To: Secretary, Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

to report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools.

SUBMISSION FROM DARAMALAN COLLEGE, ACT

Daramalan College is an independent, coeducational, Catholic secondary school of 1487 students and 110 teaching staff run by the MSC order.

Summary
1. Impact of NSSCF on Daramalan library and personnel to show the importance of the library and teacher librarians in this process
2. The importance of teacher librarians in providing the skills for the desired multi-literacy outcomes with Daramalan as an example
3. Lack of career paths, courses and support detract from the recruitment and ongoing development of teacher librarians
4. All levels of government, systems and tertiary institutions should be active in partnership and support of school libraries and teacher librarians
5. The impact of digital technologies serves to reinforce the role of the school library and teacher librarians. The teaching of effective use of digital technologies for staff and students by teacher librarians is more critical now than ever before

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

In the past twelve months as a result of successful submissions to the NSSCF, Daramalan has received a substantial boost to student computer numbers, culminating in the provision of laptop computers to all students in Year 9 this year and in subsequent years.

The role of the library and the teacher librarians in this rollout is substantial. The Director of Information Services is a member of the School Executive at AP level and until the recent appointment of a network manager was not only Head of Library but also in charge of the computer network, an acknowledgement by the school of the cross-curricular as well as technical knowledge of the teacher librarian. The role now focuses on the integration of ICT into the curriculum rather than the practical elements and, in this capacity, responsibility for the implementation of the ICT Strategic Plan as amended due to NSSCF funding.

In addition to the DIS, the school employs two full-time and a part-time teacher librarian who frees the other teacher librarians to work with staff and students to integrate ICT for two days each week. This can be on an individual basis or in the classroom or computer lab in addition to the library.

The demand for this "technology teacher librarian" time is increasing with the provision of more computers and other digital technologies; software and online applications and Web 2.0 resources such as wikis, blogs and social networking. Concomitant with this is the education of staff, students and parents in cybersafety, copyright and ethical use.

They also manage the school's intranet, an important communication tool for parents as well as staff and students.

Although we appear to be well –staffed, we need more teacher librarians to provide all these services to the level required. These are responsibilities devolved to teacher librarians due to their cross-curricular nature; their model of life-long learning; technological ability and experience in providing professional development to teachers. They are also trained and experienced teachers, an essential requirement when working with staff and students.

The school's commitment to the provision of library services culminated in the building of new Information Centre in 2004 which can (and does) accommodate six classes and senior study students at any time with a computer area for twenty-four which is for students ie not able to be booked. This has also put pressure on the teacher librarians to provide services to so many.

We also have 2.5 library technicians who are able to free the teacher librarians from most of the cataloguing responsibilities so they are able to work with teachers and classes. Two library assistants further fulfil the non-professional tasks such as end –processing and shelving.

This is the minimum required for us to function and, as more demands are made we shall find it increasingly difficult to cope. How much less able will those schools be who are not as well supported or who have new buildings but no trained personnel?

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

At Daramalan the input of teacher librarians into improved educational and community outcomes is essential and provides the example of teacher librarians and libraries impacting on all outcomes and all literacies.

The teacher librarians contribute to the writing and evaluation of course documents at High School and College level to ensure integration of ACT Essential Learning Achievements, the National Curriculum and the embedding of ICT into the curricula. They provide bibliographies at course and task level and are now a recognised component of every BSSS course panel in the ACT. They assisted with the production of the BSSS plagiarism publication, which has been adopted by some tertiary institutions and work closely with BSSS on Moderation Days eg assessing tasks.

The teacher librarians run information sessions for parents on the school intranet and coping with assignments. They provide information on recommended reading to all sections of the school community – students, staff and parents via wikis, newsletters and the intranet. They work cooperatively with the English department on a relaxed reading program held in the fiction area on floor cushions. This area is also popular at breaks for reading magazines as well as books. The library subscribes to 250 magazines – most of special interest to teenagers and of great importance to reluctant or less able readers.

Teacher librarians keep their reading of children's and young adult literature up-to-date and share this knowledge with students in class and informally. A wiki uses Web 2.0 application to give students an

opportunity to share their reading with others. They are also actively involved with Learning Support in the provision and training of special software programs such as Accelerated Reader and Paragraph Power to assist those with literacy needs and the library provides reading resources at all levels of ability and interest.

Teacher librarians teach students to use and staff to assess digital technologies for task presentations. They teach students to critically evaluate print and electronic information sources; to check for authenticity; to use search engines for accurate, authoritative results and many other aspects of critical literacy in whatever format.

Functional literacy, information literacy and digital literacy would not be possible without the provision of school libraries and the trained teacher librarians to work with staff and students.

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

In the past few years many university courses have ceased or only offer post-graduate courses in teacher librarianship. It must be noted that most teacher librarians have gained their post graduate qualifications and professional expertise subsequently at their own expense.

At Daramalan we have always insisted on dual qualifications ie in both teaching and librarianship. Most teachers also have a second teaching subject which is invaluable in a library environment. Our role description is based on the ASLA Standards for Professional Teacher Librarians (to be found at www.asla.org.au website) and our staff are assessed against those Key Performance Indicators.

It is unusual to find a teacher librarian on the Executive as at Daramalan as there is often no recognised career path for teacher librarians in schools – they often have to leave the library or schools to advance in their chosen profession. It is time recognition was made by schools, systems and authorities to the work and professional standing of teacher librarians, often the most qualified teachers in the school.

This would be an important factor in recruiting more teacher librarians as would the provision of HECS – free undergraduate and post-graduate courses. The monetary value of such a provision would be more than outweighed by the outcomes achieved in schools with fully-trained teacher librarians, especially as an adjunct to the new computers and buildings schemes. Resources are not just machines, bricks and mortar as proved by recent research www.asla.org.au/research

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

Nationally, in the provision of courses as outlined above and, as a consequence, in demanding that libraries be staffed with fully trained professionals. Library staffing should be reported in the annual reports as separate from general teaching/support numbers and inadequacies followed up. This would include all library staff, not just teacher librarians and would emphasise to systems and Principals the importance of the library and its staffing to achieve desired outcomes and the necessity to have trained personnel. Some form of preliminary audit would be necessary.

State and systems would need to uphold these values in theory and practice – tied to funding seems to be effective. There is also a need to reinstate support services to provide professional development and mentoring to new staff, currently run on an ad hoc basis by professional associations and individuals.

Tertiary institutions could assist with providing professional and paraprofessional training at a variety of levels, working cooperatively with schools to produce effective, relevant courses. Daramalan enjoys an excellent working relationship with CIT library and information courses having been on course accreditation panels and taking work placements for many years. We also take TL placements from various universities and have run courses on information literacy at ACU, Signadou campus. We also work closely with the ACT Public Library Service, National Library and other libraries.

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

The impact and potential of digital technologies have hit schools in a way never before experienced due to the proliferation of computers in such a short space of time. Teacher librarians are ideally placed to cope with the demands of this new technology and provide the necessary professional development for staff in a variety of ways ie elearning, professional learning portfolios as they have been using the technology and Web 2.0 applications for some time.

Electronic resources, just like print resources, require their professional expertise to select, purchase, organise and deliver authoritative access.

The teaching of effective use of digital technologies for staff and students by teacher librarians is more critical now than ever before. The skills of locating, selecting and evaluating information are more relevant as the information available becomes so profuse. Referencing this material correctly to avoid plagiarism and respect copyright is never more essential as is the teacher librarian who uniquely provides this expertise. The use of multimedia in presentation in terms of creating, access, downloading and embedding is often not in the average teacher's armoury of skills and they look to the library and teacher librarians to teach them and their students.

ASLA, the professional association for teacher librarians, conducts a "Teacher Librarian of the Year" award whereby teacher librarians are nominated by their school community – teachers, students, parents and Principal – firstly for state or territory then national award consideration. The nominators are required to write about the impact that person and/or the provision of the library service under the nominee's care has had on their teaching and learning. It provides a resource bank of the value of libraries and teacher librarians to all members of the school community second to none.

School libraries, staffed by fully qualified teacher librarians and support staff are essential to the provision of the educational outcomes to which we all - governments, systems, principals, teachers, students, parents and the wider community – aspire and expect.

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Daramalan College