



**House of Representatives Inquiry into School Libraries
and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools**

**Submission from
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Introduction

Catholic Education SA wishes to comment briefly on Terms of Reference 2 and 5 in an integrated way and also on Term of Reference 4.

Term of Reference 2; the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy, and

Term of Reference 5 : The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians

School librarians have always played a key role in teaching students how to access information and research topics of interest. They have played no lesser role to providing an alternative forum to the classroom to support students and teachers to choose texts appropriate to the age, ability and interests of students. With the proliferation of texts and the increasing range of choices of reading material, (including electronic resources) available to students, school libraries and librarians will be vital in the following ways;

- Supporting teachers with appropriate resources and suggestions and part of the programming and planning cycle for enhanced educational and community outcomes
- Choosing and purchasing texts and software for teacher and student use in line with school policy
- Contributing to school policy development around literacy development, text choice and purchase and use of resources
- Knowing teachers' classroom focuses, moving to provide students with appropriate extra resources to enhance student learning
- Supporting teachers and students to use the internet in critical and mature ways, where balanced judgements are made about the views and information being offered
- Supporting teachers and students to make best use of literacy early intervention programs such as Reading Recovery
- Supporting teachers and students to act on evidenced based feedback from sources such as NAPLAN data. This might be a response to an identified school based reading performance trend or assistance for individual students.
- Modelling that reading and viewing always have wholistic and meaningful purposes. The library and the librarian provide whole texts

for students and teachers and never divorce the teaching of reading and viewing from their intended purpose, be it reading/viewing for pleasure or for information and research. Student motivation for reading evaporates quickly if the lesson is perceived as simply a skills lesson which is not about making meaning. It is crucial that young students and students challenged by reading/viewing have successful experiences of real reading /viewing on appropriate texts while they are engaging in specific skills lessons. Libraries and teacher librarians more than ever need to continue to be key models for, and agents of, facilitating such experiences.

Term of Reference 4; the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians.

The comments for this Term of Reference relate to the *Premier's Reading Challenge* as a major, documented example of how teacher librarians continue to partner and complement other institutions and levels of Government in terms of motivating students to read and improve their literacy skills.

The *Premier's Reading Challenge* has been operating in South Australian for six years to the end of 2009. In 2009, 57% of all students R-9 participated in the Challenge. Over 96% of schools in the state across the three sectors participated in 2009. Each year of the Challenge has seen an increase in the number of students and schools that have participated. Students undertake to read so many books over a particular period and then are externally rewarded with certificates and the school benefits too with book prizes in particular years.

The Premier appoints reading ambassadors to further encourage the children and these are often luminaries from the sporting and literary worlds. By any measure, the Challenge has been a major success in encouraging students to read and celebrate their achievements as readers.

Key to this success across the State has been school libraries and teacher librarians. In order to keep up with the demand for books, many teacher librarians have commented that the role of local libraries in supporting the children has been most important. As the liaison person for the Catholic sector, I have observed that the teacher librarians in schools have often been the catalyst to get the challenge happening at local level.

Conclusion

Teacher librarians and school libraries are crucial for improved educational outcomes, especially literacy. The library or resource centre should be a key hub of learning in the school. Its physical presence and that of the librarian are powerful symbols about how we value reading skills, learning and research. In the digital age the work of teacher librarians is even more vital as they support teachers and students to be powerfully literate in traditional and new communication technologies.