



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Submitted by Sharron Hewer, Tasmania

Terms of Reference

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- **the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;**

The number of Teacher Librarians in Tasmanian schools has been reducing since at least the early 1990s. The results of a Tasmanian-wide study carried out in 1996 showed that there were 109 teacher librarians in 228 schools and colleges at that time. This provided 875 students for every one Teacher Librarian. Now there are 15 Teacher Librarians in Tasmanian Government schools.

Because of budgetary constraints, Principals are given the invidious job of reducing the number of classroom teachers in their schools in order to provide a qualified Teacher Librarian. This obviously is resulting in the, majority of primary schools in particular, being staffed by teacher aides, with no qualifications in providing materials to support the educational role of the school.

- **the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;**

There have been numerous Tasmanian reports into the staffing, collections and the importance of positive academic results achieved by having a professionally staffed library in the school. These reports date from 1977 through to 1995, and each one points to the academic improvement in a school when a school library is present.

The report with the widest level of influence on these lines is the *Colorado Report* (Keith Curry Lance). This methodology has been duplicated in numerous other American States as well as Australia all with remarkably similar result. They all displaying the link between a school's academic achievements and the presence of a professionally staffed school library.

See also: The Importance of School Libraries by Keith Curry Lance:
<http://www.laurabushfoundation.org/Lance.pdf>

For Australian and International reports, see also:

Research: The value of School Libraries in learning, at
<http://det.wa.edu.au/education/cms/eval/library/value/val2.htm>

- **the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;**

The lack of a Library School at University of Tasmania, or the lack of involvement the importance of the non-classroom professional can provide.