

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No.EW0660_11

Senator Mason asked on 21/10/2010, Hansard page 78.

Question

SHORTAGE OF LIBRARIANS

Senator MASON—According to the Australian Library and Information Association, there is a shortage of over 3,000 teacher librarians in Australia. Is the government aware of that shortage? Ms Paul—That would not be a question as to the BER. We could go there when we come back to schools. Senator Chris Evans—I do not know the answer, but I have heard reporting that they have had trouble attracting librarians and I know that at the school of one of sons they have had trouble finding suitable staff. So it is not counter-intuitive. Senator MASON—No, I raise it because the issue has been raised with me. I had some representations on this. What we want as a community is libraries to be staffed by qualified librarians. We have these facilities built—over 3,000 libraries at over \$3½ billion being built over the last couple of years. In a sense, to get the best out of them, you would want qualified librarians. I was just wondering if the government, along with the states, is doing anything to attract and to train further librarians. Was this issue even considered when the libraries were being built? Senator Chris Evans—I think it is a reasonable concern. The best thing is for us to take it on notice because obviously the state authorities or the other school systems are the employers.

Answer

The department is aware that on 28 April 2010 the Australian School Library Association advised, at a public hearing of an Inquiry conducted under the previous Parliament, that they considered there to be a shortage of around 2,500 to 3,000 teacher librarians. This estimation was based on the Association's policy of one teacher librarian for every school.

The most recent available national data is from the 2006–07 *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey. This indicated that 5 per cent of primary principals had at least one primary library teacher position unfilled. The indicative national estimated number of primary library teacher vacancies towards the end of 2006 was 400. A second *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey is currently being undertaken in 2010. In this survey, data is being collected on teacher librarians in both primary and secondary school settings.