



Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

16th April, 2010

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians

On behalf of Public Libraries SA I would like to contribute the following comments to the Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians.

Public Libraries SA is the peak body in South Australia representing public libraries, joint use libraries and community libraries. Membership is subscription based and paid by the employing authority. One of the objects of Public Libraries SA is to advise the Libraries Board, State and Federal Governments and other relevant bodies on matters relating to library and information services.

We believe that it is timely that this inquiry is being held as the influx of Federal funds through the Building Education Revolution has resulted in an increase in the number of new library buildings. However as we know a building does not make a library – it requires adequate resources and trained staff. Research evidence shows that students attain higher levels of achievement when there is an adequately resourced school library, staffed by teacher librarians.

We have addressed each term of reference with dot points outlining our concerns and thoughts.

1. ***The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities.***
 - The Federal Government has provided a platform for the further development and enhancement of school libraries through the

provision of infrastructure funding to schools. These need to be supported by appropriately qualified and professional teacher librarians who ensure students can access the information they need.

- State initiated programs such as the Little Big Book Club and the Premier's Reading Challenge are not funded and rely on their success and sustainability through public libraries funding (through local government).
- The introduction of the national curriculum has led to increased expectations being placed on teacher librarians without an accompanying increase in resourcing or training. For example to ensure success young people will need:
 - skills in directed research (as for the newSACE in SA)
 - information literacy skills
 - access to the primary sources of information

To achieve this there needs to be adequately trained staff in school libraries and a benchmark for teacher librarian skills. Training for teacher librarians in accessing on-line resources is critical to the successful implementation of the national curriculum, as is the provision of funding for print and online subscription based resources.

- Resources are needed to ensure the outcomes/findings of the AEDI research can be addressed and therefore make a difference.
- 2. *The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy***
- Continual 'up skilling' of teacher librarians in on-line environments and information literacy to keep students abreast of current technology is needed.
 - Need for openness to the use of social networking tools for learning.
 - Staff need to feel valued to maintain a passion for what they do.
 - Nationally endorsed statistics (My school, AEDI, National Participation Agreement on literacy and numeracy) need to be used to inform differential staffing levels (eg identifying 'high needs' schools).
- 3. *The factors influencing recruitment and the development of school librarians***
- Need to identify base-line skills for teacher librarians
 - Few resources and little value placed on the role of teacher librarians. They are often set School Support Officer tasks. There appears to be minimal recognition of the value of a library qualification within the South Australian Department of Education.
 - Teacher librarians (and school staff in general) face many bureaucratic impediments to accessing training and development. Training and development is often linked to salary increases and

unless this structure is in place of training for teacher librarians there is little incentive for them to attend training & development. When they do their absences are often funded by the public library and not by the school.

- Minimal funding for the purchase of school library resources which can be demoralising for teacher librarians.
- Most school libraries in South Australia were constructed and first staffed in the 1970's. This initial group of teacher librarians is nearing retirement age and there is no push for workforce development in this sector to replace the staff who are retiring.
- There is limited availability of a tertiary level professional qualification for teacher librarians.

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

- We are looking for commitment from the state government to partner with local government as providers/managers of joint-use and community libraries. There are a number of joint-use management models in place in South Australia each operating with varying degrees of success but none in a true partnering relationship. This partnering opportunity could also be developed on a regional basis and include tertiary institutions (eg the Libraries for Learning Partnership in the north of Adelaide between the University of SA, TAFE SA, DECS, the four local government entities and Public Library Services work together to focus on learning and literacy in the northern region. This partnership is currently being driven by UniSA and the City of Salisbury with support from the other partners. It maintains a focus on transitions within the education system – early childhood/ primary to secondary school/new SACE/secondary to tertiary – details on website - <http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/llp/>
- There are fifty joint-use libraries in South Australia. Teacher librarians attend public library training and have greater access to public library resources (professional development opportunities, information literacy training etc) than do teacher librarians in schools that are not joint-use.
- We propose universal access to a suite of on-line resources (eg 24 hour access to on-line data bases) to support teacher librarians and students. All spheres of government could contribute for mutual benefit and it could be based on the national consortia ERA that already exists.

5. The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

- School libraries and librarians need access to speedy and reliable on-line resources.

- To have children and young people who are multi literate relies on the capabilities of the teacher librarians to teach skills. Children should be immersed in a rich digital environment and a school library provides an ideal space for this to occur.
- We need effective spaces and places for collaborative learning/ playing/experimenting with digital technology and teacher librarians need training to take a lead in this.
- Need for openness to the use of social networking tools for learning.
- Students are also creators of content. Teacher librarians need to be skilled to encourage, guide and manage this content.
- All school libraries need to be linked in order to share resources, planning etc
- Teacher librarians need appropriate training to teach effective, safe and ethical use of on-line resources

If you need any further information or clarification we would be very happy to assist.

Yours sincerely,

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