

To The Secretary of the Committee

I am writing to ask for your support to place teacher librarians in every school and for proper funding for school libraries across Australia.

In Queensland we no longer have a qualified library professional in all our primary and secondary schools and this is a cause for serious concern.

While most of this letter, containing very valid points, is sourced from the generic ALIA template, I would like to add details regarding my current situation. I am halfway through the M.Ed in Teacher Librarianship through CSU. I already have a M.Ed in language, literacy and children's literature. I am employed as 0.6 of a TL, servicing a school of 1600 students. My position is backfilled for 0.3 of a teaching load by teachers not qualified as librarians. I have two teacher aides employed for 30 hours each who share the management of book processing, AV and digital equipment, supporting teachers' resource requests. This in no way meets the *Learning for the Future* standard of 4 full time teacher librarians and 168 hours of teacher aide time needed for a school our size.

I find I have little time to manage the library let alone impact on the literacy, reading and research skills of our students. I find that our students are particularly lacking in research skills in the digital environment. They tend to 'google' without the ability to evaluate the websites. They tend not to access the databases to which our school subscribes or use very 'smart' research strategies such as alternative search engines, boolean searches or using alternative keywords to access information. There is little time to reinforce skimming, scanning, notetaking or referencing skills when they finally locate information, let alone anything more advanced. I only get to work with teachers and students who value the library already rather than reaching the majority of students as there is little time to promote how I am skilled and able to help.

As a parent, I am also concerned. My daughter's school has little in the way of resources for their library and the TL is again only part time, able only to provide lessons for the upper primary school classes. The five prep/year 1 classes receive a 'library experience' only because of the goodwill of a fellow CSU student, also a mother at the school. She volunteers to read to each class and enable the students to borrow picture books, vital experiences for this age group.

The ability to read is a major factor in determining whether a child will succeed or fail in our education system, and later on in the workplace. We need to ensure that our children have the best beginning – a literate start in life.

Teachers (and parents) encourage reading for very young children, but in secondary schools, reading is no longer a subject in its own right. The only people who focus on this vital area of a child's development are librarians. And yet many Australian schools, under tight budget constraints, say they cannot afford to employ qualified library staff.

What is the use of the Government investing millions of dollars in new library buildings if there are no new books to entice children in, and no teacher librarians to support a reading culture?

A study completed by Edith Cowan University and published in May 2009 suggested that 50% of school libraries in Australia had to manage on less than \$10,000 a year for new materials, while teacher librarians (where they were still employed by schools), were under pressure to spend more time outside the school library.

The development of literacy skills is crucial for students' future participation in the Australian economy and society. Teacher librarians are instrumental in supporting this important goal. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' report *Adult literacy and life skills survey* (ABS 4228.0, 2006), found that slightly less than half of the Australian population, approximately 7 million, failed to achieve the minimum required level or higher in prose and document literacy.

There is much research evidence that students attain higher levels of achievement when there is an adequately resourced school library staffed by a teacher librarian.

Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that a strong library program that is adequately staff, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community.

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.

Teacher librarians are at the forefront of teaching essential information and digital literacy skills in our schools. The successful implementation and use of the national broadband network depends upon Australians having these skills. The development of information literacy skills -- seeking, evaluating, using and creating information effectively to achieve personal, social, occupational and educational goals -- is essential to Australia's long-term economic development.

Teaching young Australians about cybersafety and the important messages about how to stay safe online, particularly with the growth of social networking, is one of the most effective ways of protecting our children. Teacher librarians are key to cybersafety education programs in schools.

I urge the Government to recognise the vital role of school libraries and teacher librarians, particularly in the areas of literacy, lifelong learning, cybersafety, information literacy, and digital literacy skills. Adequate funding together with educational and professional development opportunities are essential to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for young Australians.

The House Standing Committee on Education and Training is currently conducting an *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools* and I

would be grateful if you could add your voice to ours in calling for the Federal Government to adopt the principle of 'a teacher librarian in every school'.

Further information about school libraries and teacher librarians is available here <http://www.alia.org.au/schoollibraries>.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

Kind regards

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