

Linda Blake



I have chosen to write this submission as I feel that the terms of the inquiry are significant to the future of our students' education and that all students in Australia have the right to equal access to a well resourced school library.

I have been a teacher for 20 years and have fulfilled a number of roles, including ESL teacher, classroom teacher and literacy support teacher. I am currently a teacher librarian in training (2nd year), and I am working 4 days a week in a school library. It is in this role, that I see, I can have the greatest impact on students' literacy, as I am able to help them hone their reading skills to find out the information they want or need, and use it effectively. I have discovered it is one thing for a student to find information, especially on the internet, it is quite another for them to find appropriate information and interpret it to answer the questions they have! I see part of my role as working with teachers to help students develop these skills.

With reference to the terms I inquiry, I would also like to make the following points:

- * The new school libraries are a great investment, but will become expensive cupboards if strategies aren't put in place to ensure they are well stocked with books, computers and electronic resources, and the staff [both qualified teacher librarians and support staff] to ensure it is a relevant, accessible and used teaching space.
- * Having qualified teacher librarians assists students to the develop skills that enables them to access the information they need, and understand what they find. Teacher

Librarians also promote and support the efforts of classroom teachers to help children gain a love of reading with books they can choose themselves.

- * Digital technologies don't mean we can forgo a teacher librarian, but in fact mean a teacher librarian is all the more needed as students learn to navigate the information super highway. The teacher librarian can develop web access points, review and select online websites, learning objects, webquests etc. They will continue to work in collaboration with teachers to ensure they support the curriculum with quality resources, digital or printed as appropriate for the particular needs of the community they serve.
- * It is difficult to get teacher librarians when there is no certainty to the position. Even when they are employed, there is a good possibility that they will be taken off the program to be used for other purposes. The Federal government needs to ensure that funding is tied to include the provision of staffing and resources for all school libraries and that places are available in universities to train the staff needed to fill the positions.

I would like to speak personally to this last point:

I am only a temporary teacher for this year and hope to gain permanent employment on completion of my course, however, that there will be positions to applied for is not guaranteed. Recent developments in NSW, the state I teach in, are not encouraging.

I am aware that not all states, or school systems have teacher librarians as a standard feature of their staffing component. This is something that needs to be addressed Australia wide as it is a matter of equity. Could it be that in our country, only students in high fee paying schools will get access to good library services? Could it be a matter of having enough money, or being born in the right state, or even the right school catchment area, as to whether your school has a teacher librarian or not. This is something I feel that the Federal Government really needs to address.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Federal Government for the funding they have put into schools, the boost was much needed. I would also like to thank the government for the opportunity to address the committee holding this inquiry. It is hoped that from my submission and that of many others, you will see the value of having a well resourced and well staffed library for **all students** in Australia.

Regards

Linda Blake