



**Australian Government Submission to the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education
and Training:
Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians
in Australian Schools**

Terms of Reference

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training has been asked by the Federal Minister for Education to inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools.

The Terms of Reference require that the Committee specifically focus on:

1. the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities
2. the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy
3. the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians
4. the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians
5. the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

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Introduction

The Australian Government welcomes the inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools as an opportunity to explore important questions about transforming education for the 21st century.

This submission will provide an overview of the Australian Government's reform agenda for schooling and will discuss this in the context of the Terms of Reference (TOR).

Overview of the Reform Agenda for Australian Schools

It is a central goal of the Australian Government that all young Australians benefit from a world-class education system. The Australian Government provides educational leadership and works in partnership with state and territory governments and non-government school authorities, parents, educators and other organisations to provide high-quality teaching and learning to all Australian school-age children.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, released on 5 December 2008 and agreed to by the then Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), set the vision for Australian schooling over the next decade with two goals:

1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence;
2. All young Australians become:
 - successful learners
 - confident and creative individuals
 - active and informed citizens.

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools, as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community.

State and territory governments regulate and fund government and non-government schools in Australia. The Australian Government also funds both government and non-government schools.

While the Australian Government plays a leadership role and supports Australian schools, it is not responsible for the day-to-day management of schools. The resourcing of libraries with books, information and learning resources, and the allocation of staff, including teacher-librarians, is a matter for the individual state and territory education authorities.

Council of Australian Governments Education Reforms

On 29 November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to implement a package of reforms aimed at ensuring that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy.

The National Education Agreement is one of these reforms. The National Education Agreement details the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and the states and territories. It will deliver \$18 billion to assist states and territories to achieve the following outcomes:

- all children are engaged in and benefiting from schooling;
- young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are improving;
- Australian standards excel by international standards;
- schooling promotes social inclusion and reduces the education disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children; and
- young people make a successful transition from school to work and further study.

In addition to the National Education Agreement the Government provides funding to non-government schools under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (the Act). The Act provides the legislative framework for Commonwealth funding for non-government schools for 2009 to 2012 and governs the provision of grants to non-government schools for recurrent, capital and targeted expenditure for the 2009 to 2012 funding period. The funding arrangements for non-government school systems and schools are aligned with, and support, the responsibilities of the states and territories in respect of regulation, educational quality, performance and reporting on educational outcomes.

The Australian Government is committed to an education system that pursues excellence for all Australian schools and where every child receives the highest quality education. This commitment is evident in both the national agenda for school reform and unprecedented investment through:

- *Building the Education Revolution*;
- the *Digital Education Revolution*;
- the *National Partnerships* with states and territories under the National Education Agreement, including the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards); and
- the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Building the Education Revolution

The Australian Government has allocated funding of \$16.2 billion over three years to provide new facilities and refurbishments in Australian schools to meet the needs of 21st century students and teachers through the *Building the Education Revolution* program.

Through *Building the Education Revolution*, the Australian Government aims to:

- provide economic stimulus through the rapid construction and refurbishment of school infrastructure; and
- build learning environments to help children, families and communities participate in activities that will support achievement, develop learning potential and bring communities together.

The *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* element of *Building the Education Revolution* is providing \$14.1 billion for all Australian primary schools, K–12 schools (primary school component) and special schools to build new iconic facilities such as libraries, multipurpose halls or classrooms, or to upgrade existing facilities. Construction of new libraries was identified as having the highest priority and further detail is provided under Term of Reference 1.

The Digital Education Revolution

The Australian Government is committed to enriching the quality of education in Australia. This includes harnessing the potential of information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform teaching and learning. In this context, the Government is working collaboratively with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to deliver the *Digital Education Revolution*. The *Digital Education Revolution* aims to prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world. Through the *Digital Education Revolution*, the Government is providing \$2.2 billion over six years to:

- provide for new ICT equipment for all secondary schools with students in Years 9 to 12 through the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund (the Fund);
- support the deployment of fibre-to-the-premises broadband connections to Australian schools;
- collaborate with states and territories and Deans of Education to ensure new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of ICT that enables them to enrich student learning;
- provide for online curriculum tools and resources that support the Australian Curriculum and specialist subjects such as languages;
- enable parents to participate in their child's education through online learning and access; and
- develop support mechanisms to provide assistance for schools in the deployment of ICT.

National Secondary School Computer Fund

A key element of the Government's \$2.2 billion investment in the *Digital Education Revolution* is \$2.1 billion for the National Secondary School Computer Fund. The Fund will assist schools to provide for new ICT for secondary students in Years 9 to 12. The overall aim of the Fund is to achieve a 1:1 computer to student ratio for students in Years 9 to 12 in Australian secondary schools by 2011.

Teacher Quality and Professional Development

Teacher professional development initiatives under the *Digital Education Revolution* will assist in ensuring that teachers have the skills and tools to design and deliver programs that meet students' needs and harness the benefits and resources of the digital revolution.

The *Digital Education Revolution* is providing a variety of teacher professional development initiatives, a Better Practice Guide for Schools and other support mechanisms that will assist teachers and schools use ICT. It is also recognised that the success of a national curriculum will be dependent on the levels of professional development and the resources provided to teachers. Accordingly, the Australian Government supported a range of measures aimed at improving teacher quality, including the \$300 million funded *Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme*. These measures have made, and will continue to make, a sustained and substantial contribution to the quality of teaching in all Australian schools. Further information is available at www.qualityteaching.deewr.gov.au.

The Teaching for the Digital Age initiative aims, through the Australian Government and education employers, to provide a coordinated and coherent approach to professional development in the use of ICT in teaching and learning. The initiative supports professional development activities for pre-service education courses, teachers and school leaders in the Digital Education Revolution. Strategic plans have been developed through the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee to guide the initiative.

The \$40 million *Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders* will also support teacher professional development in ICT. Information on the Strategy can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/DigitalStrategyForTeachers.aspx.

National Partnerships under the National Education Agreement

Through the Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (\$550 million), the Smarter Schools - Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership (\$1.5 billion) and the Smarter Schools - Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (\$540 million) the Government has set major reform priorities to raise the quality of teaching in our schools, to address educational disadvantage associated with low socio-economic status and to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are most in need of support. This investment provides greater flexibility for states and territories to allocate Australian Government funding to areas which they believe will produce the best outcomes for students.

Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership

The *Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership* agreement will support teachers across several stages in a teacher's 'lifecycle' including new and innovative ways to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders in our schools and classrooms. It will drive improvements in teacher quality and better support Australia's teacher workforce. Attracting, retaining and rewarding quality teachers, including specialist teacher librarians, is vital to ensure positive outcomes for all Australian students.

The agreement will see national accreditation for existing and pre-service teachers, recognition through reward programs and new pathways for pre-service and existing teachers to improve the quality of their teaching and leadership skills within their schools. There will be a focus on teaching and raising performance in low socio-economic status school communities, as well as opportunities for Indigenous people and education workers who wish to progress into teaching. Partnerships will be formed with universities to improve the quality of training in both pre-service teacher training and practicum delivery.

Reforms under the agreement include improving in-school support for teachers and school leaders, particularly in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools. Under this reform, education authorities will implement a range of strategies including creating additional teacher aide and teaching assistant positions and expanding training and development programs for teaching support staff.

Another reform under the agreement aims to improve the quality and availability of workforce data. All states and territories have agreed and signed up to the facilitation reform, 'Improved quality and availability of teacher workforce data'. Key reform activities include establishing a national teacher workforce dataset and developing a Teacher Longitudinal Study.

The National Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group is progressing implementation of these activities through the Australian Education and Early Childhood and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee for the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. More comprehensive national workforce data to support better teacher workforce planning to address national issues remain a focus for the Working Group. It is expected that data on specialist teacher librarians will be included in the national teacher workforce dataset and the Teacher Longitudinal Study.

Smarter Schools - Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership

The National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy will fund a range of approaches that will lead to improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for targeted students and schools. Analysis of national and international research, together with stakeholder feedback, has helped identify the key influences on students' literacy and numeracy learning outcomes.

A key focus of the Australian Government's education reforms is to achieve sustained improvements in the literacy and numeracy skills of Australian children. Ensuring that Australian children are able to improve their literacy and numeracy skills is critical in overcoming educational disadvantage and assisting them to access future educational and employment opportunities.

An ambitious reform process is being implemented in Australian schools under the *National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy*, with \$540 million in funding over four years from 2008–2009. The National Partnership will support improvements in student literacy and numeracy through a focus on three priority reform areas:

- strong school leadership and engagement with literacy and numeracy;
- effective and evidence based teaching of literacy and numeracy; and
- the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are at risk of falling behind.

Smarter Schools - Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership

The Government has committed \$1.5 billion over seven years (2008–09 to 2012–15) through the *National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities* to support education reform activities in up to 1,500 low socio-economic status schools across the country. This funding will be matched by state and territory government co-investment over the life of the partnership.

Reforms under this partnership will improve the quality of teachers, allow schools to be more flexible in how they operate and encourage different ways of learning so that individual student needs can be better met. Fostering overall student wellbeing and encouraging better connections with families and the local community are key aspects of this partnership.

The Australian Government is also working with states, territories, non-government education providers and Indigenous Australians to develop a set of actions that assist to close the gaps between the educational outcomes of Indigenous Australians and other Australians.

More information about the three Smarter Schools national partnerships, including implementation in each state and territory and the literacy and numeracy pilot initiatives, is available at www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/default.aspx.

National Professional Standards for Teachers

Research findings identify that the most important school-based factor in improving outcomes for students is the quality of their teachers. In response to this, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs has oversighted the development of draft National Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards). The Standards opened for consultation on 8 March 2010, and submissions are welcomed from members of the teaching profession and wider education community; the consultation period closes on 7 May 2010. Submissions can be made online through the Council website at www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call_for_submissions.30532.html.

Stakeholder consultations will be conducted within jurisdictions using the arrangements determined by jurisdictional authorities, major employing authorities and teacher regulatory authorities. The Australian Government, through the Department, will also conduct consultations with other national stakeholders.

The Australian Curriculum

The Australian Government is committed to the development of a rigorous and world-class national curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12, beginning with the learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history. A second phase of work will involve the development of a national curriculum in languages, geography and the arts.

Future phases of Australian Curriculum development will focus on the remaining learning areas identified in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, including health and physical education, information and communication technology and design and technology, economics, business, and civics and citizenship.

The Australian Curriculum will make clear to parents, teachers and students what young people should be taught and the quality of learning that is expected of them, regardless of their circumstances or the location of their school.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is overseeing development of the Australian Curriculum. It is also responsible for the management of assessment and reporting at a national level.

Inclusion of information and communication technology (ICT) in the Australian Curriculum

In addition to the learning areas referred to above, the Australian Curriculum also pays attention to how ten general capabilities and three cross-curriculum dimensions contribute to, and can be developed through, teaching in each learning area.

The ten general capabilities are: literacy; numeracy; information communication technology; thinking skills; ethical behaviour; creativity; self-management; teamwork; intercultural understanding; and social competence. The three cross-curriculum dimensions are: Indigenous history and culture; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and sustainability.

The inclusion of ICT as a general capability recognises that ICT skills and understanding are required across the curriculum. Accordingly, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is developing an ICT continuum that will inform curriculum development in all learning areas. It is expected that the ICT continuum will contain conceptual organisers that describe the knowledge and skills students should be taught by the end of Years 2, 6 and 10.

Online publication of the Australian Curriculum

Previously, curriculum has been published in hard copy form, and typically with separate booklets for each learning area. This has tended to reinforce notions of a static, two-dimensional, subject-centred curriculum. The Australian Curriculum will be published online. This will allow the curriculum to be linked directly to online resources to support teaching and learning and will provide maximum flexibility in how the curriculum can be accessed and organised. For example, users can view, download and print the curriculum for a particular learning area at one year level or across multiple year levels. They can also view, download and print content with a focus on one or more of the general capabilities or cross-curriculum dimensions.

Current status

The Australian Curriculum is currently in a consultation phase, with the draft K–10 curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history available for public consultation until 23 May 2010. Consultation on the senior years curriculum for these learning areas will take place from April 2010.

The Australian Curriculum in the first four learning areas will be finalised by late 2010 and will start to be implemented by the states and territories from 2011. While development of the Australian Curriculum is the responsibility of all Australian governments, implementation is primarily the responsibility of states and territories.

The process and timeline for implementation is likely to vary by state and territory, depending on the extent of change between the national curriculum and existing state and territory curricula. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is working with state and territory education authorities to map the extent of change to assist them in developing their implementation plans. Work is also underway to identify current programs and resources that can be used to support implementation.

At the national level, the newly established Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and Education Services Australia are expected to play a key role alongside the various professional and subject associations and other agencies in supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

At a local level, it is expected there will be extensive use of local and site-based professional learning, supported by online professional development.

One of the benefits of a national curriculum is that national and state and territory resources can be pooled to be available to support all teachers.

Comments addressing the terms of reference

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

Building the Education Revolution

Under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) libraries constructed typically include state of the art facilities including access to wireless internet and video conferencing. The majority of projects are due for completion by 31 March 2011.

Information on BER library projects as at 28 February 2010 is provided in Table 1:

STATE	JURISDICTION	LIBRARY PROJECTS	FUNDING
ACT	ACT Government	19	\$37,445,000
	ACT Joint Block Grant Authority	20	\$18,717,748
	ACT Total	39	\$56,162,748
NSW	NSW Government	473	\$422,935,000
	NSW Catholic	209	\$214,880,501
	NSW Independent	148	\$182,536,150
	NSW Total	830	\$820,351,651
NT	NT Government	39	\$34,759,000
	NT Joint Block Grant Authority	29	\$35,351,260
	NT Total	68	\$70,110,260
QLD	QLD Government	977	\$818,353,656
	QLD Catholic	136	\$155,846,581
	QLD Independent	98	\$131,635,100
	QLD Total	1,211	\$1,105,835,337
SA	SA Government	151	\$170,147,840
	SA Catholic	30	\$41,284,260
	SA Independent	35	\$46,811,641
	SA Total	216	\$258,243,741
TAS	TAS Government	69	\$76,522,998
	TAS Catholic	19	\$28,297,400
	TAS Independent	17	\$15,794,969
	TAS Total	105	\$120,615,367
VIC	VIC Government	397	\$911,010,500
	VIC Catholic	214	\$249,681,559
	VIC Independent	64	\$79,775,895
	VIC Total	675	\$1,240,467,954
WA	WA Government	195	\$144,481,500
	WA Catholic	72	\$82,910,061
	WA Independent	61	\$66,462,664
	WA Total	328	\$293,854,225
Grand Total		3,472	\$3,965,641,283

Please note: This data includes projects solely for libraries and projects that include libraries and should be used as a guide only.

Digital Education Revolution

Digital Education Revolution – National Secondary School Computer Fund

Education authorities are implementing the Fund in different ways. Purchasing ICT equipment through the Fund will take place at a state, sector or school level. This is because government and non-government education authorities have primary responsibility for decisions about design, purchase and use of educational hardware and software to meet the specific needs of their schools. Schools may choose to purchase computers to place in libraries or computer labs or provide students with individual take home laptops. Over 240,000 new computers have been installed in Australian secondary schools since the Fund commenced in early 2008.

Digital Education Revolution - Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders

As part of the *Digital Education Revolution*, on 18 February 2010 the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, announced the \$40 million *Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders*, which will help ensure teachers and school leaders receive comprehensive training in information and communication technology and how to embed these skills across the curriculum and their teaching practices.

National Professional Standards for Teachers

The Department held an information session on 23 March 2010 for national stakeholders to contextualise the draft Standards and to support national organisations in development of their submissions. A representative of the Australian Library and Information Association participated in the session. The Australian School Library Association was also invited to be represented at the meeting.

The Standards describe what teachers should know and be able to do at four levels of professional expertise: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. The Standards make explicit, for those within and outside the profession, the knowledge and skills required of teachers at each level. Teacher quality is linked to continual professional learning and its application to teaching practice. These Standards provide a basis for planning professional learning needs and determining career pathways.

While the Standards have been drafted in generic terms, the early feedback from consultation meetings with stakeholders is that the draft text will be enriched with exemplars of specialised practice. This may include teacher librarians.

The Australian Curriculum – Impact on school libraries and teacher librarians

While the exact impact of the Australian Curriculum is not yet known, it could have a potential impact on libraries and teacher librarians in relation to their role(s) in:

- developing ICT competence in students (given that aspects of ICT competence are as much about information management as about the use of technology – for example, the ability to evaluate the source, reliability, accuracy and validity of information in cyberspace);
- supporting teachers' access to curriculum information and resources, as well as professional development materials; and
- working with classroom teachers to embed information literacy across the curriculum.

As the professional skills and knowledge of teacher librarians are already utilised in the areas described above, it is not clear whether introduction of the Australian Curriculum will result in a significant change from current arrangements.

The exact impact of the Australian Curriculum on libraries and teacher librarians is likely to become clearer following the current consultation period and as progress is made on mapping the extent of expected curriculum change, planning for implementation, and developing future phases of the Australian Curriculum.

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

The Australian Government is aware of international research into the effect of school libraries and teacher librarians on student outcomes. For example the *School Libraries Work* research paper by the United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the 2003 report by the Australian Council for Educational Research noted:

“There is already a substantial body of ...quantitative evidence indicating some of the library variables that affect student performance on state reading tests, and it is not clear how much additional insightful information could be obtained from a similar large-scale research undertaking in Australia. This is not to say that such studies could not be usefully conducted in an Australian context, rather that in terms of evaluating the impact of the school library on broader aspects of learning, it might be that a series of focused, small-scale, qualitative studies are a more useful option.” (pp. 28–29, Lonsdale, 2003)

Through the *Smarter Schools - Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership*, the Australian Government is working closely with state and territory governments to implement sustainable literacy and numeracy initiatives at participating schools where students are struggling with the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

At this stage, the state and territory education authorities have not identified any initiatives involving school libraries or teacher librarians under this national partnership.

3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

The key to enhancing education in Australia is ensuring all our students have access to teachers of the highest quality, including highly qualified staff in all areas of the school. The responsibility for managing schools and allocating staff, including teacher librarians, rests with state and territory and non-government education authorities.

The funding arrangements under the national partnerships provide greater flexibility for states and territories to allocate Australian Government funding to areas which they believe will produce the best outcomes for students. Through the *Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership*, most state and territory education authorities have committed to initiatives to implement increased school-based decision-making about recruitment, staffing mix and budget considerations.

Professional organisations play a role in recognition and endorsement of qualifications for teacher librarians. Currently the pathway to becoming a teacher librarian is through an undergraduate teacher education qualification and then a post-graduate university qualification.

The supply and demand for teacher librarian university courses is a matter for the tertiary sector. Professional associations and the education authorities that employ teachers, rather than the Government, play a pivotal role in building a teacher librarian workforce. However,

through the *Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership* the Government is providing funding for incentives and reforms to broaden the pathways into teaching to address workforce needs identified by employers.

A lack of systematically aggregated national data makes it difficult to gain an accurate picture of national trends in Australia in relation to the staffing of school libraries. However, the Department has collected data through an online survey of a large national sample which provides a detailed picture of the Australian teacher and school leader workforces in 2007.

National data currently available on primary school librarians

Data from the 2006–07 *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey of teachers and school leaders indicated that:

- there were an estimated 6,300 primary specialist library teachers (i.e. they were currently teaching in that area);
- there were an estimated 7,300 primary teachers who had undertaken at least one year of tertiary study for library specialist teaching and there were an estimated 4,800 primary teachers who had undertaken teaching methodology for library specialist teaching; and
- 5% of primary principals identified that they had at least one primary library teacher position unfilled towards the end of 2006. The indicative national estimated number of primary library teacher vacancies towards the end of 2006 was 400.

The survey collected information on those who were teaching as primary specialist teachers in library and those who had completed tertiary study in that area. Data was not collected in relation to secondary teachers who may have a 'library' specialisation. The report is available at: www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/sias2007.

The Australian Government is intending to undertake a second *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey in 2010 and consideration is being given to collecting data on teacher librarians in both primary and secondary school settings.

Australian Research

The Department takes a keen interest in and monitors research in the area of libraries in Australian schools. Brief information on recent current research is provided below.

Australian School Libraries Research Project

Joint project between Edith Cowan University, the Australian Library and Information Association and the Australian School Library Association. Stage One resulted in two reports: *A snapshot of Australian school libraries*, published September 2008 and *Australian Teacher Librarians*, published October 2008. Stages Two and Three are not yet complete.

Key findings:

- 44% of school libraries are over 20 years old;
- 29% of schools overall (and 54% of government schools) have an annual budget of less than \$5000 to provide curriculum support, reading materials and access to electronic resources;

- subscriptions to electronic database resources are few and depend on the school's capacity to pay rather than central sector provision;
- 55% of teacher librarians are over 55 years of age; and
- 30.5% of teacher librarians do not have access to any professional development activity, often linked to lack of electronic resources, e.g. in rural and regional areas.

Student learning through Australian school libraries Part 1: A Statistical analysis of student perceptions, Lyn Hay (Charles Sturt University, 2005)

Key findings:

- 99.40% of students surveyed indicated that the school library and its service helped them in some way with their learning in and out of school: and
- 92.4% of the students indicated that school library computers helped them do their school work better. In addition, almost 40% of students indicated the library had been *most helpful* in this area.

School Libraries 21C

A report released in March 2010 by the NSW Department of Education and Training which identifies 16 recommendations as essential elements in creating sustainable futures for school libraries. The report highlighted a number of issues including:

- libraries are increasingly important as both staff and students try to keep pace with rapid developments in technology and the ways in which information is accessed, shared and communicated (p. 32);
- the concept of pedagogical fusion aligned with information literacy development emerged as an argument for school libraries (p. 32);
- equity is of particular importance because the school library may well be the only place where students of particular socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have access to emerging technologies and resources (p. 33);
- the essential work of a teacher librarian was identified in terms of curriculum design centring on resource-based inquiry, instructional leadership, technology innovation, building and leading instructional teams, and knowledge/facilities manager (p. 36); and
- beginning teacher programs need to explicitly embed an understanding of the information process and how inquiry based learning is enabled through the school library (p. 38).

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

State and territory government and non-government education authorities have responsibility for managing schools and allocating staff, including teacher librarians.

However, the Australian Government has demonstrated leadership by providing a \$16.2 billion investment through *Building the Education Revolution* that will develop world-class educational facilities, through new infrastructure and refurbishments to eligible Australian schools, including over 3,400 library projects (refer Table 1).

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

The aim of the *Digital Education Revolution* is to contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools that will prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world.

The Australian Government has developed a *Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders* and is driving change through the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee.

Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders

This strategy will provide funding of \$40 million to help teachers and school leaders achieve proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT) and embed these skills across the curriculum and teaching practices. The strategy, which is part of the Australian Government's \$2.2 billion *Digital Education Revolution*, will enable teachers and school leaders to integrate ICT in education to improve school effectiveness and provide students with the skills required for the 21st century.

The strategy will complement the work of the new Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to strengthen and advance the teaching profession; it will also support the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

There are two elements to the strategy: Improving the ICT proficiency of teachers and school leaders and establishment of an ICT Innovation Fund.

The *Improving the ICT proficiency of teachers and school leaders* element focuses on developing a national self-assessment tool and ICT professional development for schools. The aim is to:

- increase teacher proficiency in the use of ICT;
- provide access for all teachers to an ICT self-assessment tool that aligns with national initiatives such as the Australian Curriculum and the National Professional Standards for Teachers;
- ensure digital pedagogy is embedded in school practice; and
- support the rollout of the online components of the Australian Curriculum.

The *ICT Innovation Fund* will offer organisations, including universities, higher education providers and businesses, with an opportunity to bid for funding to undertake activities that will promote outcomes in three key areas:

- improve the capability of pre-service teachers;
- enhance the capacity of in-service teachers; and
- drive innovation through leadership.

The Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee encourages the advancement of teaching and learning in Australia through the effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and online services, and informs the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs on issues relating to the implementation of the *Digital Education Revolution*.

Advisory Groups have been established to progress this agenda, including the Teaching for the Digital Age Advisory Group, which provides advice on a coordinated national approach to

teacher professional learning in the use of ICT for practising teachers, leaders and pre-service teachers. The group's key role is to develop and oversee implementation of the *Teaching for the Digital Age Work Plan*. The work plan aims to identify, nationally, the areas for work to be undertaken by education authorities and the Australian Government, and the resources required to help teachers and education leaders meet the demands of the *Digital Education Revolution*.

References

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