

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

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

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

I have been a teacher for many years in the Public School System and am a very strong advocate for the importance of keeping teacher librarians pro-active in our schools.

A change in timetabling unfortunately turned our library sessions into RFF (Release from Face to Face Teaching). This is occurred to create an additional non teaching Deputy Principal position. I have elected not to take RFF during my library sessions, preferring to draw on the wonderful skills of our Teacher-Librarian and assess and evaluate my students under her tutelage. Not all schools have the luxury of such a wonderful mentor, lets hope that our government appreciates the importance of their role in the community just as much as my students and I do. Libraries and Teacher-Librarians do contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.  
Regards,

Verity Davis-Raiss (Year 6 Teacher) Avalon Public School

School libraries need the combined skills of teachers who have deep knowledge of curriculum documents and pedagogy and librarians who know how to access and organise information and this exists in the position of Teacher-Librarian. The policy in NSW to use the Teacher-Librarian as a provider of RFF (Release from Face to Face) means Teacher-Librarians can no longer work as learning partners with class teachers. The only effective way to teach information skills – which are vital as students try to navigate the enormous quantities of information available on every topic – is as a part of class work and not in isolation. There is no school subject in the Primary syllabus called ‘library’ and yet students are sent to library lessons each week and important skills are being taught in isolation from the curriculum. This is not an effective use of the skills of the Teacher Librarian nor does it benefit our students.

After twenty years of co-operative work by the Teacher-Librarian with class teachers, in my school the Teacher-Librarian position has been reduced to 100% RFF in order to create a Non Teaching Deputy Principal. This position is additional to our entitlement of one teaching Deputy and one Non Teaching

Deputy. Staffing decisions of such importance should not be left to school Principals.

I would like the following to be considered

- collect national data on school library staffing, funding, and scheduling;
- tie funding so that states can and must adequately staff and fund school library programs and services;
- develop national school library standards including staffing standards

Margot Lindgren Teacher-Librarian Avalon Public School.

## **2. The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.**

School library and information programs and services are integral to the outcomes and teaching programs of every school. As a learning partner, the Teacher-Librarian has a vital role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning programs and outcomes in any school. The provisions of effective library programs and information services contribute to the development of life long learners.

Margot Lindgren Teacher Librarian Avalon Public School

Our school library is the 'hub' of our school with our wonderful Teacher-Librarian organizing and distributing resources related to set topics across the school. Her use of new technologies with students and teachers greatly assist in the achievement of literacy outcomes. In addition she runs programs such as 'Boys Literacy' evenings when parents are involved to help encourage reading and a love of literature. It is SO important for school libraries and Teacher-Librarians to continue their wonderful work – the pace of modern life is so busy their value is immeasurable.

Yvonne Kirby (Year 1 Teacher) Avalon Public School

The library in our school is a wonderful resource for student learning and our Teacher-Librarian enriches the lives of young children with wonderful stories, poems and her amazing depth of knowledge of Children's Literature. She is able to bring the humble story to life, leaving her young audience wanting to explore and read more. Our library is the centre of learning in our school because our Teacher-Librarian supports students and teachers in their learning and teaching. Our Teacher-Librarian is a life-long learner and she shares her technology expertise with the staff. Teachers have learnt how to dove tail technology and

literature to prepare students for the digital age that is so much a part of their world. Books bring the colour of pictures and words to children in a powerful way and the Teacher-Librarian contribution to this can never be understated. Teacher-Librarians should be applauded for the contribution they make in our schools.

Jo Boreham (Year 1 Teacher) Avalon Public School

I am very lucky that for the past nine years as I have had the incredible pleasure of working with an exceptional teacher librarian at Avalon Public School. Not only do the children benefit from her amazing skills but so do the staff. I too sit and learn along with my class from her amazing wealth of knowledge. I appreciate the effort she puts in to each and every student trying to develop a true love of reading, finding out what interests them and commenting positively on their choice of reading material.

I see students from High school returning to seek her advice. She works tirelessly after school providing Smart board tutoring sessions for the staff catering lessons in accordance with our ability. Her lunchtimes provide endless opportunities for children to explore reading materials, enjoy games with peers and at times provide a refuge from the challenges that come with life.

Verity Davis-Raiss (Year 6 Teacher) Avalon Public School

No other staff member in a Primary School has the time, passion or expertise of the Teacher-Librarian in relation to Literature and its impact on literacy. The new Proposed National Curriculum places an emphasis on literature as a key to the English Syllabus. The role of the Teacher-Librarian will become even more essential when schools move to the National Curriculum.

Margot Lindgren Teacher Librarian Avalon Public School

I wish to put forward a submission in absolute support of Teacher Librarians and the high profile of School Libraries.

My parents always nurtured a love of books, reading and using libraries. My children also were read to, enjoyed books and visiting libraries. Fourteen years ago we emigrated to Australia and we have moved around NSW selecting many different schools for our children to attend. Our experience has been always to visit each school on a regular school day and the Library is one of first places that we visit. My children and I find the library often expresses the core feeling of a school from the variety of books, posters and students work displayed and also how passionate and welcoming a Teacher Librarian is. All these elements show how the library is used as the central focus of cross curriculum learning. After visiting many diverse schools we found the Library to

be reflect the essence of the schools philosophy. This been so in the primary and high schools that my children have visited. My three children can vividly recall different and excitingly, passionate Teacher Librarians of several schools.

Listening to stories stimulates a child's imagination and learning this in turn helps the child to become a storyteller. Being able to take books home is also a wonderful gift to our children and choices guided by a highly knowledgeable Teacher Librarians is a fantastic advantage. These exciting Teacher Librarians support students and teachers equally and in today's school are an essential part of teaching students how to learn, explore, imagine and share ideas.

Australian education needs to support and value our Teacher Librarians and continue to encourage them to further their studies in order to enrich our children's independent lives. The library is a magical place and a key to a school environment and should only be organised and facilitated by the very best and inspirational teachers. Value and support our Teacher Librarians.

Avalon Public School has a dynamic and inspirational Librarian who is a teacher to all our children and staff. She is dedicated to supporting a very high level of learning. We all value her. Sadly her current teaching role has become an RFF (Relief from Face to Face) position working with 32 classes a week, which completely undervalues her extraordinary experience and skills as a Teacher Librarian. "Library" is not a subject but a cross-curricular learning place for enjoyment and where all students and staff are engaged in learning through books and multimedia resources.

Libraries have the tools for learning and need to continue to change with media as our world changes and students should be encouraged make them a place of gathering knowledge.

Julie Thorby-Davies Art Teacher Avalon Public School

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

Teaching and learning session in our school library provide the opportunity for teachers and students to become familiar with and utilize new technologies. Teaching activities organised by our Teacher-Librarian encompass digital technology related to class and grade themes and topics. A large portion of our school Training and Development is run by our Teacher-Librarian to keep staff up to date with new technologies.

Lorraine Luff (Assistant Principal - on leave) Avalon Public School

Our Teacher-Librarian is the most amazing and irreplaceable resource. She knows every book in the library and she knows every child in our large school. She is always happy, helpful and knowledgeable. She is extremely accomplished with technologies and is a great teacher. There are more and more demands on teachers and less and less support. We cannot do without our very skilled Teacher-Librarians.

Sue Johnson (Year 1 Teacher) Avalon Public School

We have a wonderful school Teacher-Librarian who supports all aspects of learning for the children and for teacher development. We are provided with copious resources to meet all our needs. She also creates a love of books and libraries in our students and gives us tremendous support with all aspects of IT.

Sylvia Saszyak (Year 1 Teacher) Avalon Public School

In our school library we are lucky to have a large book collection. This has taken years to build and strongly reflects the teaching and learning needs of students and staff in my school. Teacher librarians, in collaboration with teachers, select, purchase, organize and guide access to books and information. This cannot be done by Library technicians or Clerical support staff. It requires a thorough knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy.

In my role as Teacher librarians I constantly work to update my skills in IT. I am a school leader in the use of interactive whiteboard technology. Our library collection also includes digital resources. Selecting, promoting and identifying these is part of my collection development role.

The position of Teacher-Librarian should be viewed as an essential part of the staffing of all schools. There should be a Teacher-Librarian in every school. Adequate funding together with professional development opportunities are essential to achieve the best educational outcomes for all Australian students.

Margot Lindgren Teacher Librarian Avalon Public School

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