

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

### **Sutherland Teacher Librarian Network – SUBMISSION SUMMARY**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Qualified library staff in all schools to ensure focus on learning and curriculum development.
- Dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship are essential for Teacher Librarians.
- Primary Teacher Librarians to work collaboratively with teachers, not provide RFF.
- National licensing of online databases that support National Curriculum for equitable access.
- Provide adequate funding to allow libraries to run essential programs and necessary services.
- Need for national standards in school libraries.

#### **Reference point 1: the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

- Whole school resource needs will be best addressed when the library is staffed with a qualified teacher Librarian and has access to an adequate budget.
- *National Partnership Agreement pilot* has enabled the Principal at Loftus P/S to trade the Teacher Librarian position for alternate staffing to reduce costs to the school.

#### **Reference point 2: the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

- Teacher librarians are specialists in encouraging literacy through free voluntary reading
- Teacher librarians specialize in teaching information literacy.
- Prepare booklists and gather resources to support curriculum
- Facilitate access to external sources of information
- Teach digital literacy
- Place of safety

#### **Reference point 3: The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

- Lack of trained teachers librarians.
- Need for funding for training , cadetships, etc
- Career paths
- Primary schools – library allocation depends on number of classes each year. Need for standards in staffing for primary schools – including adequate support staff to assist Teacher Librarians in library management.
- Secondary schools – issues relating to supervision of senior students.

#### **Reference point 4: the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians**

- State education consultancy services are almost nonexistent
- With a detailed knowledge of information services and resources the Teacher Librarian can provide effective communication and the establishment of links between various levels of government and other institutions.
- Common policies for school libraries and information literacy are needed across all states.

#### **Reference point 5: the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

- An increased volume in information necessitates the need for trained information professionals to teach information skills that enable students to select and use the most relevant information for their purposes.

- Infrastructure and policy development are also required for acceptable and appropriate use of the wide range of digital resources and technologies, and to educate about cyber bullying, privacy, identity theft and security of information.

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

## **Sutherland Teacher Librarian Network Submission – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

Sutherland Teacher Librarian Network represents both Primary and High school teacher librarians and library officers from the Independent, Catholic and Public sectors in the Sutherland Shire of Sydney NSW.  
<http://www.suthtl.net/>

### **Recommendations:**

To improve literacy and learning for all Australian students, all schools from primary through to secondary (K-12) school should have a range of professional (teacher librarians), paraprofessional (library technicians) and clerical staff in their school libraries. The library should be the focus of learning and curriculum development in the school.

- School communities need a qualified teacher librarian in every school. A teacher librarian is a teacher and a librarian. Dual qualifications are important as the role in the school requires both teaching and library management skills. More teacher librarian training positions are needed.
- Primary school teacher librarians work collaboratively with classroom teachers to promote literature and teach information literacy. They should not be used as a release/RFF teacher during allocated library sessions.
- Facilitate national licensing of online databases that support the National Curriculum so school communities can provide equitable access for all students to literature, information resources and information technology.
- School library budgets need to provide this equitable access. Tie funding so that states can and must adequately staff and fund school library programs and services. Support students (IM, IO, Autism etc) should be included in the staffing allocation of the teacher librarian.
- Collect national data on school library staffing, funding, and scheduling and create National standards  
<http://alia.org.au/policies/services.in.schools.html>

### **Reference point 1: the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

- BER libraries need qualified teacher librarians to select relevant resources which cater for the diverse learning styles, abilities and curriculum needs of the specific school. Adequate funds are needed to purchase current resources.
- The impact of the National Partnership Agreement Pilot has directly affected the teacher librarian position at Loftus Public School which is a part of this network. The teacher librarian has been traded in for a part-time school administration officer and a lower paid temporary teacher when the principal was given “increased school based decision making over recruitment, staffing mix and budget.”

### **Reference point 2: the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

- The teacher librarian is an expert in children’s literature and literacy. They select, teach and promote reading material suited to the needs of individual students and the school. Students become superior readers, spellers and writers by reading which also enhances their general knowledge. Teacher librarians are specialists in encouraging literacy through free voluntary reading, a guaranteed way to help students become more literate (Krashen). 60 studies have shown that free voluntary reading is, at least, as effective as conventional teaching methods in helping children to do well on standardised tests. Reading for pleasure provides a great deal more which cannot be measured by these tests.

- Planning co-operatively with classroom teachers, results in school curriculum resources which are relevant, current and at the correct level for students. The teacher librarian is the expert in sourcing curriculum resources and promoting them to the school community. This includes digital resources. The teacher librarian also teaches staff and students how to successfully search for relevant information as well as facilitate access to external sources of information through local and state libraries and institutions.
- As life-long learners, students need to be information literate. Teacher librarians specialise in teaching information literacy. Those who are information literate seek diverse viewpoints. Information literacy includes the ethical use of information and responsible use of social networking tools. Teacher librarians prepare library teaching programs that ensure students become discerning users of information, who recognise bias and accurately provide recognition for all their sources of information.
- The school library is often used as a place of safety for the most vulnerable students. The library staff and resources offer a haven and friendship for many students before school and during breaks.

### **Reference point 3: The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

- There is a shortage of trained teacher librarians in NSW.
- Teacher librarian training is only funded by the DET where the untrained teacher librarian is already working in the teacher librarian position within a school. There are no funded scholarships for teachers who are interested in the profession but are not currently employed in the field. There are no funded cadetships to allow teachers to have release periods to complete a teacher librarian course.
- Teacher librarians in DET NSW schools often state that they have difficulty finding a promotions position and feel that there are few career paths available. Many teacher librarians leave the profession to seek promotion.
- Job security for the primary school teacher librarian depends upon the numbers of students attending the school each year. Most positions are part time or casual and the number of employed days can fluctuate from year to year. Here is just one personal account from a local primary school - *“In 2010 with a reduction of just 1 class my position has been reduced to .8. This means I teach 17 classes each 4 day week. Last year with 18 classes the position was 5 days per week. Library lessons are for 50 minutes.”*
- The primary school teacher librarian is often used as a relief teacher to mind classes while the classroom teacher has release from face to face teaching (RFF), instead of working collaboratively with the classroom teacher to teach literacy and information research skills. Here is another personal account from a local primary school - *“At our school in 16 out of 17 teacher librarian classes are timetabled during the classroom teacher’s RFF. This means minimum collaboration between the teacher librarian and the teachers.”*
- There is inequality in the allocation of library support officer assistance time across both high and primary schools and it is at the discretion of the individual school Principal.
- Teacher librarian administration time is allocated as twenty percent of working time each week. This is often at the discretion of the individual school Principal. A two day per week position in a primary school may therefore mean only two hours per week to process and manage the collection. Many of these teacher librarians manage their libraries on their days off.
- Training qualifications are not required for library support officers in primary or high schools while a comparable position in a NSW State library requires a two/three year TAFE certificate.
- In high schools many senior students study the HSC over three years and also attend VET/ TAFE courses. This results in many senior students having study periods which need to be supervised. The high school teacher librarian is often asked to supervise these students during their administration time, allocated breaks and while teaching library lessons to other students.

### **Reference point 4: the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians**

- State education consultancy services are almost nonexistent. Some curriculum support services remain. Professional associations have had to assume the majority of professional development. These are dependent on volunteers and their number is dwindling. Newly appointed, untrained, school library staff therefore depend on local teacher librarian networks for their training.
- A contact person who works across the curriculum and has a detailed knowledge of information services and resources is required for the effective communication and establishment of links between various levels of government and other institutions when supporting school communities.

#### Teacher Librarians:

- \* operate within a highly pro-active professional community. They respond to and create links with the public library sector (urban and rural), the telecentre network (rural and remote), and provide information services for the school community, including teachers, administration, parents and citizens;
  - \* such links allow for the maximum use of public information utilities and equity of access for all students and their parents;
  - \* provide programs which assist students in the transition from primary to secondary school and secondary to tertiary studies; and
  - \* assist in the development of literacy programs for ESL students and their parents.
- Common policies for school libraries and information literacy are needed across all states.

### **Reference point 5: the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

- While the rapid growth of digital technologies has given us unprecedented access to a great volume of information, it has also become more difficult for students to find good information without guidance from trained information professionals. Students need to be taught how to search efficiently so they can find the most relevant information for their purpose.
- Teacher librarians, in collaboration with teachers, will still be needed to select, purchase, organise and guide access to appropriate, relevant digital information specific to the curriculum needs of students.
- Teacher librarians willingly update their skills in IT, develop library web access points, digitise data, network with colleagues, review and select websites, learning objects, webquests, online databases and social networking tools, etc. This is part of their collection development role, their teaching and curriculum support role and their role in improving literacy.
- Management of technologies is essential for equitable access to a range of digital resources and delivery formats which support the development of high quality literacy programs in schools.
- Digital technologies allow students opportunities to interact with creators of literature and various other arts via the web, email, video conferencing etc. This too needs the guidance of teachers with information management expertise – teacher librarians.
- Students are also able to collect information firsthand by communicating with people from other cultures, experts in various fields, etc
- Infrastructure and policy development are also required for acceptable and appropriate use of the wide range of digital resources and technologies, and to educate about cyberbullying, privacy, identity theft and security of information

Cecilie Yates  
 Teacher Librarian Engadine High  
 President  
 Sutherland Teacher Librarian Network

Janine Mayne  
 Teacher Librarian Woollooware High  
 Listserv Co-ordinator  
 Sutherland Teacher Librarian Network