NSW PRIMARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION Inc.
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NSW Primary Principals' Association
Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education & Training

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 NSW Primary Principals' Association (NSWPPA) is a professional association for Primary Principals of Public Schools throughout New South Wales with a membership of over 1800 Principals.

This submission is a collation of responses provided by the NSWPPA and as such represents the views, concerns and opinions of Primary Principals across the state.

This submission has the authorisation of Mr. Geoff Scott, President of the NSWPPA

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88 submissions were received by the New South Wales Primary Principals Association. Schools that responded represented a wide range of association membership, from large city schools to remote country schools. The responses therefore provide a varied collection of views on the key areas for the Inquiry.

Item One
The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities
Investment has recently included
- Building the Education Revolution (BER)– 3089 built or refurbished across Australia
- Capital Works projects operated by NSW Government - Limited
- Federal Government initiative (6 years ago) – Australian content into library was welcome, but did not make major or significant difference.
- Investing in Schools - a Federal Government project – Often used to increase technology in areas such as hardware in libraries.
- Investment is much needed – particularly in remote, small and country schools
- To many others schools across NSW the response to recent investment would be - "What investment?"

Policy
- Library policy – last one 1987 – 23 years ago.
- Not aware of any attempt in National Curriculum to bring consistency to Teacher /Librarian (T/L). It would be an ideal time – i.e. in English Curriculum reference is made to Information Literacy Skills
- Clerical time and T/L administration time does not take into account growth in technology and internet.
- The Department of Education and Training staffing policy changed as part of a salary agreement in approximately 1998. This change stripped T/Ls of their original role and made them a Relief From Face to Face teacher (RFF teacher) in primary schools. This policy change is one of the most significant in recent times
- University courses in Education do not value the specialised nature of teaching and of librarians in particular. This is also the case with Teacher /Librarian courses.
- Policy to mentor beginning librarians is small but positive and well received by those who benefit.
- Inequity in the staffing policy – High Schools receive full -time Librarian. Primary schools do not automatically get that allocation ie 300 students in a HS – 5 days Librarian time where as 300 students in Primary – 3 days allocation

Additional Observations
- Often libraries become the security store for all computer servers – most libraries are not prepared or set up for this.
- BER is <u>currently</u> negatively impacting on the proper conduct of libraries as they may be the only place to house displaced classes or other programs while building is being conducted.
- Devolved staffing trial currently in operation in a limited number of NSW schools has the potential to negatively impact on T/L positions (as in Loftus Public School)
- Distance Education settings – Libraries can provide a vital link to those things not otherwise available.
- Antiquated Library computer software (OASIS) does little to re-assure users that libraries are valued in schools
- Teaching Principals / small schools – very small library allocation. Hard to maintain a collection. Books still cost the same. Library collections vary pending how much of the school global budget is able to be allocated
- A recurring theme among respondents was that a building does not make a library if resources don't match need and if the library is not overseen and driven by qualified personnel with time to do what is required.

Item Two
The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy
- 60 worldwide studies confirm qualified T/L in well-resourced libraries improve literacy levels for students. No similar studies have been conducted in Australia. We as a system need to look at what best practice is and put it into action.
- Librarians "touch" virtually every child every week. Their impact on love of learning and reading should be enhanced not diminished
- The wonder of exploring new worlds in every book or finding the answer to ever-challenging questions still resides in a library collection (of whatever kind of book, digital, picture)
- Librarians teach others to better use the library (teachers included).
- Community programs would be wonderful but not without resources. T/L cannot teach and run a library for a community at the same time.
- For improved outcomes – qualified, well resourced and valued personnel are essential.
- Learning centres (not tutoring centres) after school hours may benefit communities lacking access to a library. No formalised approaches have been seriously considered except for community libraries that are part of some schools – Sarah Redfern school complex in South Western Sydney was one of the first examples.
- Promotion of literature – Premier's Reading Challenge, Book Week, Literacy Week, etc assist in improving outcomes for students. These are more often than not the responsibility of the T/L
- The future is a combination of traditional library resources with emerging (Web 2.0 – wiki's etc) ones
- The encouragement to read – for enjoyment – develops a life long pastime and the handing down of a wonderful human "tradition". This is only really done in libraries
- Future continues to be thwarted by T/L/RFF formula in Primary Schools.
- The future moves our world from a room/building to a global room. This movement emphasises even more that a library is the hub of school learning opportunities.

Item Three
The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians
- Limited career pathway can be a disincentive for some
- Lack of administration time – combined role of teacher and librarian and administrator is too much for one person. This is very true in large schools with large collections and extensive demands on the librarian
- Minimal retraining options for current teachers
- Only 3 institutions prepare T/Ls, offered by correspondence only
- Additional roles – technology doesn't allow for new librarians to consolidate their skills – always having to do something new.
- No demand for T/L networks as an expected part of all Education groups
- Policy of using T/L for RFF limits the attraction to the role and limits the potential for cooperative learning and planning
- As some T/Ls work in more than one school they may be running two libraries
- Inequity with High School and Primary Schools (as mentioned in Item One)
- Professional isolation – One T/L in a school

Item Four
The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians
- Desire may be evident but practicalities prohibit much being done except for a loose relationship and the occasional additional referral point for schools
- Municipal libraries are much better resourced and librarians there are just that – librarians
- Federal support – minimal
- Relationship between school library and local library varies enormously across the state – No common framework or goals
- Inter-Library loans are useful but often impractical.
- There should be an established method by which needs beyond the school's range of services can be accessed by communities. Digital collections would assist that
- NSW historically recognise the notion of T/L as opposed to other states who do not necessarily do so
- Overwhelmingly the view is that relationships are currently disjointed and incomplete
- Options may include a requirement to better link community resources to school Libraries

Item Five
The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the role of school libraries and librarians
- There is more to libraries than technology - awakening the reader, inspiring the writer, unearthing new ideas through research are all still vital components
- Not everyone comes to a library knowing the answers to the questions that may not have been yet asked in their own minds. Librarians provide this access
- Emerging technologies including Kindles, I Pads etc must be investigated – there is plenty of potential there
- Linking access to specific and rare collections but having general sameness for the most needed items may be where potential lies
- T/L have potential for enormous influence on community needs with their duel qualifications

- Connected Classrooms have not been tapped for this "teaching" aspect of Librarian's role
- Equally important in this regard is assisting distance-challenged communities
- Many recent initiatives have had their origin in Libraries – Interactive Whiteboards were more often than not housed in a library in the first instance.
- In years past the "Computer Lab" was often in a Library as it was never part of the building code in schools to have a Lab and nowhere else had the room. This will, I suspect continue
- Digital catalogues and relaxing of some current access restrictions may also be considered
- Federal Government computer revolution does not influence Primary schools but will most likely do so in the not too distant future. Helping students get what they need and be sure it is true and reliable information is where T/Ls have an essential role to play
- For some, the Library is the only access point for technology, even printers, let alone the internet. For some, a Library contributes to the essential equity issue.
- IWB should be mandated for all Libraries
- Use the concept of My School to make My Library which gives everyone all the resources they need. To be at Wombat Public School but have the same access to any Library resources as a person at Wahroonga should be our ultimate goal
- Potential for our authors to reach EVERY child in Australia – a video-linked presentation There is potential for the Federal Government to put some money to good use – Video lessons free to every school
- Children want information and themes in texts immediately. Books do not provide the "search" feature that Digital media does. Meaning and relevance changes for Gen X, Y and Z. There is potential but no political conviction to addressing such issues
- 'Googling' does not equate to researching. There is more to scholarly conduct than that. The impact of this being left unchecked because of restrictive staffing formulas will leave us behind the needs of our children
- Web 2.0 technology is a rarity in schools but a fact of life for our children – thinking ahead not catching up is what we need to do
- Our children want to see the Mona Lisa, the Dead Sea scrolls and footprints on the moon – from their computer, anywhere in Australia. Potentially we could do this – but not if T/Ls have multiple roles, part time roles and governments lack clarity as to where we should head.

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