The Secretary

Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra 2600

ACT

Submission to the Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools

Reference point 1: the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities

Recent government investment in school library building is to be applauded. However it must not be seen as a 'one off ' contribution with no follow up for the next twenty years. Funding must be on-going and must provide for all facets of the school library situation, including;

*
      adequate staffing (see ref.point 2 for more detail) ;
*
      the development of book, non book and virtual collections;
*
      the provision of appropriate furniture and fittings;
*
      the provision and upkeep of essential technology.

Policies for the improvement of library infrastructure and buildings ignores the issues of professional staff:

*   to organise and maintain the library (physical and virtual spaces);
*   who provide access to a range of sufficient resources that cater for different reading levels, curriculum areas and learning styles;
*   who develop curriculum with teachers which integrates a range of resources such as online, print and audio; and
*   who can provide access to quality virtual resources for curriculum programs.

Reference point 2: the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy

Note: professional staff in school libraries must be Teacher Librarians. Teacher Librarians have a teaching qualification plus experience in the classroom, as well as a postgraduate qualification that is an entry level into the profession of Information Science (Librarianship). As trained teachers TLs are able to:

*   communicate and design curriculum programs with teachers which incorporate a range of resource formats; and
*   fulfil the duty of care requirements as stated in the Education Act.

As Information Specialists, TLs:

*   provide access quality digital resources which support curriculum and students learning outcomes;
*   design programs which train students in the effective, efficient and appropriate use of digital resources.

As Librarians, TLs

*
        use their wide knowledge to provide students with valuable literature experience;
*
        select and maintain collections of quality resources appropriate to student learning.

Research which irrefutably supports the value TLs bring to academic programs and student learning include the importance of school libraries - research (http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/links-schoollib.php <https://webmail.cathednet.wa.edu.au/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/links-schoollib.php>)

Reference point 3: the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

*   Currently there is a shortage of qualified Teacher Librarians in schools across Australia.
*   This is an aging population with grave issues associated with succession planning and sustainability.
*   This is a time when information and the globalisation of economies means that the average citizen must have graduated secondary level education

with some information literacy skills, if they are going to be able to participate in the information economy.
*   Only three institutions currently prepare TLs in recognised Graduate Diploma and Masters Level courses - Charles Stuart University, Edith Cowan University and Queensland University of Technology.
*   Hence many schools have libraries which are run by library technicians, and library officers or parents who are not qualified to provide the educational components.

More information: The Australian School Libraries Project (http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php)

My school is fortunate in having a qualified Teacher Librarian (.7 fte) and a qualified Library Technician (.8 fte). The school is twenty-five years old and throughout that time has always had a Teacher Librarian in charge of the library. As a consequence, the library is well resourced and it maintains a high level of service to the whole school community of students, staff and parents. Collaborative planning between the TL and class teachers ensures students benefit from access to a wide range of resources and specialist teaching. The TL regularly participates in Professional Development at local, state and national levels. The library is located centrally within the school and highly valued by the whole school community.

Reference point 4: the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians

A contact person who works across the curriculum and has a detailed knowledge of information services and resources is required for the effective communication and establishment of links between various levels of government and other institutions when supporting school communities. Teacher Librarians:

*   operate within a highly pro-active professional community and respond to and create links with the public library sector (urban and rural), the Telecentre network (rural and remote), and provide information services for the school community, including teachers, administration and parents and citizens;
*   such links allow for the maximum use of public information utilities and equity of access for all students and their parents;
*   provide programs which assist students in the transition from primary to secondary school and secondary to tertiary studies; and
*   assist in the development of literacy programs for ESL students and their parents.

Reference point 5: the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians

Digital technologies as evidenced by the Federal Government's computers for all students program, does not include training for teachers or students. In schools it is the Teacher Librarian who provides:

*   specialist knowledge, support and professional development training for staff in how to use and embed digital technologies into curriculum;
*   the management of technologies for equitable access;
*   the infrastructure and policy development required for acceptable and appropriate use of a wide range of digital resources and technologies, including cyber bullying, privacy, identity theft and security of information;
*   the educational rationale for the effective inclusion of digital technologies in the curriculum;
*   equal access to a range of digital resources and delivery formats which support the development of high quality literacy programs in schools.

Recommendations: All schools from primary school through to secondary (K-12) school should have a range of professional (teacher librarians), para professional (Library Technicians) and clerical staff in their school libraries. The library should be the focus of learning and curriculum development in the school.

Yours sincerely,

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