To:

Secretary
Australian Parliament House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Training

House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra   ACT   2600

Attached is a submission for the:

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

This submission was drafted by:
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Using the resources provided by:
http://hubinfo.wordpress.com
http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/rblonline/teacherlibrarianship/tl.htm authored by Sue Spence

and contributions from members of JULA 2010, (appendix attached)

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This submission is presented on behalf of the **Joint Use Librarians Association SA,** a professional group made up of the Teacher/Librarians and Community Library Assistants who work in the 44 School Community Libraries of mainly rural areas of South Australia, hosted by 29 Local Government authorities. (Appendix 1)

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- School communities need a qualified Teacher/Librarian in every school. A Teacher/Librarian is a teacher and a librarian.

- School communities should be able to provide equitable access for all students to books, information and information technology. Equitable school library budgets need to be able to provide this access

BACKGROUND

School Community Libraries, established in 1975, are unique in Australia, if not the world. They have proven a remarkable success in providing a public library service to rural areas of South Australia. This model has been effective due to the cooperation between the **Department of Education and Children's Services** (DECS), **Local Government** and the **Libraries Board of South Australia.** The 2002 report School Community Libraries in South Australia: Funding and Governance, highlights these libraries as excellent examples of state and local government working together with local communities to maximise the use of resources, and to offer quality service to every South Australian, regardless of location.(Handbook for School Community Libraries in Rural Areas of South Australia pg 1)

The following documents underpin the successful operation of School Community Libraries:

Memorandum of Agreement
School Communities Libraries Agreement
Handbook for School Community Libraries in Rural Areas of South Australia
School Community Libraries in South Australia: funding & governance
Education Act 1972
Libraries Act 1999

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

Recent government policy to ensure access to ICT for students also means that all schools need to be staffed adequately to: support the government's policy of the 1/5 computer ratio; to have dedicated and properly trained IT personnel; as well as having access to a T&D budget that recognizes the need to train teaching staff and SSOs in the integration of ICT into the curriculum. All, of course, with the support of the Teacher/Librarian.

On a practical level this involves the provision of appropriately designed and furnished space to house the IT equipment, i.e. the library. Then allowing schools who can raise the finance to build these facilities to do so, and then granting them the scope to allow maintainence of these facilities within the department formula of $$/m cleaning fees etc.

The introduction of programs such as P21 in South Australia where the funding was devolutionised to local management/governing councils and the subsequent decision to withhold interest on locally invested funds has had a direct impact on the bottomline in local budgets, and means some tough decisions about staffing have had to be made.

Classroom and subject teachers often rely on the library and the qualified Teacher/Librarian for help with: researching information; collaboratively planning units of work; and team teaching with them to allow for the optimum benefits for their students. A task that cannot be achieved if the qualified Teacher/Librarian is teaching maths with another class and the library is not adequately staffed by qualified personnel.

Scheduling of the Teacher/Librarian's time to manage the library in between teaching classes doesn't allow for adequate preparation time for the teaching of those classes or allow for the complexities of managing the library. This is to the disadvantage of the whole school community.

The *Handbook for School Community Libraries in Rural Areas of South Australia* specifically states that the Teacher/Librarian's time should not be used as Non-Instructional time and yet in the JULA survey (2010) 44% indicated that this was the case.
This indicates a clear example of local management responding to government policy, which resulted in restricted budgets, and the inability to staff schools adequately within a rigid formula. The threat in South Australia currently being that the new formula will remove the Teacher/Librarian from schools altogether.

The recent release of the draft Australian Curriculum highlights the cross-curriculum nature of the general capabilities embedded within the curriculum. However, we feel that adequate and systematic attention to these cross-curriculum capabilities will definitely be at risk in schools where the Teacher/Librarian, with their cross-curriculum perspective & knowledge and their information literacy & ICT expertise, will not be there to become the necessary and important change agent in these curriculum reforms.

The impact this will have has been shown recently in South Australia, where the requirements of the new SACE involves students in conducting a compulsory Research Project as well as conducting an in-depth study or investigation in 23 of 54 stage 1 and 38 of 63 stage 2 subjects. The support of the Teacher/Librarian in not only providing access to suitable resources within and beyond school, but also teaching students and providing professional development support for teachers in the requisite research skills and strategies, will be critical for students and teachers alike.
To effectively implement the new Australian Curriculum – we need national planning for information literacy, perhaps based on the ICT literacy continuum promised in the Australian Curriculum: providing resources, learning scaffolds and meaningful and effective professional development to all teachers through the agency of properly trained and qualified Teacher/Librarians in every school.

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

The school's Teacher/Librarian is ideally placed to improve these outcomes by promoting programs such as Premier's Reading Challenge, various classroom reading programs, extension reading in secondary classes, as well as encouraging recreational reading of students through the provision of various genre of books in a school library.

Keeping up with current trends in reading advisory services, the use of running records, lexile based reading programs etc requires on-going training & development.

Education programs that allow for this level of training are very specific and are not usually factored in when budgets are allocated. Availability of such courses in rural areas are practically non-existent, so extra time and funding needs to be allocated for travel & accommodation to a larger centre as well as the cost of staffing the library during the absence of the teacher librarian or school services officer.

Factors such as: allowing adequate time for selection; weeding; maintenance of the library management system & it's associated network within the library, and possibly school-wide; managing the finances and budget lines to name a few, impact directly on a Teacher/Librarian's ability to fulfill their potential as a professional in this area of their role.

Changes to teaching pedagogy in recent years and a better understanding of how children learn has meant that classroom and subject teachers are more often relying on the library and the qualified Teacher/Librarian for help with: researching information; collaboratively planning units of work; and team teaching ,to allow for the optimum benefits for their students. A task that cannot be achieved if the qualified Teacher/Librarian is teaching mathematics with another class and the library is not adequately staffed with qualified personnel.

Scheduling of the Teacher/Librarian's time to *manage* the library in between teaching classes doesn't allow for adequate preparation time for the teaching of those classes or allow for the complexities of managing the library, disadvantaging the whole school community.

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3   The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

When your primary employer undervalues your profession by not placing you in a role appropriate to your qualifications and instead uses unqualified clerical staff to fulfil teaching and management tasks, there is little hope of encouraging new graduates to apply for such positions or undertake training in a dual degree.

In South Australia for example, DECS continues to deny that there is a shortage of qualified Teacher/Librarians on the basis that there are few vacancies advertised by schools. This disingenuous response has already been refuted by an Australian Education Union (AEU) survey in 2002 where, of the 303 work sites that responded, 107 (35%) had school libraries staffed below DECS own staffing formula, and 109 (36%) had staff without Teacher/Librarian qualifications (AEU 2002)[1].

Schools are putting untrained teachers and even school support officers in charge of school libraries.

The recent JULA survey (8-4-10) indicated that of the respondents 100% of the Teacher/Librarians plan to retire in less than 10 yrs, 47% in less than 5 years and that currently 47% don't hold a qualification recognised by ALIA. Responses to the question regarding training indicates that 53% of

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[1]   http://www.slasa.asn.au/Advocacy/docs/aeusurveyarticle.pdf

staff find it difficult to obtain; that 77% Teacher/Librarians consider they don't have enough time to train, nor that there is a budget to support them (82%).

Teacher/Librarian courses are few and far between and ALIA on their website list just 4 specific courses and 2 that offer a specialisation within the subject choice of the qualification. None appear to call for *experience* as a teacher as a prequisite, citing only the need to have a four year education degree, or 3 years plus a year experience as a teacher *may be considered* for acceptance; a factor perhaps, in attracting committed teachers to the profession.

None of these in South Australia.

The remuneration for Teacher/Librarians also doesn't reflect the dual role required in terms of management of a library service: supervising staff, managing budgets of thousands of dollars as well as the teaching role. There also is no clear career path and little encouragement to persue progression to Key Teacher or Coordinator roles within the school, and still stay in the library.

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

The South Australian model of joint use libraries has been very successful and if it is repeated in other states, for their regional areas, the lessons learnt in South Australia will need to be tempered with our hard earned experience along with the reality of the dual role of Teacher/Librarians.

Our role as a Teacher/Librarian in a School Community Library encompasses the role of a public librarian as well as that of a school librarian; and while we have the added benefits of access to the extensive resources offered by the state network, PLAIN (Public Libraries Automated Information Network), the position of Teacher/Librarian is often undermined by budgetary and HR restraints imposed by inadequate staffing and funding of schools at a local and state level.

With libraries of the future becoming more centres of lifelong learning where the public can access new technology as well ads community services our role is rapidly changing.

As Community Librarians, we are expected to understand Local Government structures; budgets; meeting protocols; to promote the library in the local community; to develop and promote Community Programs such as Baby Bounce, Big Book Club, Premier's Reading Challenge etc as well as excel in our school roles.
While State & Local government are required to contribute to the materials and operating budgets of a School Community Library, the staffing is funded by, and subject to, Education Department requirements.

Local school management are often faced with having to make a decision to put a qualified teacher (the librarian) in front of a class of students instead of allowing themselves the benefit of that Teacher/Librarian being in the library to assist the whole school community, as well as fulfill their role as public librarian.

A recent survey of our JULA members (conducted 8-4-10) shows that member libraries are not always allocated sufficient support staff, (SSOs - school support officers/teacher's aides) to maintain the necessary tasks to enable the Teacher/Librarian to do what they are trained to do, that is to support students in research, literacy information skills, and navigating the technologically complex world the library has become, as we guide them towards becoming lifelong learners.

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

There is no doubt that technological advances in recent years have changed the way that we as a community learn and gather information. Teacher/Librarians are at the forefront of that change.

The growing importance of social networking alongside the expansion of the use of the internet for research has from the early days of web browsing meant that the first computers and networks were in the library. The expectation was the teacher/librarian became, or expanded their role as media specialists. The complexities of school wide Local Area Networks, and the introduction of wireless systems has meant the teacher/librarian is responsible for making it all work and takes precious time away from the library, and working with students and staff.

Never has it been more relevant to teach and model not just the technical skills needed to access this new world, but also the information skills required for lifelong learning.

As Teacher/Librarians we are often expected to take on the role of the ICT manager and coordinator. This is a time consuming task that often takes the Teacher Librarian out of the library, away from students and staff.

The training and development needed to successfully fill this specialist role is growing rapidly. It is time consuming and expensive for a library to support from within its small budget. While South Australia now allows for recognition of this being done in our own time, not all the necessary courses are available during semester breaks or on weekends. Trainers need time off too!

This concludes our submission.

ROLE STATEMENT FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIBRARIANS

Teacher Librarians in School Community libraries have a vital role to play in: the development of both a school and public and library service, where information literacy, enjoyment of reading and access to statewide networks are key elements.

School leaders are encouraged to support their teacher librarians to develop clear role statements, reflecting their roles as teachers, information specialists, and community library managers.

When fulfilling all aspects of the role, the qualified teacher librarian is operating at a leadership level.

Leadership

- Sustain a high level of professional knowledge
- Demonstrate practices that reflect current educational and public library directions
- Develop & document library policies, set goals & objectives & evaluate according to changing school and community needs
- Contribute to the ongoing professional development of staff
- Function as a member of the school leadership and/or curriculum team
- Participate in the on-going development of the school's and Local Government Information and Communication Technology plan
- Facilitate knowledge management processes for the libraries diverse customer groups
- Advocate the need for students and community users to be information literate
- actively participate in broader networks to provide benefits to all library users
- actively liaise with local Govt Funders Library Board of Management

Teaching & Learning

- Assist students to seek, critically evaluate, synthesize and present information
- Incorporate the essential knowledge, skills and dispositions of the SACSA framework into teaching and learning programs
- Help students use a range of resources and technologies
- Provide opportunities for students to work in groups, individually or whole class
- Collaboratively plan and teach units of work with subject and classroom teachers to develop information literacy
- Be inclusive of the diverse needs of learners

Management

- Organize efficient procedures and systems for delivery of services, including flexible time-tabling for use of the library
- Develop and administer library budgets (PLAIN, school and Local Government) and be accountable to relevant funding bodies.
- Coordinate the roles and daily tasks of library staff and volunteers
- Manage the automated library system and related technology
- Coordinate promotion and marketing of the library and its services.
- Contribute to relevant webpages and intranets
- Develop effective partnerships with Local Government, School Management and community groups

Services

- Select resources to support the information needs of the school and wider community
- Employ strategies to maximize access to print and electronic resources for community, staff and students
- Facilitate access to community resources and information services
- Instruct community, staff and students in specialist information tools and services
- Provide a friendly environment in which community, staff & students feel confident that their information needs will be addressed
- Provide access to local knowledge networks
- Assist community, staff and students in the use of the Internet and Intranet
- Ensure that the library is multi-functional and a focal point for community, staff and student learning
- Provide outreach services to Hospitals, day care, housebound, depots, feeder schools etc.
- Support the services offered through the Public Library Network, ie ILL, Film & Video, hear-a-books etc

Curriculum involvement

- Be informed and proactive about current curriculum documents and developments, e.g.SACSA
- Participate as a partner in planning, implementing and evaluating school policies relating to curriculum
- Actively promote student information literacy across the curriculum
- Develop with teachers a school-wide information skills continuum
- Work with school leaders to integrate Information and Communication Technology into the curriculum

Literature Promotion

- Expose community, staff & students to a range of genres in both print and digital formats
- Develop strategies to foster a love of reading and literature for leisure
- Promote best quality literature and authors reflecting a variety of cultures and themes
- Guide community, staff & students in their reading choices
- Use selection tools/ reviewing journals to keep informed about current literature for readers birth to 95 yrs
- Collaborate with teachers to develop literature based reading programs
- Work collaboratively with teachers to select suitable texts

Acknowledgement to the School Library Association of South Australia for allowing the adaptation of their Teacher Librarian Role Statement 2002