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Attention
Secretary of the Committee
Canberra

INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

In a multicultural community such as Fairfield City, with low incomes and high rates of unemployment, young people need all the help they can get to succeed at school and go on to further education and obtain fulfilling employment.

Professional Teacher Librarians are critical to this success. They teach Information Literacy skills – not just the ability to read and write but the ability to use these skills effectively in the real world. Recent NAPLAN test results show a significant gap between spelling and reading/comprehension levels which indicates the need for more information literacy education.

School students of all ages, but especially high school students, need to be able to access information from the internet and make a judgement on the authority of this information and the use of on-line databases. Teacher Librarians are the professionals who can train students to use the internet effectively. Public libraries are flooded with students after school and the public librarians can only assist in an ad hoc manner so systematic class sessions with a teacher librarian are much more effective.

Also, most importantly, as local government public libraries receive no funding from the Commonwealth their first priority is to members of the community who have no access to another library. Students should be able to use the public library effectively having been skilled up by teacher librarians.

Teacher Librarians are also able to show children that reading is something they can do for fun, not just a skill needed in order to complete assignments. Preschool children can attend story sessions at their local public library but older children also need to be encouraged to enjoy reading as a leisure activity, a way to stimulate the imagination and to learn about the world from different points of view.

Teacher Librarians can effectively network with professional colleagues at their local public library to form partnerships to enhance the resources and programs of both institutions for the benefit of students and the development of a life-long learning habit.

Teacher Librarians can assist teachers in keeping up to date with their research skills and latest information technology.

Our communities need professional teacher librarians – our children depend on them for a well rounded education that will fit them for the world awaiting them outside the school yard.

Anne Hall
Manager, Library & Museum