



To: Secretary, Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training

## **Submission into the Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools**

Australian schools, irrespective of size and location, need a library staffed by a qualified teacher-librarian for the following reasons:

- . to improve literacy and learning
- . to provide equitable access for all students to books, information and information technology.

### **The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

Many new libraries are being built under the umbrella of the BER initiative, but how many will be just bricks and mortar without a qualified teacher-librarian and up-to-date print resources? Children need guidance and encouragement.

### **The future potential of school libraries and librarians (Teacher-Librarians) to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

It is a well-known fact that children become better readers (and spellers and writers) by reading. This observation is made to parents at Orientation each year in many schools. Teacher-librarians are specialists in encouraging literacy through enabling daily access to the school library and all of its wonderfully-appealing resources, both print and digital.

### **The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

Teacher-librarian training programs have decreased in number in recent years resulting in a dearth of qualified library teaching staff. Furthermore, some of the teachers who are doing one of the three available teacher-librarian courses do not need to have practical classroom experience as was the criteria years ago. The recent trend toward flexible staffing, along with dwindling school budgets, has resulted in the increased use of teacher-librarians in classrooms as release time for non-contact duties for classroom teachers. In some schools the teacher-librarian has been replaced with less expensive staff.

### **The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians**

Educational leaders need support in developing effective and efficient school libraries and excellent teacher-librarians.

Quality teachers and pre-service teachers need easy access to the research on guided inquiry, information literacy, collaborative planning and teaching with teacher-librarians.

## **The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

Books will continue to exist in many formats such as printed, e-books and CD-ROMs to name a few. Quality information, for example through online databases, is not free. Teacher-librarians, in collaboration with teachers, will still be needed to select, purchase, organize and guide access to books and information.

Teacher-librarians willingly update their skills in Information Technology in many ways. They develop library web access points, digitize data, network with colleagues, review and select learning objects, web-quests, online databases, social networking tools. This is part of their collection development role, their teaching and curriculum support role and their role in improving literacy. And they do it brilliantly.

Yours Faithfully

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