



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

To whom it may concern,

I have been a teacher-librarian for less than 5 years, but already in that time have found that I have needed to move offshore to work.

The role of teacher-librarian is diminishing in Australia and with low pay and poor conditions, I find it much better to work overseas – where this profession is rewarded both professionally and financially.

Working in an international school allows for greater pay (I earn roughly double what I would in Australia, after tax), a more equitable tax scale expatriate benefits that are rewarded with an overseas placement contract. I currently work in Singapore and personally know of at least 9 other teacher-librarians who work at international schools in Singapore. Across the South-East Asian region, there are scores of Teacher-librarians who have decided to move offshore to continue their profession, especially at IBO schools.

I cannot afford to live in Australia with the current pay that is being offered to teachers in New South Wales. Also, with large class sizes and the politicization of education, I find the conditions of employment are far more favourable in international schools. The library budgets are generally in excess of AUD\$100,000 which ensure that reading and information literacy can be adequately taught to children.

I believe school libraries are an important and pivotal part of the Australian education system. Teacher-librarians engage with teachers/parents/students and are a vital part of the school body. Without them, and properly funded libraries, I believe Australian education will suffer considerably.

I believe that when conditions and pay improve in Australia, more expatriate Australians will return home to continue in their profession.

A few points to note:

- Teacher-librarians should have a 50% teaching load, 50% administration load;
- School libraries need to be well-resourced. This requires considerable investment.
- Every school in Australia should have access to a teacher-librarian;
- Teacher-librarians play a vital role in the education of students and in the development of literacy;
- Teacher-librarians play a pivotal role in curriculum development;
- Many school libraries are being run by non-qualified teachers or volunteers. This needs to be rectified;
- With the introduction of a national curriculum, a library curriculum needs to be formulated;
- Pay needs to be improved to both attract and maintain staff;
- Funds need to be provided for visiting author visits and to support whole-school events such as Book Week.

Kind regards,

Benjamin Farr
Infant School Teacher-Librarian