Submission: 'Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools'.

I am a qualified teacher librarian working in a Catholic secondary school. We are lucky to have at present 1.2 FTE teacher librarians within the school, but this is not the case in other schools. Many schools do not have a qualified teacher librarian in their school. This has an impact on quality of services within the school.

The University of Wollongong is finding that the majority of students that start undergraduate studies do not have the information literacy skills required. It is essential that we help the students develop these skills to assist them in becoming 'life long learners' (Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), 2001).

Learning for the Future (2001) discusses the fact that there is an increasing amount of information being available; what we know today as true may not be true tomorrow. They believe that to be able to use information effectively may be more important than gaining knowledge. It is seen that effective learners are students that are able to find and use information as they need it (Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), 2001). Having access to online resources opens up an 'information jungle' (Johnson, 2005). Most students use Google when they need information and this yields thousands of possible sources of information. As Johnson (2005) points out, it is the challenge of the educator to help learners acquire the skills to find, evaluate and select resources. It is the teacher librarian that has the expertise to teach students and teachers these skills.

Library literacy skills must be incorporated throughout the school curriculum, not just as isolated information skills lessons (Thomas, O'Sullivan, & Michael, 2004; Haycock 1991). It is through collaboration of the teacher librarian and the teachers that the students can be prepared with the necessary information skills to help them in the future (Thomas, O'Sullivan, & Michael, 2004).

This year I have been given extra hours to address this issue. Sue Spence (2005) believes that it is not practical to work directly with each student or for that matter every class. However by working with the teachers, the teacher librarian can affect the learning outcomes of the students. For this reason we will be working with teachers to improve their information skills and believe this will have a flow on affect to the students.

There has been discussion that in the future there will be no books so no need for libraries and librarians. Books will continue to exist even if they exist in other formats. Whatever the format there will be a need to purchase, and organise access to these books. It still will be the role of the teacher librarian to resource the curriculum.

I am only a relatively new teacher librarian. I was attracted to this occupation for a number of reasons one being the involvement with Information and communication technologies (ICTs). Teacher librarians have been in the forefront with the use of ICTs. They have embraced the new technologies, organising access to evaluated websites, using online databases, webquests as well as developing library websites and using web 2.0 tools to name a few. These are all part of my current role.

There is much research evidence that students attain higher levels of achievement when there is an adequately resourced school library staffed by a teacher librarian.

> Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that a strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community. (Lonsdale, 2003, p. 27)

What is the use of the Government investing millions of dollars in new library buildings if there are no new books to entice children in, and no teacher librarians to support a reading culture?

A study completed by Edith Cowan University and published in May 2009 suggested that 50% of school libraries in Australia had to manage on less than $10,000 a year for new materials, while teacher librarians (where they were still employed by schools), were under pressure to spend more time outside the school library.

I urge the Government to recognise the vital role of school libraries and teacher librarians. Adequate funding together with educational and professional development opportunities are essential to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for young Australians.

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Supported by Roslyn Stewart

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