



Catholic Primary Teacher Librarian's Association Inc.

PO Box 523
Kingswood NSW 2747
enquiries@cptla.com.au

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The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr. Baker

**INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND
TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS**

**Submission on behalf of the CPTLA
(Catholic Primary Teacher Librarian's Association Inc, NSW)**

This inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools is long overdue and hopefully we can view it as a positive and critical step in ensuring that the role of the teacher librarian is secured for the future. Many of us currently working in this role and many before us, have been campaigning for a long time for this opportunity to highlight the invaluable impact that teacher librarians have on student literacy and learning. In this information age the timing of such a discussion is imperative.

The CPTLA is an organisation that was founded 25 years ago by a teacher librarian who recognised a need to support other teacher librarians and professionals in this role. Annual conferences are the highlight of our organisation when our members meet from 11 different dioceses from around NSW (including ACT) to engage in professional development and to network with like-minded colleagues. It is always apparent from these meetings of the many facets & intricacies of our role in this ever changing and challenging world. The professional development provided at our conferences endorse the teacher librarian as a leader of 21st century learning, particularly in the areas of information literacy & literature.

Recent developments relating to Australian education, in particular the new Australian Curriculum, the 'My School Website' and the 'Building the

Education Revolution Program' could open a new chapter in the education of our children if these innovative actions are put into good practice. What good are such high economic and pedagogical investments if they are not facilitated and managed by the best specialist possible?

In a time when information literacy is crucial for all aspects of life, educational leaders need to commit to this next generation by providing them with opportunities to understand and make use of relevant information. A teacher librarian can help our children to access, use and also evaluate information in both digital and print form.

Studies conducted globally and in Australia strongly support and give evidence of the vital role that a well-resourced library managed by a trained teacher librarian can have on student learning.

'Resource-rich school libraries and credentialed school librarians play key roles in promoting both information literacy and reading for information and inspiration. When staffed by qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters in the real world, school libraries become sophisticated 21st-century learning environments that offer equal opportunities for achievement to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community.' (School Libraries Work, 2008)

This discussion should not just be about information literacy. Teacher librarians also share a love of literature and reading with their students. We are specialists in children's literature. On a daily basis we aim to excite and encourage the love of reading to children and staff in our schools.

Research indicates that literacy standards are higher when reading is widely promoted and supported. This gives clear evidence to the connection between student achievement and the presence of a teacher librarian in a school.

School libraries are considered by many to be the 'hub of the school'. This can only be truly realised with the existence of a teacher librarian. Unfortunately there are an increasing number of libraries in all our dioceses that are no longer managed by a trained teacher librarian. Over time the understanding of our role has been fractured by what can only be considered ignorance. There are some educational leaders who have taken the financial option to replace a qualified teacher librarian with less expensive staff. The cost of this decision extends far greater than the present circumstances. In these situations the impact of this lack of investment attacks the potential of our students.

Whilst this scenario is becoming all too familiar there are some visionary and realistic educational leaders who have a grasp on the importance of libraries and the role the teacher librarian has on a school's community.

I am fortunate enough to work in such a situation. The library at my school is seen as the 'heart and soul' of our learning environment. The library has a;

- Teacher Librarian (4 days a week) & a School Support Officer (16 hrs)
- Quality library program – Library/ITC skills taught
- - Collaborative/integrated work with teachers
- Opportunities for specific learning opportunities for students
- A coordinated whole school approach to Information Literacy Skills – with T/L managing ITC resources
- A well resourced collection with both print (& audio) and IT resources
- Sufficient budget to develop the collection appropriate to student learning
- Other activities offered – Book week Activities (including author/illustrator visits, Book character Parade)
Lunchtime activities/games, Reading Club, Book Fair
- T/L encouraged to attend Professional Development
(Including an International conference in Italy 2009)

Today the role of libraries and professional librarians is changing worldwide. We are no longer passive keepers and preservers of books; rather, we have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong learning opportunities with an emphasis on supporting literacy learning from the foundation level.

As a result of this inquiry, we as an organisation and as members of the collective body of teacher librarians recommend that the Federal Government:

- 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;
- Require that literacy programs and other national curricula explicitly recognise the central role school libraries have in student achievement, literacy attainment, and preparation for post-secondary success;
- Develop national school library standards;
- Increase teacher librarian training positions in university programs.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Preddey

President