

Submission to House Committee Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools.

In our WA government primary school we have not had a qualified Teacher Librarian for the past ten years. Sadly, the person who had been in this role, albeit on a part-time basis, was moved into a full-time classroom teacher role as the staffing formula only provided sufficient teaching time to have specialist teachers in a limited number of specialist areas (namely Phys Ed, Music and Art). In 2009 we also had a Drama teacher paid for by the P and C!

It is a very sad reality that the Teacher Librarian role was viewed as dispensable, leaving a part-time Library Officer to “run” the Library on the same time fraction as with a TL present – the workload has been enormous! The Library Officer’s time is determined by a separate staffing formula which is determined by student number and a socio-economic index. It has not been revised in accordance with demands by changing curriculum needs, the number of Ed Assistants in the school, Prac teachers, presence of a computer lab in the Library or the demands of operation of a commercial publishers’ (Scholastic Lexile) reading program from the Library.

During the past three years our school has placed a teaching staff member in the role of a Library Skills teacher; however not all classes have access to this opportunity and the main priority of this arrangement is to provide DOTT (duties other than teaching) time for the classroom teachers, so the teachers are not involved in working with their class in a Library environment! The majority of classes have only a half hour block of time to “do” Library; this entails a book change opportunity and very little time for learning skills of how to use the Library – certainly no time to carry out research using printed and electronic media! This year we have had two Year 1 classes of 28 and 29 students (including an Ed Support child) coming to the Library for half an hour a week whilst their class teachers have DOTT. This has been a most unsatisfactory arrangement both for the students to learn; all they achieve is to exchange a book.

Further to the above, our school has identified this year a need to improve literacy standards at a number of year levels. Surely we should be able to meet these needs by utilising Library resources including the experience and skills of a qualified Teacher Librarian who can specialise in teaching information literacy appropriate to the age group they are dealing with; numerous times I have seen “Google” searches being undertaken in the computer lab with no filtering of age- appropriate material. The value of a TL in every school to enhance a reading program appropriate to individual students needs and to monitor progress would be an invaluable asset. If only Principals could be convinced that it is money worth spending; they could achieve this if the Federal Government tied funding to schools where Principals employed a qualified Teacher Librarian and ensured that all students had access to a certified Library program in those schools. **Please, please, please ensure that all Australian**

**students (especially those in government schools) have the same access to a literacy program overseen by a specialist qualified teacher librarian in every state.**

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