



Submission into the Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools by : Ms Heather Gallagher and Dr Richard Evans

16/4/10

We make this submission primarily as the parents of two primary school-aged children but also as a children's writer and historian respectively.

Our eldest daughter is in Grade 3 at Preston Primary School and prior to her commencing at school we were unaware of the extent to which school libraries have been eroded. When we went to school there was a librarian, we had weekly library lessons and borrowing as part of the curriculum and the library was open for children during lunchtimes and recess.

At our daughter's school (which has over 700 children enrolled) there is a teacher librarian who works one day a week, primarily managing the administration of book supply. That teacher is due to retire later this year and we fear that she will not be replaced.

The children are only able to access the library once a fortnight on the condition that a parent volunteer attends to perform the borrowing.

Attending the library during this time is optional.

The children are not taught how to use the dewey system or how to research. There is only one computer in the library which is used for borrowing and returning books so the children do not have access to a catalogue.

We are very unhappy with this state of affairs. We believe all children, as a part of their education, should have a well-equipped library and learn research skills appropriate to their age level. The fact that at our school, attending the library is optional makes it most likely that children who do not come from "bookish" homes will not take up this option and be

disadvantaged. We believe this has a huge detrimental effect on the long-term educational prospects for these children.

We also believe a joy of reading is one of the great gifts of childhood.

A fundamental part of instilling this joy is to allow children easy access to books at school and having an interest in books nurtured by a skilled librarian.

We believe a mandatory requirement for all schools to employ a full-time teacher librarian is the solution to this problem. A renewed emphasis on the importance of books and reading – with more programs like the Premier’s Reading Challenge – would also help.

We are available to make an oral submission if required.

Regards,

Ms Heather Gallagher & Dr Richard Evans