



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

As a professional teacher librarian I submit the following to the Inquiry for consideration.

Reference point 1: The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities

Policies for the improvement of library infrastructure and buildings has made a huge impact on many library facilities, but ignores the issue that many schools operate without professional staff who:

1. organise and maintain the library (physical and virtual spaces);
2. provide access to a range of sufficient resources that cater for different reading levels, curriculum areas and learning styles;
3. develop curriculum with teachers which integrates a range of resources such as online, print and audio; and
4. can provide access to quality virtual resources for curriculum programs.

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

It is essential that professional staff in school libraries be Teacher Librarians. Teacher Librarians have a teaching qualification plus experience in the classroom, as well as a postgraduate qualification that is an entry level into the profession of Information Science (Librarianship).

As trained teachers, TLs are able to:

1. communicate and design curriculum programs with teachers which incorporate a range of resource formats; and
2. fulfil the duty of care requirements as stated in the Education Act.

As information specialists, TLs:

1. provide access quality digital resources which support curriculum and students learning outcomes;
2. design programs which train students in the effective, efficient and appropriate use of digital resources.

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

1. Currently there is a shortage of qualified Teacher Librarians in schools across Australia.
2. This is an aging population with grave issues associated with succession planning and sustainability.
3. This is a time when information and the globalisation of economies means that the average citizen must have graduated secondary level education with some information literacy skills, if they are going to be able to participate in the information economy.
4. Only three institutions currently prepare TLs in recognised Graduate Diploma and Masters Level courses - Charles Stuart University, Edith Cowan University and

Queensland University of Technology.

5. Hence many schools have libraries run by library technicians, and library officers or parents who are not qualified to provide the educational components.

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

The teacher Librarian is a contact person who works across the curriculum and has detailed knowledge of information services and resources. This professional is required for the effective communication and establishment of links between various levels of government and other institutions when supporting school communities.

Teacher Librarians:

1. operate within a highly pro-active professional community and respond to and create links with the public library sector (urban and rural), and provide information services for the school community, including teachers, administration and parents and citizens;
2. provide links which allow for the maximum use of public information utilities and equity of access for all students and their parents;
3. provide programs which assist students in the transition from primary to secondary school and secondary to tertiary studies; and
4. assist in the development of literacy programs for special students such as ESL and those with learning disabilities.

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

Digital technologies as evidenced by the Federal Government's computers for all students program, does not include training for teachers or students.

In most schools it is the Teacher Librarian who provides:

1. specialist knowledge, support and professional development training for staff in how to use and embed digital technologies into curriculum;
2. the management of technologies for equitable access;
3. the infrastructure and policy development required for acceptable and appropriate use of a wide range of digital resources and technologies, including cyberbullying, privacy, identity theft and security of information;
4. the educational rationale for the effective inclusion of digital technologies in the curriculum; and
5. equal access to a range of digital resources and delivery formats which support the development of high quality literacy programs in schools.

I strongly support the recommendation that all schools from primary school through to secondary (K-12) should have a range of professional (teacher librarians), para professional (Library Technicians) and clerical staff in their school libraries. The library should be the focus of learning and curriculum development within the school.

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