To the Secretary of the House Standing Committee on Education and Training.

Re: Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools.

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SUMMARY

Introduction

The school community is a partnership between staff, students, parent associations and the wider community. Of all the very important roles that schools play in our communities, achieving high rates of literacy is paramount. Educational outcomes in schools need to prepare students to be valuable members of a society where rapid changes occur. To cope with these rapid changes in technology students need to be information literate as well.

The formal education of our students begins in Kindergarten and so it is important that the structures are in place for students learning from an early age. Libraries and TLs are vital in delivery of the information needed to make our students informed and useful citizens.

TLs are experts at collaborating productively with others and there are many benefits to classroom teachers of this type of assistance from trained TLs and well resourced libraries. The roles that TLs perform are many and very diverse, but paramount throughout them all is that the TL is best qualified to pass on information and assist students to become valuable and responsible members of society.

TLs collaborate with classroom teachers develop quality work for students and find resources to use. They have management skills which develop relevant collections within budget restraints. They are heavily involved with up-dating their knowledge and imparting that knowledge. In today's society students need to be aware of cybersafety and the TL is best qualified educate the student in this area.

Terms of reference 1

THE IMPACT OF RECENT POLICIES AND INVESTMENTS ON SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES.

a)   In DET schools, Building Education Revolution (BER) funding has provided new libraries in Primary schools and some new library facilities in Secondary schools. This shows the importance the Federal government places on school libraries to deliver quality education and raising literacy rates in schools. However unless funding is also made available for resources and to staff with adequate and qualified staff, schools will not get the full benefit from this investment.

b)   Funding is needed to replace the antiquated operating system used in NSW DET schools called OASIS, which is very inefficient and does not make full use of available technologies to help students or staff. A trial using the ALICE system was carried out, but the changeover was deemed too expensive to be put in our schools.

c)   Digital Education Revolution (DER) has funded much needed IT, but this has been at the expense of other school funding.

d)   The installation of wireless technology for the student laptop use caused many problems for libraries and TLs, and will possibly cause health problems in the future. It was based on the cheapest positioning. No attempt was made to look at possible future health issues or discuss more suitable locations.

e)   Information literacy delivery by the TL is the most efficient way of get full usage out of new technologies.

Terms of reference 2.

THE FUTURE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES, ESPECIALLY LITERACY.

a)   Levels of literacy (including information literacy) must be raised so our students can make full use of the advantages of the available technologies. TLs are best qualified to provide the resources to allow this to happen.

b)   The TL needs to be able work with students to help even reluctant readers to raise the literacy levels.

c)   Libraries help students to be responsible members of the community and prepare them to be life-long learners.

d)   Students begin their education journey in the early days of Kindergarten and it is here that the TL reads exciting books to students and encourages them to love reading.

Terms of reference 3

THE FACTORS INFLUENCING RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS.

a)   Universities provide courses to train Teacher Librarians and in NSW in a combined effort with CSU, a short post graduate diploma course to teachers in permanent positions in school libraries in NSW. This has provided some training and a better understanding of how to be a TL.

b)   Some principals have shown they devalue the training needed to be a TL by an increasing number of library positions going to untrained teachers. Teachers see that they can be appointed into permanent positions even though they are not accredited, so they choose not to train as TLs. This has a downward spiral effect because as fewer teachers are accredited more unaccredited teachers will be employed and then there seems to be less need to become accredted.

c)   The government needs to treat the appointment of TLs the same as a Maths teacher.

d)   There is no additional pay for extra qualifications and little potential for financial improvement.

e)   Sometimes professional learning in Secondary schools is hampered by the fact that TLs are often not replaced and this has a negative effect on students using the library.

f)   Primary TLs must not be involved in RFF lessons but need to be able to collaborate fully with classroom teachers.

g)   Full time TLs need to be in every school, so that the library and the TL can be fully utilised. This will raise the perception of value of TL's and more will wish to become qualified.

h)   To attract more teachers to become TLs positions in all schools must be permanent and full time, and above establishment, and not involve RFF. Libraries must also be fully resourced.

Terms of reference 4

THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN PARTNERING WITH AND SUPPORTING SCHOOL LIBRARIANS.

a)   TLs are often in local groups which involve librarians from other schools and local libraries. There is a large amount of support given to each other.

b)   The NSW State Library provides services for educational institutions which are particularly beneficial to more isolated TLs.

c)   P&Cs raise money from functions they organise and funding is sometimes distributed to the school library.

d)   Governments should support all schools by providing enough funding to meet the needs of the library. Even though we are in the digital age, sufficient funding is still needed to provide resources such as databases.

e)   To make all schools equitable, certain guidelines for staffing need to be adhered to. There needs to be at least one full time accredited TL and adequate support staff in every school. Principals should be given the opportunity to decide to save money they can employ a library technician or a SAO who are not qualified to allow students to develop to their true potential.

Terms of reference 5

THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS.

a)   The digital revolution has greatly enhanced learning and as it evolves will continue to. However, items such as e-books still need to be selected and put in library collections.

b)   TLs are very IT literate and by updating their skills are able to show others how to change their teaching methods to make the best use of the technology.

c)   DER has had, and will have an impact on technology use, however there still needs be funding to establish full usage.

d)   Libraries were targeted as being in the first round of wireless connections, and so the TL played a prolific role in helping students and staff to adapt. There for properly staffed and resourced libraries are important.

e)   The TL is best qualified to continue developing the information skills of students in order for them to use these new technologies.

CONCLUSION

For students to achieve educational outcomes at a high level, as well as to become life-long learners and therefore effective members of their communities, they need to raise their literacy levels. Libraries are vital to this and TLs are best qualified to collaborate with classroom teachers, and to provide direct assistance to students to achieve this.

Funding to schools needs to be increased to provide adequate funding so that on every school staff there is a minimum of one fully trained, TL who is appointed above establishment, and is not part of RFF or asked to help out with extra classes, as well as libraries being given adequate SAO time.

END OF SUMMARY

SUBMISSION

Introduction.

The school community is a partnership between:

- ❖ Staff (both teaching and non-teaching);
- ❖ Students;
- ❖ Parent associations;

and

- ❖ Wider community.

There are many, different, important roles that our schools play in the community One very important role is to develop its students into responsible young adults who can make positive contributions to that community. To do this, educational outcomes need to be achieved, but also very importantly, is that schools must prepare students to be life-long learners.

Today, the importance of the school in young people's lives is growing. Apart from learning how to locate, select, and present information, and meeting curriculum outcomes, schools strive to educate students to develop as valuable members of society. Now, with the rapid growth of digital technologies, it is even more important to develop students to be responsible, and adaptable to change. With this in mind, having the tools set in place within our schools, to be able to provide students with the skills needed to be able to function well in the workforce and as family members, should be a priority in any school.

Staff play a vital role in preparing these young people to achieve learning outcomes. School education in NSW is K-12 and information presented in this submission is relevant to all levels of school education. Although the educational opportunities differ between the Primary and Secondary education process, there is one constant factor throughout. School policies must be to develop and successfully implement programs to raise literacy skills. The Teacher Librarian (TL) in a school is at the forefront of delivery of these programs.

TL's are well known for good at collaborating productively with teachers. The "teaching" part of the qualification allows them to assist teachers in developing suitable research tasks and assist the teachers in delivery. The "librarian" part of the qualification allows them to use their skills to identify and accession available resources. The teachers and students in a school benefit greatly from teachers with this combined teaching qualification.

If classroom teachers are to provide quality teaching to students, then the assistance librarians give is worthwhile in order to achieve good outcomes. One of the greatest assets that classroom teachers can have in order to achieve quality teaching is having an "extra person" permanently available to them. TLs best qualified to carry out that role because they are both a teacher and a librarian.

TLs are able to assist teachers in many different ways.

Collaboration between classroom teachers and TLs to:
  ❖ Develop tasks that are educationally sound and produce quality outcomes within guidelines of the curriculum because as teachers they know what is required for learning and as librarians they understand what the collection has to offer, and they help with the delivery of lessons;
  ❖ Manage the library collection to find resources that will satisfy the current and future needs of teachers. This includes print resources, and an increasing importance on relevant electronic resources;

Also TLs:
  ❖ Offer assistance to groups of students who might be given an Independent Learning task.
  ❖ Offer assistance to some individual students who are struggling with a particular part of the work. This may be in just one part of the learning procedure (eg. locating relevant resources), or even in the presentation of the work, particularly in electronic versions which are becoming more and more relevant in today's digital society;

Apart from being a "manager" of a large proportion of the school's resources, and having the ability to work collaboratively with other teachers, TLs are also involved in:

* Enhancing literacy. Providing exciting books to encourage all students and assisting students to improve their skills. This also includes digital literacy which as mentioned on page 1 is becoming ever more important in our society;

* Organising visiting authors/illustrators to run workshops for students. Workshops help raise literacy levels.

* Being passionate about up-to-date knowledge particularly in regards to technology. TL's are renowned for wanting to make use of professional learning to develop their skills which they then pass on to other teachers and students.

* Maintaining school or library websites;

* Teaching about cybersafety. The TL is often aware what is happening with student's social networking and is in a good position to educate students about how to stay safe online and over their phones;

* Being a public relations person when meetings are held in the Library; Managing the usage of the library itself so that it is fair and equitable for all staff and students,

* Providing supervision for senior students who have "study periods", and, often during this period of time offering assistance to those students to complete their work;

* Being on committees such as Literacy, G&T and Welfare;

* Making sure that suitable resources are available for Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) or similar programs that operate in many schools. Children become better readers (and spellers and writers), and they gain more knowledge by reading.

Specific Terms of Reference for the Inquiry

1)   THE IMPACT OF RECENT POLICIES AND INVESTMENTS ON SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES.

a)   Recently the Federal Government has invested large amount of money from the Building Education Revolution (BER) funding to provide school facilities looking towards the future. In NSW, DET Primary and Central schools are receiving completely new libraries and others are receiving extensions to modern existing ones.

In Secondary schools some new facilities have been provided to modernise existing libraries. I do believe that there has not been enough investment in the Secondary schools, and I do not see why Secondary school libraries should miss out. There should have been an equal amount of funding between all DET schools wherever there was a need.

Even so, the Government has shown that they place school libraries as important assets in the Education Revolution, and should realise that to provide a modern building will not help students unless an adequate number of properly trained and qualified TL's and SAO's are employed to guide students to develop these lifelong learning abilities referred to on page 8. The budgets provided also have to be suitable to resource these BER buildings. Only then will the large investment be fully utilised.

This reflects the need to find sufficient funding to adequately resource and staff all school libraries.

b)   The Operating system used in NSW DET schools called OASIS is outdated and often breaks down. Even though a newer version of it was introduced in the last couple of years it is slow and often unreliable. A new system has to replace OASIS. Money has to be found to make the task more efficient. Even in the 10 weeks this year the system has frozen for my SAO or me at least once a week. This is very time consuming and data often has to be re-entered. Looking at the NSWTL listserv there have been many schools which have experienced the same break downs.

In 2003 I was part of a trial which was run to see how best the "ALICE" system could be implemented into schools in NSW. There was only positive feedback from the trial schools, but I was reliably told the system would not be used because "it would cost the Government too much". DET Libraries cannot be made to fall further behind in efficiency. There needs to be more funding made available so a better system can be used.

c)   Digital Education Revolution (DER) has funded much needed IT, but some of this has been at the expense of funding in other areas. (This is discussed more in Terms of Reference 5)

d)   When the concept of wireless connections for DER laptops was introduced, in most schools the library was going to house the cabinet. There was no consultation with TLs, just contractors looking at where it was the cheapest to install regardless of what was best for the library and the TL. Unfortunately many TLs had to move whole rooms of AV material or their own desks and now many of them have hot, noisy and possibly dangerous gas emitting cabinets in their offices. The Government should.have taken more to the needs of the libraries and TLs and perhaps should ask for these OH&S issues to be further investigated

e)   The installation of more computers has allowed the use of more electronic resources such as data bases, e-books and CD roms. These must be selected as being suitable for the needs of the students of a particular school and then purchased. TLs who are trained in collection management are able to collaborate with teachers to select suitable print and electronic resources.

2)   **THE FUTURE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES, ESPECIALLY LITERACY.**

a)   Literacy (including information literacy) is becoming ever more important in our schools and community. Students who struggle to read begin a downward spiral at school and often in society in general. They develop a negative image of themselves and find it hard to learn at school, and are often absent from school. Even though specially trained STLA teachers can help to overcome these they can work in partnership with the TL to provide resources and often to work with particular students in a less formal arrangement which is beneficial to the students. To even use the technological devices that are part of the modern age some basic digital literacy skills need to be understood. An e-book might sound exciting to a student, but it still needs to be read to be understood.

b)   The TL is trained to select resources for the collection (print and electronic) which will engage even reluctant readers and result in improvements in literacy. Information literate students will seek a variety of information and then be able to be selective to achieve educational outcomes.

c)   As mentioned previously, schools need to prepare students to be life-long learners as well as learning to use technology in a responsible manner. When those outcomes are achieved the community will benefit. Students learn to achieve these outcomes in the library.

d)   In Primary schools particularly, the TL is the teacher who mesmerizes young children as they read from exciting books and have the students develop a love of reading. From here the journey of education begins and so literacy skills are also developed.

3)   **THE FACTORS INFLUENCING RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS.**

a)   Tertiary institutions provide Teacher Librarian courses, but unfortunately these are not being utilised enough. In NSW, CSU in conjunction with DET, provide an on-the-job training course which goes for a year and students end with a Diploma of Teacher Librarianship. In some cases after this initial year of training the TL will decide to complete a Masters degree. A properly trained TL in any school is an integral partner of the school's teaching and learning team and has the role of assisting in planning, implementation and evaluation of school policies.

b)   However, principals vary in their view of the importance of the role that TL's play in the delivery of quality teaching within their school communities. In many cases particularly in Primary schools, the TL is not considered as a valuable asset, and because there are few accredited TLs, principals can offer permanent positions to untrained teachers who say they are willing to undertake the DET training through CSU. In too many cases they just appoint teachers to "fill in" the TL role for a couple of years. This causes a snowballing effect because there seems to be no need to complete training if people are getting positions without any accreditation. The more that happens, the less people see the need to train, and then there are fewer accredited TLs to employ and then more untrained people will be employed.

c)   The government needs to make a stand and treat the TL employment the same as a Mathematics or Primary teacher. If this is done, "would-be" TLs will realise they will not receive permanent positions until they are fully trained, and then more will undertake training.

d)   Monetary considerations also play an important part in low recruitment levels. TLs are more qualified than many classroom teachers, but there is no financial incentive to do the post graduate courses. It is easier for classroom teachers to increase their earning capacity by choosing career paths that TLs find difficult to take.

e)   For those who are trained, there must be continued professional learning made available. One disadvantage to attending any professional learning in Secondary schools is that the TL is rarely replaced if away. Again this disrupts the running of the library and where seniors spend their study periods in the library there is no-one to supervise them. So often it is easier to turn an opportunity down.

f)   At present, in many Primary situations including in Central schools the principal uses the TL to deliver "release from face-to-face teaching" (RFF) lessons. The classroom teacher does not accompany the class and often the TL is told what strand of lessons they must deliver. This is not conducive to people wanting to be a TL in a Primary situation.

g)   There are only negative effects of having the amount of TL time related to the school numbers. If the position is a three day a week Librarian, and if the TL is required to take the RFF classes, on those days then the Library is not available for collaborative use by classes. On the two days the TL is not there, if teachers take their classes to the Library, they are on their own and receive no help for their students to develop all the good skills that TLs are able to teach them. In many cases because of the negatives about the requirement to do RFF problem potential TL's decide not to go ahead with it.

h)   To recruit good quality TLs it is imperative that the position is a permanent, full time one and the TL can spend all week in collaborative teaching situations to impart their knowledge. Every school no matter how small or large must be able to access the services of properly trained TL who is adequately supported by SAO's who are specifically trained for Library services. In large schools the library teams should consist of a suitable number of staff.

4) THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN PARTNERING WITH AND SUPPORTING SCHOOL LIBRARIANS.

a)   Many schools have partnerships with local town libraries and other nearby schools. Town libraries provide access to databases which the school may not have, and if a resource is not available at school the town library or another school might be able to provide for that student. The town library will be able to access special books such as those needed for "English as a second language" students. Networking with other librarians usually includes those from town libraries and TAFE, particularly in rural areas and workshops held support each other's needs.

b)   The NSW State Library also provides well for schools. They cater for HSC students with Infocus, and Hot Topics, and other students and teachers can access all the databases remotely by becoming a State Library reader. This is a real asset for more isolated, rural schools. Then continually ask TLs what else they can do to support them and send presenters to local conferences to show what their services are.

c)   DET schools in NSW are funded mainly by the State government, in combination with some Federal funding in the form of special grants. In many cases parent bodies such as local P&Cs raise money to provide those "little extras" which are not covered by normal funding. This is wrong.

d)   To be equitable all schools should have sufficient funding provided by the government so that community organisations do not have to provide. TL's often apply to the P&C for funding for a special resource project. eg. Funding for the purchase of something expensive like the subscription to a database which the TL has decided would be useful for the students to achieve outcomes. Some principals seem to be misguided and believe that as more electronic resources are available in the school, there is less need for a large library budget. However at the present stage and in the future books still need to be purchased, and subscriptions to electronic systems such as Clickview are needed, so it is detrimental to educational outcomes if library budgets are reduced.

e)   There are many arguments about how much control principals should have over budgets. Conditions in the local system are best understood by the school, so there should be some school driven funding. However I believe to make it equitable across the State there should be a combination to include some funding being tied to staffing. Staffing is one area that needs to have no local decision making and this is particularly so in staffing of libraries. The State Government must see to it that every school has at least one accredited, full time TL and adequate assistants staffing. It is only by doing this that the true potential of its students can be developed.

5) **THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS.**

a)   As the digital revolution has progressed throughout society and our schools, libraries and the TL have learned to make use of the improved technology. The connected classroom, interactive whiteboards, data projectors and even mobile phones can all be used in libraries to enhance learning. Recently at a conference the presenter had us in groups discussing a problem and then using those phones with email ability discussion summaries were emailed and displayed instantly on the large screen. Obviously that sort of teaching technique can be invaluable in a school situation. The use of e-books also makes use of great developments. These e-books still need to be selected as part of the library collection.

b)   Because the numbers of computers in schools are rapidly increasing and with the DER in DET schools in NSW, where many students have been issued with their own laptops, the delivery of lessons needs to change. TLs are always willing to update their skills in IT, so they play an important role in using this improved technology.

c)   The impact of the DER funding has had conflicting results as far as enhancing the role the school library and the TL. Funding to provide equipment needs to also be supported by extra funding to become established. The need for improvements in information literacy has also grown in line with this increase in computer use and as the TL plays an important role in delivery of programs needed to improve this literacy, the increase in computers means a corresponding importance of the TL.

d)   There has been funding for professional learning on how to use much of the new equipment provided by DER funding. As libraries were targeted as having the first wireless connections, the TL became an important person to help students learn how to use them. For this reason it is imperative that school libraries are properly staffed and resourced.

e)   The DER program has provided computers for students, so it is even more important that students are properly instructed in using them efficiently. It is wrong to assume (as obviously some politicians do) that give students some computers and they'll miraculously develop skills in being efficient in locating what they need. TLs are the experts in finding the right information efficiently and can pass these skills on to students while they are in the library.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I stress again the importance of libraries and TLs in the school community, and the role they play in meeting educational outcomes, as well as preparing students for the wider community. If schools are to prepare them to be life-long learners then adequate funding must be provided by the government for staffing and resources.

The appointments of TLs must be treated the same as any other teacher with accreditation playing a role in any permanent appointments. Only those with qualifications should be appointed. Continued professional learning must be provided so that with the rapid technological advancements TLs can be updated.

There needs to be funding that will allow schools to keep up with rapidly changing technology, and install these new technology devices for the benefit of the students.
Most importantly, it is imperative that on every school staff there is a **minimum of one fully trained, TL** who is appointed above establishment, and is not part of RFF or asked to help out with extra classes, as well as libraries being given **adequate SAO time**.

If this can be achieved, looking into the future, libraries and librarians will be able to deliver programs to students that will assist in raising literacy levels, educational and social outcomes for students. This will enable students to be life-long learners who will be able to make valuable contributions to society.