers to have a look at a resource and give us a critical description of its quality, how they would use it, its suitability and so on. The provision of those reviews to everybody saves teacher librarians, wherever they are, an enormous amount of time.

Secondly, we provide, for example, recently, Links to Learning. With the rollout of the Digital Education Revolution, New South Wales went down the laptop path. Not only have we developed teaching and learning resources in different subjects for each year level but we have also reviewed a whole range of websites and given links to the best quality ones. Again, that saves a teacher librarian time and effort, wherever they are—whether they are at a small school or a large school, whether they are in an urban location or in a wealthy community et cetera—and provides them with the same quality of access. We also put online what we call raps and book raps. Each term, it is a learning package that is cross-curriculum that involves a whole lot of information literacy work and digital literacy work. Again, that is a resource that is available to teacher librarians and school communities, irrespective of where they are.

There is also access to retraining programs for teacher librarians. They can do either the graduate certificate or the master's course. We run, through our retraining program, the graduate certificate. It can be done by distance education over 12 months, and there is additional study support and there are various other elements to that to make it easier for teachers to do. That is an accessible training program for teachers, wherever they are.

Those are the kinds of things we do to address any disadvantages. Nevertheless, they do not compensate for being in a wealthy community. I was very recently school education director for the lower North Shore here in Sydney, and we would have parents come in and hand over a cheque to \$10,000, saying: 'Thank you very much; it's been wonderful. I am now about to put my child in'—whatever independent school it is. Or they would hold a fundraiser and raise a very large amount of money. But we know that there are lots and lots of areas in New South Wales where that simply is not possible. So what we do cannot compensate for that.

We support some of the comments that were made by the previous group of witnesses about building into the funding. I know that we have moved into sort of broadbanding the funding—the NEA takes away all those specific-purpose grants. Nevertheless, it really is an issue in terms of resourcing our school libraries too, because there will always be a place for books and all of that kind of stuff.

CHAIR—I have one more question before we go to my colleagues. It sounds to me that your unit is able to provide efficiencies for school librarians—for example, instead of a hundred of them reviewing the same thing, one person does it and they share it. But one of the things we have heard about in evidence is the prohibitive cost to many schools of subscription-based online reference materials. I think it was the *World Book*, we heard earlier—

Mr ZAPPIA—The *World Book Encyclopedia*, yes.

CHAIR—that cost \$600 per year if you do it through the National Library. While libraries want to retain their flexibility, there are probably some common reference materials that are subscription based and it might be possible for authorities to get a bigger advantage if they did a bulk purchase of them, if you like. Have you explored that at all, or are there problems with that that we should know about?

Mr Olah—We did, and your immediate reaction is right, especially for New South Wales; we are such a large system we could really leverage the costs, as we do now. We have a whole procurement process in place for the purchase of a number of types of resources, laptop computers being one. You really can bargain and get a good price. It is really tricky in terms of textbooks and literature and so on as to which way to go. You could see that you could do it in some core areas—for example, all books that win prizes in children's literature. But would you go so far as supporting *World Book* as opposed to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as opposed to something else? It starts to get a little bit tricky.

The movement to a national curriculum helps. One of the issues for us is always about the particular resource in relation to curriculum outcomes in New South Wales as we move to a national curriculum. If you really put potential resources through a very tight quality control on that alignment with our curriculum, it becomes a real possibility. The implication for publishers—

CHAIR—I am interested in the challenge, because, as you would be aware, there is a discussion around going to subscription based access of the material of the media who operate online, which a lot of students may use for research and so forth. It is going to be an increasing issue, I think, with online material. I am just wondering whether you are looking at that in terms of policy.

Mr Olah—Again, there is a potential impact on publishers and authors. The cultural alignment—because obviously you will get publishers producing on a world scale—coming through that can be, say, edging towards a very American slant on the world. So it is a vexed issue. We eventually decided to advise strongly against, but once you move it into a national context and so on you have to go back and have another conversation on that. I am sorry I do not have a clear view on that.

Dr JENSEN—Some of the statistics for the demographic information I find alarming. This is Australia wide. I do not know about New South Wales. But if I were involved in future planning they would be scaring the bejesus out of me. Eighty-nine per cent of 40-plus and 55.1 per cent of 50-plus—this strikes me as potentially a profession in crisis given that there seems to be a lack of interest from people who are younger. You have the situation where you have people that are uncertain of what the career is actually all about. That seems to be apart from the fact that the association has actually put out a document stating exactly what it is. It has not, to my understanding, been formalised by any of the departments. It seems to me that there needs to be a formalisation of structure, possibly, of assessments so that these library teachers can actually start feeling that they are well regarded. I would like to know your views on how you might go about that and how you might go about putting in place structures that improve the attractiveness of careers in the context of library teachers. When they are looking at promotion into something else, the fact that they have been working in the library system devalues them rather than adds value to them.

Just to complete it, one of the points one of the principals made was that the library teacher sees every single student in the school on a weekly basis, something no other teacher does. Therefore, it would appear to me to be an absolutely critical link in terms of a valuable education. Let us face it, you can get good teachers and you can get crappy teachers. If you get a kid that is faced with a crappy teacher—particularly as a class teacher in primary school, where that is basically the teacher they have just about all the time, apart from the library teacher—they need to have that valuable learning experience. I know it is a very long-winded question, but I think career structure for library teachers, due recognition and value of their worth and what they are actually doing, and a way in which they can be rewarded are critical issues.

Mr Olah—Yes, I could not agree more. The statistics are deeply concerning. This ought to be the best job in the school, honestly. What other job involves working with kids all the time—all the kids across the school? It ought to be working with all the teachers as well, and that is a really crucial issue as well because of the professional learning, coaching, collaborative programming and working with teachers in an inquiry approach and in terms of quality teaching. It takes a lot of people to make a quality education in a school, but your school library and your teacher librarian ought to be right at the guts of it—a real powerhouse for that happening. So I want the best teacher out of the classroom in that school in the teacher librarian role, rather than in the library, because the library conjures up all those old-fashioned images of this room. I do

not want to have a go at the last speaker—I think it is wonderful that we have the Bibliotheca Alexandrina—but that is not the modern 21st century teacher librarian school library.

We should not see the teacher librarian role as a career for life. It ought to be a career experience, so that you can move into that for a period of time, take on that leadership role in the school and then move into something else. Ideally—I could not agree with you more—we ought to see this as the mark of a really excellent teacher who has enriched their experience and brings a whole lot more to the executive or the principalship and beyond. We really have not come to terms as well as we might with how to attract more teachers into taking an interest in being a teacher librarian. There are barriers there, some of which you have mentioned.

I think New South Wales has done well in terms of providing access to a genuine training program, because the scary part is always, ‘What does the job involve, how do I go about doing that, and is it just about library management?’ whereas we would say that library management is 20 per cent of the job. So we do have a policy. Yes, as somebody said earlier, I think the policy needs to be upgraded in terms of the digital environment, but much of the guts of the policy are still absolutely right.

It needs that professional learning support and feeling part of a network of teacher librarians. It is principals as much as anyone whose vision for the role and the valuing of the role is relevant, but it cuts right across teachers and so on. Why is it that there is there is not instructional collaboration going on to the extent that we would want it to? It takes two to collaborate. The teacher librarian can be as welcoming and as capable of that as they will, but if the teacher does not want to collaborate then that is not going to work so well.

I am not sure about the issue of incentives and what would constitute an appropriate incentive. I do not have anything to offer on that. To sum up, I think I am saying, ‘Let’s change our vision for this and work particularly on principals and valuing.’ They ought to be more included as part of the school leadership team. There ought to be more support for them taking part in that. As for the significant parts of the role, we can certainly market the role of a teacher librarian better amongst young teachers. Otherwise, I think the kind of support and so on that we provide is really important.

CHAIR—Ken, do you know whether the principal performance reviews include questions about or exploration of the development of the library and so forth?

Mr Olah—Certainly with the support staff, because in New South Wales we have ESL teachers, support teachers and learning assistants; we might have an Aboriginal community liaison officer, and we have the teacher librarian. So it makes reference to support staff. With the principal assessment and review process, you are looking at so many different aspects, particularly focused on the school plan, where it is that the school has set out for improvement, what processes the school is using to achieve that and so on. In all honesty, I do not believe that there is really a focus on how well the principal is working with them. The relationship between the principal and a teacher librarian is a really crucial one. Nothing happens in a school without the active support of the principal, really.

CHAIR—I would have thought it was pretty significant to ask them how they are developing a 21st century school and how they are dealing with new digital based learners and those sorts of questions.

Mr Olah—Absolutely, and therefore it ought to follow on.

Dr JENSEN—If I can follow up on one thing, it concerns me that this almost appears to be a career that is in a death spiral. The statistics are frightening. The evidence from some of the teacher librarians is frightening. We had a person in the last group who did not continue with their masters course and they were aware of other people who were not doing qualifications because they saw this as a profession that would no longer be there. This really needs to be addressed. I am aware that New South Wales is better than most if not all other states and for that opinion to be voiced here is of great concern. It is something that clearly needs addressing.

Mr Olah—I guess someone of that view is more likely to bring that to the attention of the inquiry. Having said that, it is an issue and I guess it is one of the reasons you are having the inquiry. Finding solutions to that is obviously a critical outcome of the process.

Ms COLLINS—I come from a state with very few teacher librarians. In fact, as a parent of three children, I do not think I ever met one in the school environment whilst my children were going through primary school and high school. While there are some issues with teacher librarians and their careers in New South Wales, you appear to have more teacher librarians because you value them differently from other states. Have you had any conversations with other states about the role of teacher librarians? If you have not and if you were to, what would that conversation be about?

Mr Olah—The reality is that communication and collaboration between even directors of curriculum between different states is really rare. Partly, we are all absolutely flat strap—I cannot tell you the hours I work! You could say, ‘Surely, once a year you people could get on the phone to each other.’ You are absolutely right; we ought to do that but we do not. Have we had conversations? Is there a network between people? I do not know how many equivalents there of Colleen. There are probably some poor devils out there who have that among many other responsibilities. So no, it does not happen. If we were to have the kind of conversation you have asked us about it, would be exactly these issues—what are the strategies used to encourage more people into the teacher-librarianship, how do you see the role, how are you supporting it and so on?

Ms. COLLINS—Compared to other states, teacher librarians seem to be more highly valued in New South Wales. How would you describe their value to other states?

Mr Olah—Partly in the way I described at the outset—if you value democracy, if you value the economy and if you value a civilised society. You could then take that down a level and talk about the focus that teacher librarians have. So you could talk about their leadership role in reading, you could talk about the key role they play in information literacy and digital literacy. You would talk about their role in collaborating with teachers in programming and teaching. You would talk about the font of knowledge they are about quality resources and where to find quality resources which can assist teachers or students. The school library as a space is still

really important and Building the Education Revolution effects that. You would talk about them creating an environment which is welcoming, stimulating and encouraging inquiry.

CHAIR—And does not leak!

Mr Olah—Yes, that is always good. It is those kinds of things that you would have a conversation about. Better still, you would bring teacher librarians out to talk about what they do and get them to show examples of good practice. One of the things we are doing as a result of School Libraries 21C is showcasing more examples of good practice as part of our digital side.

CHAIR—It will be interesting to see, as we most controversially go through the issue of testing and reporting and so forth, the direct link which has been shown internationally, as you indicated in your submission, between a well-resourced library and better outcomes for students. We look forward to more evidence on that. I sincerely thank you for taking the time to make a submission.

Mr Olah—We were delighted to have the opportunity.

CHAIR—We will be chasing up some other authorities who have not put submissions in, which may reflect part of the problem with having a conversation with them in the first place. We do appreciate that you have done so. If we have asked for any additional information, you can forward it to the secretary. I do not think we did. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Again, thank you very much for your time today and for the time taken in putting a submission in to the inquiry.

Mr Olah—Thank you very much. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR—The New South Wales Teachers Federation indicated that they had a position description for teacher librarian that they wanted to supply to us. I need the committee to indicate that it is the wish of the committee that the document entitled *New South Wales Teachers Federation: the role of the teacher-librarian in the school community*, presented by the New South Wales Teachers Federation, be taken as evidence and included in the committee's records as an exhibit.

Dr JENSEN—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Jensen. There being no objections, it is carried.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Collins**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 3.01 pm