Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;

- students need to be information literate. Teacher Librarians specialise in information literacy
- Teacher Librarians encourage a love of literature in students and expose them to a wide variety of genre
- As a Teacher Librarian, I know every student in my school (over 600). I am aware of their strengths and needs
- Teacher Librarians offer resource support for teachers and can critically evaluate a wide range of resources

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;

- Fewer teachers are willing to undergo the training to be a Teacher Librarian due to time commitments and cost (HECS)
- The NSW DET has downgraded the Graduate Diploma and Masters courses to a graduate certificate with mentoring by an experienced Teacher Librarian
- NSW DET staffing policies have seen a number of people placed in schools who are untrained – it's often seen as a "backdoor " way of getting into the system. Often these are teachers who have little understanding of the nature of the job. When they do get to undertake the course they are often surprised at the rigorous nature of the course and the time needed to complete assignments.
- The system, in some cases, also allows those who are untrained to get jobs over those who are – it's all in the wording of the ads. A recent job advertisement for a Teacher Librarian did not actually mention the word "library"
- Addressing the nature of school libraries and their role would be of benefit in preservice training
- The level of training in day to day functioning in the library is poor as regions do not run courses in the library circulation system or stock control. These are left to the local library networks and a listserv that constantly answers queries on the very basics of library circulation and management

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

- Funding school libraries to an adequate level so that the school library can adequately support the curriculum and its learners
- Institute a set of national government standards for all libraries
- Look at the effects of DET procurement (NSW) on the cost of library supplies – it is rumoured that soon we will not have a choice of where we get our supplies. SmartBuy is difficult to use and very expensive, meaning budgets will not go as far
- Break down the barriers that exist in working conditions between high school and primary Teacher Librarians. This is very much the case in NSW where primary Teacher Librarians are teaching for the majority of the school week unlike their secondary counterparts
- Allow adequate clerical assistance in primary school libraries. This is now at the whim of the School Administrative Manager. Primary school libraries often have to beg for clerical time.
- NSW School libraries and information services section of the DET is great, but there needs to be far more regional support. Recently I approached my region for some professional assistance in running a course on digital technologies. My request was passed around and in the end had to go outside the region to get the assistance that we needed.
- In some schools there little support among educational leaders for the Teacher Librarian. We are often only seen as the providers of RFFT (relief from face to face teaching) and everything else takes second place to this role. As one Teacher Librarian quoted "the only thing a Teacher Librarian has to fear is a Principals' Conference". As the only ones in the school we can be fair game
- According to my union, stress levels amongst Teacher Librarians is quite high compared to other areas of the teaching profession
- Allow adequate time for us to manage the library. 20% of the week as set down as a minimum by the DET means that I spend at least 8-10 hours a week out of school hours to catch up on library management. Having to negotiate time off classes to do a stocktake, as required by the audit act, is extremely unfair and meant last year undertaking it on a weekend to complete the job. Managing the library is not seen as important as the RFFT role, and as a result there is insufficient time to provide the service to teachers and students that I would like
- Support us with adequate and ongoing training. Too often it is seen that because of the nature of our jobs, information specialists, we will find out things we need to know ourselves
- Support us with a 21st century library management system. OASIS is old enough to vote! It is about 26 years old and constantly crashes. It does not meet the needs of a modern school library. Support for it is woefully inadequate and we are way below the office in terms of OASIS support. The NSW DET is planning on replacing it in their LMBR project but their plans for a school library circulation system have to include TAFE. Ridiculous! Our needs and users are very different

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

- Teacher Librarians are amongst the most flexible group of teachers that I have come across. They willingly update their skills in ICT, select websites and learning objects, use databases, Web 2.O tools, create webquests and educate students in social networking tools, to name a few. This is part of collection development for the 21st century. The willingness to adapt and change their role in the school is obvious when Teacher Librarians attend their local network meetings and share what they are doing and ask for assistance for what they would like to do. Educating students on the use of ICT has become an increasingly important role
- An increasing number of libraries are purchasing Interactive Whiteboards and Teacher Librarians are integrating this technology into their teaching
- The connected classroom project in NSW has seen Teacher Librarians as leaders in adapting these technologies into their teaching, as well as inservicing staff
- Books will continue to exist but in different formats. The cost of online databases and access to interactive learning sites such as Skwirk is considerable.
- A large number of Teacher Librarians, particularly in primary schools, are computer co-ordinators in their schools. At a recent inservice they were a significant group. That they are in this position means that they have been able to upgrade and adapt their skills to take on new challenges to meet the needs of their students and staff.

What I would like to see from this Inquiry:

- A recognition of the vital role school libraries and Teacher Librarians play in meeting the education needs of their students
- A raising of the profile of Teacher Librarians so that we are taken seriously by educational leaders and our union
- a survey on school library funding, staffing and timetabling
- greater support from the state government in terms of fair working conditions
- upgrading libraries to take into account the use of digital technologies (we didn't all get a new library)
- development of a national information literacy curriculum
- grants to libraries to improve literacy (forget the Premier's Reading Challenge)
- include the role of the library and Teacher Librarian in all curriculum documents

Kate Ryan
Teacher Librarian