# 'From small things big things grow....

# Productive Partnerships-Learning for Life'

## Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians

## in Australian schools

## 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.

## Strand 4

### *The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians*

## Margaret Spillman
### Teacher-Librarian

**Productive Partnerships, Learning for Life** is a collaborative and co-operative program which provides a very practical example of how the two library sectors, one school and the other public, can work together to deliver improved learning outcomes for students. This program between Mackay West State School and Mackay Regional Council Libraries (MRCL) has been operational since 2002. I believe that it is an example of best practice, a fact supported by Dr Alan Bundy in his submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry. In 2005 Productive Partnerships won the IASL/Softlink Excellence Award.

Public libraries provide a learning network which runs parallel with formal school education. Reading and literacy is the core business of schools, especially primary ones like Mackay West but also of public libraries like MRC Libraries. We share common interests and common clients. Our aim has been to develop a school culture which sees the public library as a natural extension of the school library where students move seamlessly between the two. Rather than walk parallel journeys, we have opted to make connections, not for our own sakes but for the learning and skills acquisition of our mutual patron/student base. In simple terms, we aim to connect kids. Our school newsletter regularly contains items about Productive Partnerships. We also use the newsletter to publicize MRC Libraries programs and initiatives.

Dr Bundy is the Australian president of Friends of the Library Australia (FOLA) and in his 2006 Report he noted that there is often a dis-connect between school education and its awareness of school/public libraries. Productive Partnerships is the absolute antithesis of this example. Rather, this program connects kids and provides a networked learning community which is a model of learning for the future.

There are 5 elements to Productive Partnerships. Substantial detail about all five elements is on the school website, www.mackwestss.eq.edu.au

1.  **Library Monitor program**

2.  **Work Experience**

3.  **GOAL**

4.  **Website**

5.  **Database workshops**

1.  **Library Monitor Program has 5 main aims;**
    - ➢ **Providing support for Library Administration**
    - ➢ **Increasing ICT Skills**
    - ➢ **Providing alternative forms of leadership**
    - ➢ **Developing personal skills**
    - ➢ **Forming a strategic alliance with MRC Libraries**

    - 15 Yr 7s selected as part of school leadership program

    - Involvement of MRC Libraries is crucial. It is what sets us apart from other Library Monitor Programs.

Below I have listed some of the contact points between our Libraries which involve students.

Young Peoples staff:

- Attend our Leaders' Induction Ceremony held at Mackay West in February. They are formally invited and are acknowledged on the official program. They present badges as do other community leaders, meet parents, and have an official photo taken.

- Host visits by Mackay West Library Monitors to the two branches of Mackay Libraries, the City Library and Gordon White Library

- Play an official role in the annual Year 7 Graduation ceremony by presenting certificates.

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**Library Monitors are a school version of FOLA.**  In our discussions with Library Monitors the connectedness and similarities between the two Library sectors is continually emphasized. Regular items in the school newsletter keep our school community up-to-date with this program.

## 2. **Work Shadowing**

This began as an Education Queensland initiative, a form of professional development. Library Staff from Mackay West and the Young Peoples' section of MRC Libraries each spent a week at their counterpart's Library. The practical results are still felt to this day.

- Substantial boost in numbers of Mackay Library Members (90%) up from 30 per cent which has been maintained.

- A school survey revealed significant use of library by new members.

- Greatest result came in area of collection development with better understanding by YPL of reading ages and age appropriate material.

- YPL realized that children as young as year three needed age appropriate non-fiction and that the public library was not providing this adequately. This situation was rectified by Mackay West suggesting useful titles/series which had worked.

- Design and signage – better shelving, 'kid friendly'.

- Separation Junior Non-Fiction from Adult Non-Fiction at the City Library Branch.

- More directional signage, eg. Space 520, with subject area labeling across front of shelves which were copied from Mackay West.

- For Mackay West the best thing was sourcing magazines storage cabinets exactly the same as Mackay Libraries

**Note**: We could never have envisaged when we began Work Shadowing, the positive long term effects which would result for both sectors. The benefits continue and are tangible, practical, long lasting and transferable. But what I want to emphasize, is that students are the key beneficiaries of the changes which have resulted from Work Shadowing. Not just Mackay West students, but all who use Mackay libraries.

### 3.  GOAL Grade Ones At the Library

This was an idea which we first saw in use by the Caboolture Public Library. We adapted it to our school situation. GOAL aims to get every Grade 1 student to become a member of Mackay Libraries. The development of early literacy skills is our common goal. The aims of GOAL are heavily advertised to parents through newsletters, meetings etc. Application forms are sent home for completion and then forwarded to MRC Libraries for processing.

Young Peoples' staff share a Storytime session with all four Year 1 classes at Mackay West junior campus.  New MRC Libraries cards are handed out and photos taken for the website. This year has been particularly successful with 47 students applying to become members.  This is almost half of all Year 1 students.  In some years, the GOAL program has seen whole families applying for Library membership.

GOAL supports both libraries' emphasis on importance of acquisition of literacy skills and the development of a love of reading. GOAL emphasises the connectedness of our learning environments and our common literacy goals.

**Testimonial Anne Marie Nicholls**
*I have had email contact with Margaret Spillman, the librarian at Mackay West State School, on whom the article in Connections, on Productive partnerships, was based.  GOAL was part of her program to have public and school libraries promote lifelong learning, and she has been extremely supportive of my endeavours.  Public and school libraries provide the best opportunity for the development of networked learning communities and the acquisition of lifelong learning for all students. (Connections 56, 2006).*

### 4.  Mackay West Website
### http://www.mackwestss.eq.edu.au/productive_partnerships.htm

- ➢ Used to promote, publicize, inform and educate within school community and beyond
- ➢ Home page has link to Mackay Regional Council Libraries
- ➢ Provides models for other school/public libraries to follow
- ➢  Often receive inquiries from internet searches re elements of our program.
- ➢  Most recently we were approached by Whyalla Public Library for details about setting up GOAL

- *I checked out your school's website; very impressive!* **Kim Tabor**
- *I have been checking out your site again and I still think it is marvellous.* **Linda Baigent**
- *As a parent of two girls that attend Mackay West (junior and senior campus), I have just discovered your wonderful web site - via the school newsletter.  As I work full time I believe that your web site has given me a chance to see what is going on at the school.* **Lashona Peterson**

## 5. **Database workshops**

- ➢ In 2006 we trialed Database workshops at our school Library as a result of a very pro-active Information Services Library Assistant.

- ➢ 2007 Cool Clicks and Data Dudes has continued and expanded to other schools.

- ➢ Mackay West Library provides a safe environment/supportive environment for MRC Libraries to trial various initiatives.

- ➢ Very real advantages for Public Library staff to visit schools and also for us to expand our contact base to include another section, Information Services of the public library.

- ➢ This was a fabulous opportunity for the public library to expand its membership base.

**Message posted to OZTEL Net**
*I have been following the Databases issue with interest. In conjunction with Mackay Regional Council Libraries, my school, Mackay West State School, has offered database workshops for the past four years. Four years ago, we worked with the Information Services of our public library to develop a pilot program called Cool Clicks and Data Dudes. This was trialled on all 100 year 7 students at Mackay West. This program is documented on our school website* [www.mackwestss.eq.edu.au](www.mackwestss.eq.edu.au). *Follow the links to Library, productive partnerships and then Year 7 orientation. So successful was it that the year 7 teachers unanimously requested that the program continue and it is now an integral part of term 1 activities.*

*There are many benefits; increased public library membership, greater familiarity with what the public library can offer and of course the most important benefit, in my opinion, both sector libraries working together. This program has undergone a name change and is now called Knowledge Navigators.*

*The program has been taken up by both private and state schools, from year 7 to year 12. More than 2000 students in the Mackay area participated in Knowledge Navigators in 2008. Much more detail is provided on our website.*

## Conclusion

**Productive Partnerships-Learning for Life** has been very successful and is an excellent example of how a school library can partner with another institution, the public Library. Mackay West School Library and Mackay Regional Council Libraries have pioneered a way of working effectively together. We have presented Productive Partnerships at many school and public library conferences throughout Australia and overseas. The program has also been documented for professional journals such as Synergy.

Apart from schools; the other great educator of people is the public library system. When school and public libraries work together, when students experience 'connectedness' between the two, when the 'parallel' journeys intersect, the beneficiaries are students, whom both library sectors serve. For this reason I believe that Productive Partnerships- Learning for Life is very worthy of consideration by the Parliamentary Inquiry.