



**Submission to:**

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

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools.

I attended a small state primary school in country Victoria in the 60s. Our library was a cupboard up the back of the room. In the years since, there have obviously been major changes in education, and schools have become places connected to the world through the Internet.

The learning opportunities available to children and young people now are truly amazing, but they cannot be taken for granted. Neither can it be taken for granted that students know how to access such learning.

Education is something Australia can be proud of. As we move closer and closer to the truly global classroom, it is of increasing importance that all children and young people have professionally trained experts to guide them in their learning. An Australian school library today must be recognised as not only a resource bank, but as also a place where students can actively learn the skills to explore and motivate and stretch their capabilities, and reach out to the future.

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

It is very disturbing to think that some schools, especially primary schools do not have qualified teachers in their libraries. There are some that do not even officially have a library. It is particularly of concern that it appears to be the beginning of a trend, that with financial constraints, schools are choosing to limit or even eliminate the school library. Even some educators seem to believe misguidedly (!), that the Internet is a library and children are intrinsically able to search the web without a qualified teacher actually teaching them how. It does make me fear for students' ability to discern and effectively and efficiently use good resources. The Internet is fabulous but research repeatedly shows that children have to be taught skills in its use.

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

School libraries and teacher librarians are there to lead students and their teachers into the global world of learning. Associations such as SLAV (School Library Association of Victoria) are wonderful sources of professional development for library specialists and have much to offer librarians and

teachers in Australian schools. Well before Web 2.0 became a catchword SLAV and similar bodies were training teacher librarians in possibilities for educational use.

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

Teacher librarians are trained in choosing resources: books, online material, audio, etc. Their expertise includes discernment and selection of material for a range of needs, for a variety of teaching styles and also a variety of learning styles. As support for the learning that takes place in the school it is the teacher librarian's specific role to know the curriculum, to know the students and to know the staff, and thereby provide the very best for their school. This position is a cornerstone of the school educational program. It is the responsibility of the teacher librarian to be aware of literacy needs for specific students and for their whole school; they are trained to use their expert knowledge to ensure the best resources available. School should be a place where children and young adults can explore a variety of ways of learning.

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

It is timely and appropriate that the Australian Federal Government carry out this investigation into school libraries and librarians as part of their commitment to enhancing educational prospects for all young Australians. A school library in every school, staffed with professionals, trained in educational and library expertise is an investment in the future of Australia.