



Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Department's *Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians*.

I am an associate member of the Australian Library and Information Association, and support their stance on **a Teacher Librarian for every school**.

However, in addition to this, I wish to raise the related issue of work conditions for non-teaching librarians who work in schools.

I currently hold the position of Library Manager at a government Secondary College in Melbourne. I maintain a sizeable collection of information resources for the school, and the budget for developing the collections. I am responsible for the library team, and work closely with the school's senior teaching staff in supporting teaching, as well as strategic planning for the library in line with the school's strategic aims. I provide face-to-face assistance with staff and students in the library. I undergo cataloguing of new library resources, and maintain the online library system.

Whilst I do not have any teaching duties, nor do I hold a teaching qualification, I perform my role as a qualified library professional, with a wide range of librarianship and team management experience. In any other library sector (i.e. university, public, corporate), I would be offered a salary that reflected my experience.

However, it is standard practice in government schools to employ non-teaching librarians at an Education Support (ES) level 2-3. Unlike teaching roles, these positions are only offered as a yearly contract, and pay **far less than recommended industry wages for that level of experience**.

Personally, although I am passionate about working as a librarian in schools, I cannot help but feel that my skills would be greater appreciated and recognized in other areas of librarianship. Furthermore, whilst this salary suits my personal needs for the moment, it will likely be unsatisfactory in future years, with a desire for a salary that matches my expertise.

What results is a glass ceiling with school-based library professionals, where they are encouraged to be innovative and strive for excellence and growth in their practice, but are forced to pursue their career in other sectors if they wish to gain greater professional achievement and recognition. It is hard enough for schools to attract new

librarians to the school industry, without also having to experience a brain drain, as librarians become disillusioned and seek professional recognition through other industries.

Just as having teacher librarians employed in all schools is essential, it is also essential that other non-teaching professionals in the school environment are offered work conditions that are in line with ALIA's recommended salary scale, which can be found on the ALIA website

<http://www.alia.org.au/employment/salary.scales/roles.and.pay.html>).

Offering substantially-reduced wages and non-permanent work to library professionals in schools is demeaning to the profession, and only sends the message that schools do not value the skills that a qualified library professional has to offer.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Finegan