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To : Secretary, Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

In order to do my job well, I need to :

- * be a teacher AND a librarian
- * have adequate teacher-aide hours in the library every day
- * have an understanding of every curriculum area in my school so I can ensure there are resources to assist and enhance the delivery of the curriculum ;
- * source, select and purchase resources for the school (students and staff) – not just print and visual resources such as books, magazines, journals, posters/charts etc, but electronic and online resources such as websites, databases, cd-roms, webquests, learning objects and audio-visual resources such as videos and dvd's ;
- * draw on my teaching experience to determine which resources will suit particular topics, year levels, class groups, ability levels and even individual students ;
- * source materials suitable for all students, even those with limited literacy skills ;
- * work with, support and assist teachers in their planning and implementation of units of work ;
- * provide a wide range of reading materials to encourage and enable students to read for enjoyment ;
- * work with students so that they can learn how to find information (from a wide range of sources – not just the internet) and then what to do with that information – all part of being 'information literate'.
- * work with staff, provide professional development for staff on research skills, information literacy, digital literacy, cyber safety, online resources, web 2.0 tools, search strategies, research task design etc.

Terms of Reference

Impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities.

- It is wonderful to see that many schools, particularly primary schools, have got or are getting new or refurbished libraries. A library (or whatever the school wishes to call it) is and should be 'the hub' of the school. The library plays a central and vitally important role in the teaching and learning activities of all students. It is vital that the money spent on these investments results in a resource that can benefit the entire school community. In order for that to happen the library staff need to be involved in the planning and decision making phases in each school and in schools where there are not qualified staff, there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure the school gets qualified staff. There is no point building a new library if there are no qualified staff to

staff it. That would be like building a new hospital and not having any doctors to staff it.

The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.

- Well staffed and resourced school libraries make a positive difference to student achievement and there are numerous studies completed around the world that prove that. The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) lists several studies on their website <http://www.asla.org.au/research/>
- To be life-long learners, students need to be literate and information literate. Teacher-librarians specialise in teaching information literacy. We also specialise in providing reading materials (print and non-print) and actively encourage reading. Teacher-librarians know that children become better readers by reading.

Factors influencing the recruitment and development of school of school librarians.

- These days, very few courses are available for teacher-librarianship. While the numbers of teacher-librarians decrease there has been no contingency plans from educational departments to fill the vacancies that will be appearing due to retirement.
- School based staffing decisions have also played a part in the diminishing of teacher-librarian positions. Staffing of the library is usually at the Principal's discretion which has often led to unqualified, less expensive staff in the library and the teacher-librarian being taken out of the library and put back into the classroom. Some schools have not had a qualified teacher-librarian for years. Schools in the Northern Territory rarely have a qualified teacher-librarian. It is beyond belief that schools are able to make such decisions which fly in the face of quality research which prove otherwise.

The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians.

- With the proposed introduction of the National Curriculum, it is vital that school libraries are recognised as having an important role to play. Every school in Australia and every school student in Australia deserves to have access to a well-staffed, well-resourced school library. State education departments need to recognise the importance of school libraries and have common policies in place which will ensure that staffing, budgeting and resourcing needs are address and not left to each individual school to determine.

Recommendations :

- school libraries be staffed by qualified teacher-librarians and have adequate teacher-aide or library aide time every day
- training courses for teacher-librarians be reviewed and increased
- state departments acknowledge the need for more teacher-librarians and actively support and encourage staff to complete the study required
- acknowledge the importance of reading and the role school libraries play in the development of better readers and literate, life-long learners
- develop a national policy and standards for school libraries – with emphasis on staffing and minimum funding

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