



Sharon Uthmannv  
Shire Librarian

12<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Minister for Education,  
Hon Julia Gillard MP  
c/- Secretary  
House of Standing Committee on Education and Training  
PO Box 6021, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gillard,

**Re: Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools**

I am writing to ask for your support for the principle of a teacher librarian in every school and for proper funding for school libraries across Australia.

The teacher-librarian is an essential part of a modern school. With the demands of interpreting information which are being placed upon students across the spectrum, information literacy instruction is essential. The teacher-librarian is the staff member responsible for teaching these essential information literacy skills, including:

- How to search for relevant information sources;
- How to critically evaluate those sources for accuracy and authoritative status;
- How to search within the sources for relevant data;
- How to extract and synthesise that data in response to an assessment task or other project; and
- How to prepare and publish the data in the form of an information report or similar document, either in print or electronic form.

These skills apply whether the student is working with a printed document or an electronic information source.

The teacher-librarian's other principal role within a school is purchasing resources to build the collection to support the educational curriculum. This specialist role calls upon the teacher-librarian to evaluate and select resources appropriate to the age and ability level of the students, and, in conjunction with the classroom teacher to design educational programs which will use those resources to their best effect. The teacher-librarian may also be the information technology coordinator for the school, responsible for the management of the school's computer network, and for the provision of electronic resources, whether in the form of networked software or of web-based data. This latter role requires particularly careful selection and management to ensure that the materials provided are appropriate to the developmental stage of the students, that the cultural

and educational background of the resources is suitable for Australian schools and is safe for students at appropriate stages of development to view.

In schools without libraries or teacher-librarians, these resource demands fall upon the public library network, which in country NSW is already under funded, and local government is called upon to provide resources which more appropriately should be funded by education systems.

The provision of an adequate school library network is essential to a balanced system of information delivery to Australian country schools, and to ensuring that local government is not burdened by the necessity to provide resources which should be funded by other government instrumentalities.

Given the Australian Government's focus on literacy as a key target for improvement in the outcomes for Australian students, the provision of a quality school library network, staffed by professionals trained in both teaching and librarianship, is an essential element in the nationwide improvement process within school education.

I urge the government to recognise the vital role of school libraries and teacher librarians, particularly in the areas of literacy, lifelong learning, cybersafety, information literacy, and digital literacy skills. Adequate funding together with educational and professional development opportunities are essential to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for young Australians.

I urge the government to endorse the principle of 'a teacher librarian in every school' and to implement the actions necessary to achieve this.

Kind regards,

Sharon Uthmann