

Personal Response by Teresa Ison (Teacher Librarian) to Senate Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Libraries



I am currently the Teacher Librarian at Nambour SHS which is a large state school on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. The library was built during the 1970s under a Federal Government program that supported and built libraries. It is a large structure which accommodates several classes at once. While the library has benefited from grants money in recent years to update some aspects of the library there are still areas which require a substantial investment in money to improve. During the last thirty years there have been significant decreases in staffing of the library. During the 1980's there were two Teacher Librarians, and AV technician and the equivalent of two full time teacher aides. Currently there is one full time Teacher Librarian and the equivalent of 1.5 teacher aides. The school library at Nambour SHS is well-used and plays a key role in the teaching and learning of students at Nambour SHS.

Recent policies such as QLD Essential Learnings and the draft National Curriculum have meant that the school must constantly review the resources that the library provides to meet the changing curriculum. The print based resources that the library provides are often the best source of information for students with lower levels of literacy. However providing the quantity of quality print material required for approximately 10 year 8 or 9 classes is expensive. *Selecting and processing these new resources* requires the skills of the Teacher Librarian and a significant amount of time which is in short supply in an understaffed library.

I am a member of the school's Technology, Curriculum and Literacy committees and as such regular contribute to the **improved educational and community outcomes**. As the Teacher Librarian I believe that it is important that I am informed and involved in the curriculum discussions within the school. My involvement allows me to be better placed to support students and teachers in the teaching and learning process. I am often one of the few people in the school who has a *whole school perspective* and as such can contribute from a whole school perspective at these committees.

During my tenure as the Teacher Librarian at Nambour SHS I have been involved in a number of projects and programs which are designed to improve the **educational outcomes of the students**. I have developed and implemented an information literacy skills continuum for the school which has ensured that the students are exposed to these skills at appropriate times during their high school years. I am also involved in the promotion of reading at the school by: advertising new novels, newsletter articles about suitable reading material, running Readers Cup competition, and talks to classes about suitable fiction. Reading for recreation is one of the key predictors for the literacy ability of students and is a key function of the teacher librarian.

There are several **factors which influence the recruitment and development of school librarians**. I am currently enrolled in a Masters of Education Teacher Librarianship which I am completing in my own time and at my own expense. Once I am finished with this qualification I will not receive any different wage to what I currently receive. Currently in the position of Teacher Librarian I am *not officially in a management position* with the associated remuneration and title which are given to Heads of Department. In many areas I have the same or similar level of responsibility as Heads of

Department: budgets, staffing, resource management, and implementation of curriculum. One of the key factors which limit the recruitment of Teacher Librarians is this lack of official status within the school.

There is significant **impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support school libraries and librarians**. I regularly use a range of technologies in my daily duties as a Teacher Librarian. Digital technologies allow wider and quicker communication with staff, students, parents and fellow Teacher Librarians. Digital technologies provide a tool for better presentation of lesson material. Digital technologies are integral to the operation of a library.

I have been one of the key personnel in the school to *provide professional development to staff with regard to using and embed digital technologies* into the curriculum. I provide the professional development mostly outside school time which requires me to be familiar with the technologies, design training activities and publicise the activity to school staff. I am one of only a few staff in the school with my Digital Pedagogical Licence and as such I am involved in the approval of the ICT Certificate for teachers at my school.

The majority of students and staff use the Internet as their main source of information and it is my role to assist them with by teaching appropriate searching skills and evaluation of sources.

The use of digital technologies comes at a cost to libraries as the provision of digital services to the school has meant that the library and other budgets are often reduced to allow for the increasing Technology budget. The library staff are seen as pseudo computer technicians within the school and we spend large amounts of our time answering queries relating to technology. While this has the benefit of good relations with the staff and student it takes away from our primary role of supporting the school community in their resourcing needs.

The school library has three main goals:

- Promote life-long learning
- Provide equitable access to resources, and
- Promote the love of reading.

These three goals are able to be achieved when the library is well staffed, funded and given status within the school. It is my role as Teacher Librarian to work with the school community in my capacity as a Teacher and also as a Librarian. **It is my recommendation that all schools have a teacher librarian employed and that there is a policy developed which provides a standard ratio for the number of teacher librarians and support staff to the number of students.** The Teacher Librarian is skilled in the selection of resources, the teaching of information literacy, the promotion of reading and has a whole school perspective.

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