



Ms Sharon Bird MP

Chair, Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Dear Ms Bird,

Until my resignation in October last year I was, for 11 years, a professional Education Officer with the Catholic Schools Office Broken Bay, and had oversight of 43 K-12 school libraries in the Diocese of Broken Bay amongst my responsibilities in information services and technologies. Prior to that position I was a teacher librarian for over 20 years in independent, Catholic systemic and Departmental schools.

Because I have not been working in the educational sector that last few months I only recently became aware of the Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians but once I heard about the Inquiry was both heartened that at last there may be some long-overdue changes ahead and felt that I should make my voice heard to.

My role as an Education Officer gave me a unique opportunity to observe issues affecting school libraries **in all educational sectors**, the most critical of these being:

1. the national shortage of qualified *and* suitably skilful teacher librarians, primary and secondary;
2. the diverting of limited school budget allocations and government grants, away from libraries and into usually, Information Technology, unfortunately often based on the perception that students will only need the internet and computers to obtain and manage information;
3. the lack of expert consultation and considered planning in the design for 21st century learning and teaching of nearly all new school libraries on the last few years. There is a wide gulf between the mere handful of well considered newer school libraries [*often in those independent schools where the library and its staff are considered integral to the school's educational life*] and the 'school library stuck in the 90's' designs that have and are being built in most schools. Sadly there will undoubtedly be insufficient funds to push these new-old libraries into this century and even if there were there won't be enough trained staff to man them.

I am confident that the library community around Australia will present to your Committee much more around these three issues as well as other matters that have confounded, restricted and disturbed the profession. I also trust that the submissions will highlight the many positive outcomes for students that good teacher librarians and well designed 21st century school libraries can achieve.

Sincerely,

Mrs Jenny Fawbert