



**Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools**

**Submission from**

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Aim: 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 impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

- The results of Naplan testing should be used to focus funding of school libraries. I believe if a school, through its teacher librarians, has developed a reading culture, good Naplan results will follow. Matthew Flinders Anglican College strongly supports the role of teacher librarians in the guidance the reading program because the TLs have thorough knowledge of children's literature. The results of this decision can be seen in our above average Naplan results. Teacher Librarians, here, who are trained in children's literature, provide the students with excellent up to date resources and work closely with the classroom and English teachers to ensure students are provided with interesting novels at appropriate reading levels. I believe schools that have poor Naplan results should be targeted for extra funding for children's literature resources and the Government should ensure these schools have trained teacher librarians appointed to create reading cultures within the schools.
- My School <http://www.myschool.edu.au/> site has enabled parents to compare schools' Naplan results and move their students to better schools if they feel the results are not what they expect for their child. I feel this is unfortunate for those teachers and students left in a poorly performing school but this trend could be reversed if the Federal Government positively discriminated for these schools by providing grants for children's literature materials and a trained teacher librarian.
- The critical role teacher librarians play in the information skills program and delivering exceptional reading programs in schools has not been recognized by some school principals who have removed staff from the libraries due to staffing shortfalls in other areas. Principals have not realized how this decision will affect the whole educational

program. An effective teacher librarian ensures appropriate resources are selected for all year levels since he/she knows the educational program and the reading levels of the children. He/she also ensures the students are taught information literacy skills in conjunction with the classroom teachers. The removal of the TL is likely to affect the school's Naplan results.

- With the incoming National Curriculum, it is even more critical that schools have a fully trained teacher librarian since he/she can guide the school through the changes that will have to be made. He/she will be ready to purchase the new resources needed since most TL's are members of Networks which are already discussing and planning for the changes.
- Teacher librarians are often in an excellent position to ensure whole school policies on Copyright and Cybersafety are implemented.
- BER money provided for a library building when the school does not have a trained teacher librarian will be wasted. A building will not improve the quality of the education students receive and untrained staff will not be able to fully utilize the facility the way a teacher librarian could.

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

- The distinction between teacher librarians and "school librarians" who may not be teachers must be addressed by the committee. Teacher librarians focus on improving literacy through the provision of excellent children's literature and teaching information skills to improve the educational outcomes of students. School librarians or librarians focus on developing the collection only.
- As mentioned above, a trained teacher librarian uses his/her professional judgment to select and build up to date resource collections
- Trained teacher librarians will be aware of the Federal Government's focus on literacy especially in the early years of childhood and will be able to promote the materials made available by the Federal Government to the parent bodies of their schools
- Teacher librarians regularly promote literacy initiatives such as the MS Readathon, The Smith Family Support a Reader Program, Premier's Reading challenge, Readers Cups and Book Fairs. When a school does not have a trained teacher librarian these avenues for additional literacy outcomes suffer.
- School Community libraries, where public libraries are not available, should be developed with additional funding from local authorities to allow the public to use the school facilities.

#### **The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;**

- The *Role of the Teacher Librarian* statement needs to be developed and agreed to nationally and recognized as the standard for appointing teacher librarians to all schools
- The process for recruiting teacher librarians must change. In the past teachers could apply for scholarships to gain teacher librarian qualifications. This process ensured only good teachers became teacher librarians since these scholarships were highly desirable. Later, unfortunately, teachers who could not cope with the classroom were asked to be the teacher librarian. This has meant some schools still have teacher librarians who are ineffective. It would be a good idea if Principals could nominate their best teachers to be trained as teacher librarians
- Teacher librarians need to be change agents. They are often at the forefront of technology and national developments and they need to have the confidence to guide their schools if necessary. Strong teachers are more likely to become successful teacher librarians.
- The Role of the Teacher Librarian should be a series of lectures in teacher training courses so trainee teachers would fully understand what they can expect from their teacher librarian
- At the moment, Principals in schools can use the teacher librarian “at their discretion” and this often leaves schools with no trained teacher librarian in the library. This has enormous implications for the educational program and Naplan results.
- Employing “Librarians” in schools who are not qualified to teach, is counterproductive to the *Role of the Teacher Librarian*. Librarians could be replaced by Library Technicians and teacher librarians then employed to ensure the literacy standards of the school are improved

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

- The Federal Government should provide all schools with access to a range of online databases. This would ensure students in poorer schools that cannot afford the expensive online subscriptions were not further disadvantaged.
- Providing schools with funds for laptops without staff to support the laptop programs has sometimes seen the erosion of support staff positions in school libraries. This decline should be reversed
- The Federal Government has a major role to provide resources to support the National Curriculum. The appropriate staffing level of trained teacher librarians must also be supplied so these resources can have maximum impact on the educational program in the school
- The model of School Community Libraries as developed by the South Australian Government in the 1970s should be looked at for use in other state such as Queensland.

The partnership between schools and the local governments in areas where the population was less than 1,500 was a success

- UQ Cyberschool (a service provided to Queensland schools by the University of Queensland ) provides excellent support for teacher librarians. It would be good if Educational Services Australia provided a similar service.

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

Again, I am only referring to teacher librarians in the following points since I do not believe librarians without teaching qualifications have a place in school libraries. Teacher librarians use their professional judgment to improve the educational outcomes for students. Librarians cannot do this.

- Teacher librarians play a major role in their schools often assuming responsibility for digital technologies since they see them as so beneficial to the educational program
- Teacher librarians have a major role to play in the professional development of staff when they are planning units of work with them. They can often suggest ways to embed technology and information literacy skills into the curriculum, both of which are vitally important in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia
- Digital technologies require technical support so it is important that the school provides this so the teacher librarian can continue to focus on teaching information skills and improving the educational outcomes of students

I believe the Committee should be requiring each school to provide the statistics showing the staffing level and number of teacher librarians each school has and the roles the teacher librarians play within the school. The committee could then compare this to the school's NAPLAN results for literacy. I am convinced that schools that value the role of their teacher librarian will show higher literacy results.