House Standing Committee on Education and Training: Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.
Submission by the primary, South Brisbane network 'Teacher Librarians Connecting'.

This submission for the Parliamentary Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians has been written by a committee from the 'Teacher Librarians Connecting' network in South Brisbane. The five terms of reference have been addressed and all network members were consulted in writing this submission. The teacher librarians on the committee were Lesley Thurlow, Sandie Schurmann, Claire Austin, Fiona Eastwood, Mary Durrington, Beth Auchter, Lyndell Roberts, Margaret Kittson, Karen Kruger, Deborah Cairns, Kaye Rosnick, Diane Lyons and Jan Spruce.
Fiona Eastwood has agreed to be the contact person if further correspondence is required.

The Lonsdale Report (2003)* found that active school library programs run by trained teacher librarians made a significant difference to student learning outcomes. Students in schools without a teacher librarian were educationally disadvantaged.
Changes in library funding, policies and support in the last 20 years means schools have regressed considerably from when Queensland was an acknowledged world leader in the delivery of library services to schools <u>and</u> the provision of properly qualified teacher librarians to staff them. This was the time when dynamic library programs were run by trained teacher librarians with enough time and resources to do the job effectively. Then, the programs were not solely reliant on principals who valued their educational input. Today, those schools with this supportive leadership are at a distinct advantage to schools where local staffing and funding decisions have meant a steady decline in library services and impact.

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

- Teacher Librarians' dual expertise in teaching and library management must be recognised when making decisions regarding buildings, resources, equipment, pedagogy and time allocation.
- It is imperative that the National Curriculum Framework includes an Information Literacy Strand in order to prepare students for the information-rich world in which our students live and learn.
- By investing in qualified teacher librarians, policies can be developed and implemented that will ensure funding, resources and time allocation are managed in an informed way.
- The ratio of students to trained teacher librarians needs to be reinstated and mandated as an Educational Policy rather than a School Policy.
- The adoption of the ASLA [Australian School Libraries Association] Standards for Teacher Librarians needs to be explicit and across all educational systems.
- Reinstate paid full-time release for the first semester in post-graduate diploma in teacher-librarianship for practising, experienced teachers to make a dedicated career choice. [This initiative was closed down in the late 1980s and sends a devalued message about literacy, the investment in libraries and the role of library staff.]
- Reinstate a mandated level of funding for libraries that is tied to enrolment, in a maintenance or development phase and is an Educational Policy rather than a school-based one.

*Lonsdale, M 2003, Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research, report for the Australian School Library Association, ACER, Camberwell, Vic., p. 27.

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The future potential of school libraries and <u>teacher</u> librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy:

- Dual-trained teacher librarians are a pedagogical investment in children's literacy skill development.
- Experienced teacher librarians have an integral leadership role in the development and implementation of a school's Information Literacy curriculum and the delivery of a rich, literature-based program.
- Harnessing the skills of dual-trained teacher librarians to inspire students and community members to be successful participants in a reading culture will service the lifelong learning needs of school community members.
- Future-proof the library environment to ensure learning needs and outcomes are achieved for all community members.
- Teacher librarians use their expertise and understanding of resources [including: online, digital, kits, books, government and community issued, visual and audio aids] that are available for educational purposes
  - ➤ to match curriculum needs to learning outcomes across all Key Learning Areas
  - ➤ to inform classroom teachers and school leaders regarding acquisitions
  - ➤ to support students' interests, abilities and needs

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school [teacher] librarians [and library technicians]:

- Mandate the allocated time for staff and funding based on school enrolment figures.
- Make training to be a teacher librarian accessible and affordable to all interested people.
- Promotion of the teacher librarian position to be a committed and dedicated senior teaching position rather than a "teaching alternative".
- Educational institutions need to recruit and train library staff with a foundation in on-site practice and relevancy.
- Endorsement of defined role statements to mandate the use of teacher librarians and library technicians\library aides.

The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering and supporting school [teacher] librarians [and library technicians]:

- Reinstate the ongoing development of school libraries with support from a central advisory body (as in the past eg LARS).
- Government funding must adequately cover library programs, initiatives and resources including online packages, subscriptions and digital tools.

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- Government funding must also sufficiently cover staffing to ensure the mandated ratio of students to trained teacher librarian and to library technicians/aides.
- Implementation of Policies to ensure mandated funding is allocated appropriately with assured accountability.

The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and [teacher] librarians:

- Develop initiatives, implement strategies and allocate time to future-proof students, staff and the school library environment by
  - ➢ Delivering information literacy skills that are integral, up to date, relevant and reliable so students and teachers become critical thinkers in a lifelong learning process.
  - ➢ Creating a professional learning community with the school library being the hub where the awareness of and the acquisition of the latest digital technologies, information and communication technology resources can occur in an informed and planned way.
  - ➢ Allocating time for teacher librarians to act as the information gatherer of digital technologies and upgrades in order to equip teachers and schools leaders in a cost effective manner.
  - ➢ Allocating adequate time for effective in-service of teacher librarians, classroom teachers and school leaders.
  - ➢ Engaging in discussion groups (online and face-to-face), attending and presenting ICT workshops, investigating ICT developments and accessing resources such as the Learning Place.
  - ➢ Choosing total, compatible packages of software, hardware and online digital tools so that resources can be used to their full potential.
  - ➢ Supporting teachers in their use of and development of digital technologies.