



To whom it may concern,

There will be many more experienced and learned people making submissions to this enquiry. I am a teacher of over thirty years experience who has just begun to study for qualification as a teacher librarian. I do feel that this allows me to see the continuing significance of the school library and the central role of the school librarian from more than one vantage point.

The Federal government's focus upon literacy and numeracy, while in itself worthy of some commendation, has continued a narrow focus on the definition and assessment of these two skills. In twenty-first century classrooms much more emphasis should be being placed on inquiry, critical review and the applied use of information for solving problems.

This is not just literacy, even in the expanded form of reading, comprehension and writing. It is about the larger domain of information literacy. To be a successful reader today means to question the source of what you are reading, it means being able to locate the information you need from amongst the ever-expanding amount of information available. It means being able to process information in the form of text, images and sound. It means understanding how to decode, evaluate and use that information for your own purposes and to ethically use that information to persuade others or to solve problems. There is a further ethical imperative to teach students how to be discerning in their own selection of information and information sources.

The role of the library as the information media centre of a school has not changed. While computer access is now more widespread, the teacher librarian remains the school staff member best placed to know the information needs of students, to demonstrate effective and wise practice when it comes to information literacy and to evaluate the development of information literacy skills across the whole curriculum. It is this flexibility or transportability of skills from one context to another that will be required of our work force in this century.

However, the development of these information literacy skills should not be seen merely as an economic tool. They are important to the

maturing of responsible citizens, able to make informed decisions. This is important, whether those citizens are consumers or, as is increasingly the case, creators and manipulators of information themselves.

It makes sense to commit this crucial role of literacy learning to people who are trained, dedicated and engaged in the business of information in the school. It also makes sense to ensure that they are adequately funded for this task. This includes the need to fund access to recognised, authoritative sources of relevant information, both in printed and digital form. This becomes all the more imperative as teachers grapple with the task of implementing a new national curriculum. The need for resources together with the need to develop the full range of literacy skills, including digital literacy, make the role of the teacher librarian even more necessary than before if we are to truly nurture the citizens of the twenty-first century.

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