



Submission to the Government Inquiry into School Libraries (AEU Tasmanian Branch)

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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents over 6000 teachers and educators in the early childhood, primary, secondary, and post year ten sectors of Tasmanian education. Teacher Librarians and other school library staff make a significant contribution to school communities and the AEU welcomes this inquiry into their roles, staffing and funding.

The inclusion of new libraries as a key element of the Rudd Government's *Building the Education Revolution* schools infrastructure funding program is a recognition of the vital importance of school libraries to school communities. Unfortunately, despite this recognition, it remains the case that there is a crisis with regard to school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australia.

The AEU welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry, and notes that this AEU Tasmanian Branch submission is intended to complement a more comprehensive, AEU Federal submission.

This AEU submission addresses only the first three terms of reference of the inquiry as follows.

1. *The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities*

Federal Government *Building the Education Revolution* funding has meant that many Tasmanian Government schools will now have new library facilities, yet there has been no accompanying investment in appropriate professional and support staffing or funding for library resource materials. Recent State Government budgetary restraints following the Global Financial Crisis resulted in many library personnel who were responsible for supporting state school libraries' automation systems losing their positions, leaving schools with minimal support.

Much has changed since the 1970s when school library funding was readily available through a combination of State and Commonwealth grants supplementing individual school contributions.

Some of these changes include:

1. The phasing out of library grants to schools
2. The onslaught of Government funding cutbacks following the CRESAP report in the early 1990's, which affected all areas of school staffing and funding and resulted in the loss of 1056 school/college employees, including 696 teachers
3. In 1991, as a direct result of CRESAP cuts, secondary school Teacher Librarians lost their separate staffing entitlement (primary school teachers suffered this fate some years earlier)
4. Post CRESAP, schools became more self-managing as the Education Department increasingly devolved responsibility to the schools

5. The integration of computers and access to the internet within schools, as well as other information communication technologies (ICTs)
6. In Tasmania, there is no longer a specific job description for the position of Teacher Librarian – this reflects the standing of this position within the DoE

The implications for the staffing and funding of school libraries as a result of these changes has been the gradual erosion of library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities. The AEU Tasmanian Branch has documented the developing inequity evident in the resourcing of school libraries in a 2008 policy background paper:

Without an appropriate funding formula and guidelines for school libraries, the existing inequitable funding arrangements will continue to allow some libraries to become marginalised through underfunding and neglect, while others are prioritised within their schools and are able to provide quality print and multimedia resources as well as access to emerging technologies, electronic databases, the internet and other online resources.

For some school libraries, rather than integrating computers into the library as another valued source of information to be used as an effective research tool for teaching and learning, the overwhelming priority has been purchasing, updating and maintaining computers within the school. This has often been in direct competition with the funding provided for other research and recreational resources within libraries, creating an imbalance within library collections and their capacity to support quality literature and resource-based teaching programs, as well as the professional learning requirements of staff (See Appendix A).

In short, the result of systemic neglect of school libraries has been inequity of access to school library resources across state schools. The AEU 2009 School Libraries Staffing and Resourcing Survey confirmed a deepening of this inequity. Some of the key findings of this survey are outlined on pages 3-6 of this document.

2. The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy

Teacher Librarians, when staffing levels permit, work in collaboration with teachers to achieve the outcomes described in each of the five interrelated domains that encompass the role of the school information service.

These include:

- Developing the Physical Environment
- Learners and Learning
- Providing Access to Information
- Resourcing the Curriculum
- Teachers and Teaching

(Learning for the Future, 2001, p 6)

They are responsible for integration of these functions into a responsive and dynamic resource and information service for the school community.

Teacher Librarians also have three major roles as follows:

- Teacher Librarians as curriculum leaders, for example - 'Maintain(ing) literacy as a high priority, engaging students in reading, viewing and listening for understanding and enjoyment.' (Learning for the Future, 2001, p 61)
- Teacher Librarians as information specialists, for example - 'Provid(ing) specialist assistance to students using the school information service facility for independent reading, viewing and listening.' (ibid, p 61)
- Teacher Librarians as information services managers, for example - 'Develop(ing) and implement(ing) strategies for evaluating the resource collection and for determining curriculum and student needs within the context of identified school priorities.' (ibid, p 62)

3. The factors influencing recruiting and development of school librarians

The lack of courses and access to courses for the preparation and training of Teacher Librarians is compounded by the fact that there are now no identified positions as "Teacher Librarian" in Tasmanian government schools. It is at the discretion of the school principal to deploy any teacher to the role of library manager, and then only if the school's staffing allocation permits. Particularly in primary schools, the idea of deploying a dedicated "Teacher Librarian" is in direct competition with the school's needs for other specialist staff, including physical education, music, language and arts teachers as well as the provision of programs such as, in some schools, literacy coaching and behaviour management .

In addition, there are so few Teacher Librarians currently working in schools that it is imperative that measures be taken to recruit new staff who are either qualified Teacher Librarians or are prepared to undertake the necessary course(s) to become Teacher Librarians.

AEU School Libraries Staffing and Resourcing Survey

Conducted in first term, 2009, this survey questionnaire was sent to all Tasmanian government K-12 (n=202) schools. The AEU received responses from 130 schools which was a return rate of 64 per cent. Some schools that did not submit a survey return noted that there was no staff member responsible for the school library and therefore no one who could complete the return. The survey asked about staffing levels, resources and the kinds of activities for which the school library was used. Larger primary and high schools as well as secondary colleges were better able to provide library staffing, even if this was a library technician or teacher assigned to the library rather than a qualified Teacher Librarian.

Fig 1. Staffing in Tasmanian School Libraries

Role	Total Number of Schools	Sector Break down	Number Of Schools	Overall % from schools that responded	Average Hours of Library Staffing per week
Teacher Librarian	33	Primary	14	16	21.75
		High School	13	52	21.6
		District High	2	14	16
		Senior Secondary	4	100	70.25
Librarian	1	High School	1	4	30
Teacher Assigned to Library	22	Primary	15	17	12.8
		High School	3	12	6.8
		District High	3	21	8.7
		Senior Secondary	1	25	29
Library Technician	87	Primary	52	60	15.3
		High School	21	84	24.6
		District High	10	71	24.1
		Senior Secondary	4	100	53.8
Teacher Assistant	45	Primary	33	38	8.4
		High school	6	24	24.6
		District High	4	29	16.4
		Senior Secondary	2	50	18

The AEU survey indicated that only 33 schools out of 130 schools responding (or 25%) had a Teacher Librarian. In primary, high and district schools the number of hours the Teacher Librarian was assigned to the library was considerably less than this. In all except one large high school and the 4 senior secondary colleges that responded, there was only one Teacher Librarian and they were part-time.

When the size of the school is taken into account, the shortfall in staffing for school libraries becomes apparent. This was calculated from recommended staffing levels laid down in Learning for the Future (ASLA, 2001, p.68)

Fig 2. School Library Staffing Shortfalls (hours per week)

Sector and No-of Schools	Teacher Librarian	Library Technician	Other Support Staff	All Staff
Senior Secondary-4	20.9	41.5	11.3	73.7
High Schools-25	26.6	21.4	4.3	52.3
District High Schools-13	13.5	49.4	6.5	69.4
Primary Schools-86	12.9	7.9	6.7	27.5

The AEU 2009 survey found that schools libraries are used for a wide range of learning and other school activities. The range of these activities was reported from the 130 responding schools as follows:

Fig 3. Activities Occurring in Tasmanian School Libraries

General Heading	Activities described.
Literacy Based	Book week Research tutorials Book Share Book Fair Writing Groups Quite Reading Groups Book Launches National Simultaneous Story time Author Visits Debating Reading Rocks Program Literacy Programs including small group teaching NAPLAN testing ESL literacy programs Birth to 4 Reading Groups Reading Magic Program Reading Recovery Program Oral Language Groups CELO Programs community library reading
Competitions – Literacy focused	MS Readathon Reader’s Cup Premier’s Reading Challenge Write a book in a day competition Academic Competitions
Tutorial/Extra teaching	Research Groups Mentoring Small group maths tutorials Music teaching ICT teaching Learning support (unspecified)
General Activities	Chess club travelling community displays Parent groups Mini Gym Dance rehearsals School Banking Wet weather supervision Robotics practice Computer games

	Watching TV social events Medical room use/organisation of audiovisual equipment.
Meetings	Parents and Friends Staff meetings Staff professional development Assemblies Guest Speakers School Council meetings New staff induction

Other than formally timetabled library skills lessons which tend to occur only in those schools which have qualified Teacher Librarians, Tasmanian school libraries are used for a range of school activities. The number and quality of many of these activities varies across schools depending on the availability of library staff to assist.

As well as collecting quantitative data on school library staffing and resourcing, the AEU's survey called for general comment. Some of this was extensive and chronicled the systematic devaluing of Teacher Librarians across Tasmanian state schools. One example which typifies the responses of Teacher Librarians and was submitted as part of the 2009 survey, is included at Appendix C.

Many of the following recommendations form part of the AEU Teacher Librarians and School Libraries Policy 2008; others have been added in response to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

Recommendations

1. **There should be MCEECDYA agreed national recognition of the importance of the discrete position of Teacher Librarian as information manager and key curriculum resource coordinator within schools.**
2. **Scholarships or other forms of funding and incentives should be introduced to encourage teachers to complete an approved course in Librarianship.**
3. **A centralised support structure for school libraries needs to be established to provide leadership, professional development and management advice.**
4. **A funding formula and guidelines for school libraries should established to ensure a minimum per capita amount is spent on library resources to maintain and develop collections and services. Funding should be provided centrally by the DoE with schools able to fund over and above this level if it is considered a priority.**
5. **Once sufficient trained personnel become available, school libraries should be staffed by appropriately qualified Teacher Librarians and support staff**

and should aim for the benchmark levels as recommended in *Learning for the Future*.

6. For appropriately qualified Teacher Librarians, a staffing entitlement that is separate from the school staffing quota should be established, in order that the staffing of school libraries is not compromised due to local budgetary decisions.
7. To ensure sufficient Teacher Librarians are available to staff DoE schools, teacher trainees and existing teachers should be recruited as Teacher Librarians by offering incentives such as: DoE sponsored courses to ensure a supply of Teacher Librarians with appropriate post graduate library qualifications, for example, the UTAS Graduate Diploma of Information Management.
8. Teachers and Teacher Librarians should be provided with sufficient flexibility in timetabling to allow them to actively work together to cooperatively integrate information literacy and other essential literacies into the curriculum. Also, in recognition of the duality of their role, Teacher Librarians should be provided with sufficient administrative time for library management responsibilities.

Bibliography

Learning for the future 2nd ed (2001) Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South

AEU Teacher Librarians and School Libraries Policy 2008. Retrieved from:
http://aeutas.org.au/fileadmin/user_upload/Policies/AEU_Teacher_Librarians_and_School_Libraries_Policy2008.pdf

APPENDIX A

AEU Tasmanian Branch Background Paper (2008): REAFFIRMING THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Most, if not all, of the nearly 10,000 schools across Australia have a school library. This was largely due to generous Commonwealth funding in the 1960's and 70's, but this funding was only possible as a result of the widespread support for school libraries from a range of advocacy groups, including parent bodies and the Australian Teacher's Federation, who championed school libraries and the need for appropriate staffing of these new purpose-built facilities.

In deciding who would be best suited to staffing the new school libraries so as to optimise their value to the school community, the decision was made to have someone with dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship. This combination was considered the ideal mix; providing both the necessary knowledge, skills and experience in pedagogy and teaching, as well as library and information management practices, thereby allowing the position to cater for the specific needs of the teachers and students who were their principal clientele.

In Tasmania, this position is most commonly known as the Teacher Librarian.

What has changed for school libraries?

A lot has changed since those halcyon days when funding was readily available through a combination of State and Commonwealth grants to school libraries supplementing individual school contributions.

Some of these changes include:

1. The phasing out of library grants to schools
2. The onslaught of CRESAP in the 1990's, which wreaked havoc on all areas of school staffing and funding and resulted in the loss of 1056 school/college employees, including 696 teachers
3. In 1991, as a direct result of CRESAP, secondary school Teacher Librarians lost their separate staffing entitlement (primary school teachers suffered this fate some years earlier)
4. Post CRESAP, schools became more self-managing as the Education Department increasingly devolved responsibility to the schools
5. The integration of computers and access to the internet within schools, as well as other information communication technologies (ICTs)

The implications for the staffing and funding of school libraries as a result of these changes has been the gradual erosion of library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities.

Library funding is at the discretion of the individual school and levels of funding between schools differ markedly. While some schools fund appropriately many more have seen the library as an easy target for funding cuts, particularly when there is such fierce competition within schools for a finite budget. Compound these cuts with inflationary trends and the buying power of the school library is severely diminished.

Without an appropriate funding formula and guidelines for school libraries, the existing inequitable funding arrangements will continue to allow some libraries to become marginalised through under funding and neglect, while others are prioritised within their schools and are able to provide quality print and multimedia resources as well as access to emerging technologies, electronic databases, the internet and other online resources.

For some school libraries, rather than integrating computers into the Library as another valued source of information to be used as an effective research tool for teaching and learning, the overwhelming priority has been purchasing, updating and maintaining computers within the school. This has often been in direct competition with the funding provided for other research and recreational resources within school libraries, creating an imbalance within library collections and their capacity to support quality literature and resource-based teaching programs, as well as the professional learning requirements of staff.

The need to resource teaching and learning programs and meet the ever-evolving curricular requirements necessitates that all aspects of the library's collection remains current, relevant and engaging for its users. This is a basic requirement for any school library and should be the norm rather than the exception. Equitable access to an appropriately funded and resourced library is the right of all staff and students in all schools.

What has changed for Teacher Librarians?

1. Critical decline in the number of Teacher Librarians has reduced their capacity to be advocates for school libraries and their own essential role within those libraries.
2. Reduced levels of support staff as well as increased time on classroom teaching have made it increasingly difficult for Teacher Librarians to perform their cooperative planning, teaching and evaluating roles with other teachers on top of their library management responsibilities.

3. The role of the Teacher Librarian has changed in response to societal changes and their impact upon schools and school libraries.

Some of these changes include—

- The amount and quality of information potentially available to staff and students
 - The increasingly sophisticated technological means of accessing information and the added responsibilities of the Teacher Librarian in assisting staff and students with the use of this technology
 - The shift from content-based education to an outcomes-based education
 - Emphasis on information literacy skills in addition to other essential literacies
 - Integration of new technologies and their effects upon teaching and learning within the school library
4. Shortage of Teacher Librarians and also financial concerns within some schools has increasingly led to library technicians or even unqualified personnel being asked to replace Teacher Librarians.
 5. The axing of the *Graduate Diploma of Librarianship* course at UTAS which was only re-established as recently as 2002/3 as the *Graduate Diploma of Information Management*.

Arguably, the school libraries most damaging loss is the decline in staffing levels and in particular, the unsustainable decline in Teacher Librarians currently filling positions within our public schools.

The number of Teacher Librarians in Tasmanian DoE schools has now reached critical levels with most of them close to or over 50 and none below 30 years of age. This 'greying' of the profession was highlighted in a study done by the State Library of Tasmania back in November 2000, when it identified a loss of almost 50% of Teacher Librarians in a four-year period between 1996 and 2000.ⁱ

A more recent report conducted in December 2005 confirms this grim picture, with statistics indicating that by 2015, if there are no more Teacher Librarians recruited, there will only be 15 Teacher Librarians remaining in Tasmanian state school libraries.ⁱⁱ

The lack of any Librarianship course for so many years has taken its toll and the resurrected UTAS course has failed to address the existing skills shortage. Those graduates who have pursued the new UTAS Graduate Diploma of Information Management course have not appeared as Teacher Librarians in the Government sector. One can only assume that they have found alternative employment in the information industry, private sector or within the Catholic and independent school system.

We need to attract these graduates into our Government schools by ensuring there are jobs available for them. This requires a separate staffing formula that provides a level of security and assurance that the positions are there to fill upon satisfactory completion of their course.

Unfortunately this may not be enough to address the critical shortage of Teacher Librarians within the Government sector. Enrolments in the UTAS course are few and the numbers graduating even fewer. To encourage more teacher trainee and teacher enrolments in approved library and information management courses, the costs involved in upskilling, and similar incentives, should be met by Government sponsorship.

Most other Australian states have already recognised the need for a separate staffing entitlement for Teacher Librarians and some of these have also introduced Government sponsored retraining programs for teachers, for example, the 'Retrain' program offered in NSW. **(SEE APPENDIX B)**

This decline in Teacher Librarian numbers is in part due to financial stringencies within schools, which have resulted in the 'cutting back' of specialist areas to prioritise other areas within their school or sometimes voting off one specialist teacher in favour of another. This process occurs repeatedly, particularly in primary schools, creating undue stress for all staff when a colleague and friend is 'traded off' for another.

Studies conducted in Canada and the USA have identified this marginalisation of specialists as a particular problem in a devolved education system like Tasmania's. Their research concluded that where no separate equity measures existed, school counsellors and Teacher Librarians generally lose out to classroom teachers who are in the majority. ⁱⁱⁱ

Currently, Tasmanian Guidance officers (school counsellors), who are similarly qualified to Teacher Librarians, are on a separate staffing entitlement.

The existing skills shortage has meant that Principals requesting Teacher Librarians in 2006/07 had difficulty locating any. This exacerbates the problem by necessitating the employment of underqualified or unqualified staff to fill the position. This situation is due to worsen as retirements continue and dissatisfaction with worsening conditions forces many Teacher Librarians to return to the classroom, leaving schools with little choice but to go without a Teacher Librarian.

The changing role of the Teacher Librarian

According to an extensive review of post 1990 research on school libraries by Lonsdale (2003) there has been

...an explosion in information production and the development of information communication technologies (ICT's); changes in educational philosophy and practice, including a greater focus on learning outcomes, inquiry-based learning, evidence-based practice and school accountability; and changes in the nature and role of the Teacher Librarian as a result of these developments.^{iv}

The shift from content-based to outcomes-based education; from what is taught, to the skills and understandings the student needs to acquire, has highlighted the importance of the processes of learning and the development of information skills through resource-based (inquiry-based) learning. Teacher Librarians have always had a role in the provision of information for educational programs, and teaching research skills to students to enable them to define, locate, select, organise, present and evaluate information, only now the breadth of information and the technology available to access it has made this role even more crucial.

In adopting and adapting new and emerging technologies to meet the information requirements of staff and students, Teacher Librarians have developed expertise in areas such as: using electronic databases; creating library websites for the school's Intranet; learning how to use search engines and secure websites to source appropriate sources of information; using digital technology, such as CD ROMs and PVRs; as well as the use of streaming media such as 'clickview'. This expertise has enabled the Teacher Librarian to become the interface between the technology and the user, facilitating access to ICTs, as well as other more traditional print and non-print resources; making them ideally suited to working cooperatively with other teachers to plan, teach and evaluate information skills.

According to Bonnano (1996)—

Students who enter schooling today must develop skills to become independent lifelong learners. A key focus of Teacher Librarians has been to develop retrieval and interpretation skills with students. With the global nature of information it is important to emphasise the evaluation of the retrieved information; to provide our users with an ability to assess information and test for authenticity, reliability, bias and prejudice. Accessing and using information in an electronic world has become a complex task. Now, more than ever, students need to develop information literacy skills within a resource-based learning environment to survive in the Information Age and beyond.^v

It is important to stress that information literacy is only one area of a Teacher Librarian's teaching responsibility and that their role encompasses everything from promoting literature and actively engaging readers, to working with classes on 'how to create a bibliography' to professional development for staff on areas such as copyright, plagiarism and using online catalogues.

The role of a Teacher Librarian is diverse and challenging but one thing that has been demonstrated definitively in landmark research both internationally and within Australia is that:

SCHOOL LIBRARIES + TEACHER LIBRARIANS = POSITIVE AND MEASURABLE IMPACT ON STUDENTS.

Much of the research has been conducted in America, but as recently as 2003, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) conducted a review of National and International research from 1990 to 2002. In this study, Lonsdale identified the positive impact of school library programs on student achievement, whether those achievements were measured as test scores, reading scores, literacy or learning more generally—

1. **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;**
2. **a strong computer network connecting the library's resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement;**
3. **the quality of the collection has an impact on student learning;**
4. **test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library;**
5. **collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers;**
6. **a print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability, and writing style;**
7. **integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students' mastery of both content and information seeking skills;**
8. **libraries can make a positive difference to students' self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning.^{vi}**

AEU (Tasmanian Branch) Research into School Libraries and Staffing Issues

There has already been a considerable amount of Tasmanian-based research into the funding and staffing of school libraries, partly as a result of surveys and discussion papers by professional bodies such as ASLA (Australian School Library Association), ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association), the State Library of Tasmania and, of course, the AEU itself.

At the end of 2001, the AEU conducted a survey of Tasmanian Schools and received responses from 102 workplaces. Schools were asked to discuss issues from the State Library of Tasmania paper—*Enhancing Student Outcomes with Improved Information Services and Provisioning*, and asked to vote on three recommendations:

1. That all Teacher Librarians be excluded from the school's classroom teaching quota and placed on a central formula in the central staffing establishment.
2. That the State Government sponsor enrolments in Interstate Teacher Librarian courses. (This is still valid, even though UTAS has now re-established a Post Grad. Course for prospective Teacher Librarians) and
3. That school library benchmarks be established to reflect national standards for services and program delivery and that schools be resourced to these levels.

All three recommendations received an endorsement from 93% of the 102 workplaces that responded.

This suggests that there is already a groundswell of support within schools for:

- Improving the quality of resourcing and staffing in school libraries;
- Ensuring that Teacher Librarian shortages are addressed; and
- Providing equitable access to Teacher Librarians to maximise the outcomes of all public school students.

These three recommendations form the basic tenets of the recommendations that are currently before you.

APPENDIX B

NSW DoE sponsored retraining in Teacher Librarianship **Teacher Librarian Retraining Program**



The *Teacher Librarian Retraining Program* is one of the strategies developed by the NSW Department of Education to meet workforce need for Teacher Librarians.

Applicants undertake a program of study that meets the Department's requirements for accreditation as a Teacher Librarian.

The retraining program:

- is a post-graduate tertiary award
- involves distance study with workshop sessions
- includes a mentoring support program.

To be considered for selection, applicants must:

- be qualified graduate teachers
- be permanently appointed to the position of the Teacher Librarian in a Departmental school, without accreditation as a Teacher Librarian
- be prepared to undertake the role of the Teacher Librarian for a period of two years following successful completion of retraining.

Support provided:

- payment of course fees
- study relief
- residential travel and accommodation costs if applicable
- one-off general purpose allowance.

Teachers are targeted for retraining through the Department's School Staffing Unit each year.

Interested teachers can view the [Information Package](#) or contact the Retraining Unit on 1300 300

Endnotes

¹ State Library of Tasmania 2000, *Enhancing Student Outcomes with Improved Information Services and Provisioning, discussion paper*, Hobart, p. 10

² ASLA-Tasmania 2005, *DoE School Libraries in Crisis: Issues Compromising the Viability of School Libraries in Tasmania*, Hobart, p. 8

³ Hull, R. 2001, *Leading the Way: The Changing Role of the Teacher Librarian*, AEU Tasmanian Branch, Hobart, pp 5-6

⁴ Lonsdale, M. 2003, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, Camberwell, Vic., ACER, p. 1

⁵ Patten, M. 1999, *Information Literacy and the Role of the Teacher Librarian*, Hobart, Library and Information Centre, p. 2

⁶ Lonsdale, M. 2003, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, Camberwell, Vic., ACER, p. 1

APPENDIX C

Except from response to the AEU Tasmanian Branch 2009 School Libraries Staffing and Resourcing Survey

It concerns me that it has taken so long for this issue to come to the fore. Every time an AEU official has visited any schools that I have been at over the past 15 or more years, I have raised the issue of teacher-librarians being on staffing quota and at the bottom of the heap when end-of-year school staffing is being done. When a school is forced to choose between large classes containing several inclusion students, or similar classes that allow these students to be spread over a larger number of classes, senior staff really can't be blamed for the choices they make. It is pleasing to see that AEU is finally seeing the light and agitating the teacher-librarians to be removed from the quota – it's just a shame that it has taken so long and they will have to make up a huge amount of lost ground. For me personally it's a case of too little, too late.

My progression is probably typical of most. I taught for some years before retraining as a teacher-librarian. I was a full-time teacher-librarian until 1991 when a drop in student numbers meant that the best situation I could be offered was 0.8 teacher-librarian and 0.2 'dogsbody'. I chose to drop my hours to 0.8 and remain as teacher-librarian only, an understandable choice for a specialist. Due to ongoing staffing issues, over the next few years I gradually lost time in the library as I was allocated to Flying Start, teaching a primary class for a day a week, and convenient on-site relief.

In an effort to retain my work hours in my area of expertise, the next step I was compelled to take was to split my time as teacher-librarian between one primary and one high school – two days each. At the primary school I was taking 15 classes in the two days and trying to keep the library running as smoothly as possible with only 9 hours of aide time weekly – a hard task. At the high school I was able to be a 'proper' teacher-librarian and loved it. Unfortunately student numbers were dropping...

I am now at two high schools, both quite small, so both are subject to end-of-year staffing issues. Last year, in my four working days, I was running two libraries catering for the needs of around 450 students, teaching two lines of options and tutoring an ESL student of 0.05. I am responsible for budgets totaling over \$10,000, ensuring both schools achieve the best possible outcomes within the budgetary constraints.

At the end of the year one of my high schools planned a major restructuring. I was told that since I was on the staffing quota I would be required to take an extra 0.1 teaching load. As a (long-ago) *primary* teacher I was reluctant to do this, particularly as I was given no indication of either grade or subject, and I

would not only be teaching outside my area of training, but would also have to learn different methods of assessment and reporting. Any required planning time was to have been taken off my library hours. I have willingly learnt new skills through personal professional development where they have complemented my current qualifications, or where they have been required to enhance student outcomes such as in Flying Start, ESL and in my role as Online Learning support teacher.

As this is my final year before taking extended leave ahead of retirement, I have made the decision to save sanity at the expense of income, rather than accept an untenable work arrangement. I now work 0.63 (3 days 2 hours per week) spread over four days. I am still running two libraries and teaching two lines of options, but in even less available time than last year. By the end of the week I feel as though I am only just surviving. There is no time for many of the extras that I used to do. To add insult to injury, this latest work arrangement comes at a considerable financial cost to me.

No doubt there are others like me, and while there are current staffing limitations placed on schools, the only solution I see is to remove teacher-librarians from the staffing quota. I know of schools that are employing library technicians to run the library and have by stealth, added extra duties until they are expected to do the full teacher-librarian job. The principals involved don't see that there is any problem with this, despite it being a case of exploitation, and of dubious legality. Each principal that does this means that there is less school library being run by a teacher-librarian who is qualified to provide a service that will enhance the students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Qualified teacher-librarians have an immensely important role to play within schools at all levels. They are able to enhance student learning experiences and outcomes by providing the best resources to support the needs of students of all abilities and interests, and they provide invaluable support for teachers. With the ongoing reduction of teacher-librarian numbers in the state there is a risk that these skills and expertise will be lost, to the detriment of education and students within Tasmania.