

Impact of recent Commonwealth Government policies and investments on school libraries

Background

Policy Framework

- 2.1 The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provided an overview of the Commonwealth Government's busy reform agenda for Australian schools. Some of the reforms mentioned impact directly on school libraries and teacher librarians, others impact more indirectly.¹
- 2.2 DEEWR elaborated that while there had been a lot of developments in overall education policy, there are not many activities at the Commonwealth level of administration of education policy and programs that relate specifically to teacher librarians.² Nor is there anyone at senior level within the Department that has specific carriage of teacher librarian issues.³
- 2.3 This is because the departmental organisational structure operates more broadly, with sections responsible for matters like teacher workforce and

1 DEEWR, *Submission 344*.

2 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 19.

3 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 29.

quality, the curriculum, and online technology. Dr Arthur from DEEWR explained how teacher librarian issues fit into the current structure:

My area is responsible for teacher librarians on ICT [information and communication technology] issues, but how you use ICT to effectively change the way teaching occurs is a vital component of the curriculum and a range of other agendas.⁴

- 2.4 While issues affecting teacher librarians – like a host of others – do not have their own area, the department works within and across the organisational structure in order to deal with the full range of issues in the best way they can with the resources available.⁵

Council of Australian Governments Education Reforms

- 2.5 On 29 November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)⁶ ushered in a new era of federal financial relations with an intergovernmental agreement that aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of government services by reducing Commonwealth prescriptions on service delivery by the states and providing them with increased flexibility in the way they deliver services to Australians. Central to these reforms is a substantial financial package that provides an additional \$7.1 billion in Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs) funding to the states over five years to improve services for all Australians. This is accompanied by a major rationalisation of the number of payments to the states for SPPs, reducing the number of such payments from over 90 to five, including total funding of \$18 billion in a National Schools SPP.⁷
- 2.6 The new National Schools SPPs/National Education Agreement sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and the states and territories, and underscores their shared commitment to high quality education. The objective of the agreement is that all Australian students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy.

4 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 29.

5 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 29.

6 The Council of Australian Governments is the peak intergovernmental body in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. The role of COAG is to initiate, develop, and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments (for example health and education and training).

7 See COAG website for communiqué and details: COAG, 'Council of Australian Governments' Meeting,' 29 November 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/>.

2.7 The \$18 billion agreement will assist states and territories to achieve the following outcomes:

- all children are engaged in and benefit from schooling;
- young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are improving;
- Australian standards excel by international standards;
- schooling promotes social inclusion and reduces the education disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children; and
- young people make a successful transition from school to work and further study.⁸

Funding for non-government schools

2.8 In addition to the National Education Agreement the Commonwealth Government provides funding to non-government schools under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (Cth). The Act provides the legislative framework for Commonwealth funding for non-government schools for 2009 through 2012 and governs the provision of grants for recurrent, capital and targeted expenditure. The funding arrangements are aligned with and support the responsibilities of the states and territories in respect of regulation, educational quality, performance and reporting on educational outcomes.⁹

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

2.9 At about the same time that the COAG reforms were implemented on 5 December 2008, state, territory and Commonwealth ministers of education released the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which sets the direction for Australian schooling over the next 10 years. The Declaration is supported by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) Four Year Plan endorsed by all Australian education ministers.¹⁰

8 COAG, 'National Education Agreement,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national_agreements/downloads/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_national_education_agreement.pdf>.

9 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 2.

10 See MCEECDYA website for details: MCEECDYA, 'MCEETYA Four Year Plan 2009-2012,' March 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/action_plan,25966.html>.

2.10 The Melbourne Declaration states that the two goals for the coming decade are:

- Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and
- all young Australians become
 - ⇒ successful learners
 - ⇒ confident and creative individuals; and
 - ⇒ active and informed citizens.¹¹

2.11 The Melbourne Declaration is complemented by action plans. The first action plan from 2009 to 2012 outlines the strategies and initiatives that Australian governments will undertake, in collaboration with all school sectors (government and non-government), to support the achievement of shared educational goals.¹²

Investments and activities

2.12 To complement the national reform agenda the Commonwealth Government has invested in a range of education-related initiatives. Those most relevant to school libraries and teacher librarians, and the subject of comment by submitters to the inquiry, are the:

- *Building the Education Revolution (BER)*;
- *Digital Education Revolution (DER)*;
- *National Partnerships* with states and territories under the National Education Agreement, including the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers; and
- implementation of the Australian curriculum.

2.13 The Commonwealth Government also introduced the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in 2008 to measure children's abilities against six achievement bands in Australian schools. Under the program, every year, all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9

11 MCEECDYA, 'Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians,' December 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf.

12 See MCEECDYA website for details: MCEECDYA, 'MCEETYA Four Year Plan 2009-2012,' March 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/action_plan,25966.html.

are assessed for their reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy skills using national tests.¹³

- 2.14 Reference was also made to the improved online access that should ensue for students through the new high speed \$43 billion National Broadband Network.¹⁴

Building the Education Revolution

- 2.15 According to the Australian School Libraries Research Project some 44 per cent of school libraries in Australia are over 20 years old.¹⁵
- 2.16 The Commonwealth Government has allocated \$16.2 billion over 3 years to modernise schools through the delivery of infrastructure and refurbishments and, in so doing, support local jobs and stimulate investment.¹⁶
- 2.17 The Primary Schools for the 21st Century component of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) provides \$14.1 billion for all Australian primary schools, K-12 schools (primary school component) and special schools to build facilities such as libraries, multipurpose halls or classrooms, or to upgrade existing facilities. The construction of libraries was identified as a high priority.¹⁷
- 2.18 The Department advised that typical projects comprised state of the art facilities that include access to wireless internet and video conferencing.¹⁸
- 2.19 DEEWR indicated that there were 3 017 BER library projects underway as of 31 May 2010, of which 2 650 are new library facilities. The table provided shows the breakdown by state and territory of the new facilities.¹⁹

13 See website for more details: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 'National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy,' 2010, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.naplan.edu.au/>>.

14 See website for more details: Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 'National Broadband Network,' 2010, accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.dbcde.gov.au/broadband/national_broadband_network>.

15 Australian School Libraries Research Project in DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 11.

16 Building the Education Revolution website: DEEWR, 'Building the Education Revolution,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/buildingtheeducationrevolution/Pages/default.aspx>> and DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 2.

17 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 2.

18 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 8.

19 DEEWR, *Submission 344.1*, p. 2.

STATE/ TERRITORY	Number of New Libraries
ACT	20
NSW	584
NT	63
QLD	1,023
SA	140
TAS	40
VIC	522
WA	258
TOTAL	2,650

Note: Data is aggregated across government and non-government sectors.

Digital Education Revolution

- 2.20 The purpose of the Digital Education Revolution (DER) initiative is to harness the potential of information and communication technologies to transform teaching and learning.²⁰
- 2.21 The Commonwealth Government is providing \$2.4 billion of funding over seven years (2008-2014) to:
- provide for new ICT equipment for all secondary schools with students in years 9 to 12 through the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund;
 - support the deployment of fibre-to-the-premises broadband connections to Australian schools;
 - collaborate with states and territories and Deans of Education to ensure new and continuing students have access to training in the use of ICT that enables them to enrich student learning;
 - provide for online curriculum tools and resources that support the Australian Curriculum and specialist subjects such as languages;
 - enable parents to participate in their child's education through online learning and access; and
 - develop support mechanisms to provide assistance for schools in the deployment of ICT.²¹

20 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 3.

21 See the Digital Education Revolution website: DEEWR, 'Digital Education Revolution – Overview', accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/default.aspx>>.

- 2.22 The DER is governed by the Digital Education Revolution National Partnership with the states and territories and by Digital Education Revolution Funding Agreements with Catholic and independent education authorities. The implementation of the DER will be guided by the DER Strategic Plan and Roadmap and supported by the Digital Education Revolution Projects, Infrastructure and Support Program Guidelines.²²

National Secondary School Computer Fund

- 2.23 The overall aim of the Fund is to provide each student in years 9 through 12 with a computer by 2011. Schools may elect to purchase computers for libraries or computer labs or to provide students with individual take home laptops.²³

Teacher Quality and Professional Development

- 2.24 Teacher professional development initiatives are an important element of the DER. The Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders aims to increase the level of ICT proficiency for teachers and school leaders across Australia, through provision of a Better Practice Guide for Schools and other support mechanisms.²⁴
- 2.25 A cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional Teaching for the Digital Age Advisory Group has been established to support the work of the Australian Information and Communications Technology Education Committee, responsible for informing MCEECDYA on issues relating to the implementation of the DER. The Advisory Group oversees the Teaching for the Digital Age Work Plan that identifies work to be undertaken by education authorities and the Commonwealth Government.²⁵

National Partnerships under the National Education Agreement

- 2.26 The Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments have entered into three Smarter Schools National Partnerships aimed at

22 See the Digital Education Revolution website: DEEWR, 'Digital Education Revolution – Overview, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/default.aspx>>.

23 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 9.

24 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 3.

25 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p.13-14.

addressing disadvantage, supporting teacher and improving literacy and numeracy. The three National Partnerships are:

- The Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities (\$1.5 billion);
- The Smarter Schools National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy (\$540 million); and
- The Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (\$550 million).²⁶

2.27 The overall purpose of the Improving Teacher Quality Partnership is to broaden the pathways into teaching from the traditional entry points, particularly through employment based programs.

2.28 DEEWR elaborated:

We have one being trialled currently, the Teach for Australia program, which is a national program. In addition to that, each state has designed its own pathway into teaching which has variations on Teach for Australia. It could be scholarships, internships or new ways of attracting people who have not thought of teaching before and also reforming the methodology for how teaching is taught.²⁷

2.29 DEEWR stressed that the Partnership is about enhancing generic opportunities and that is why there are no measures pertaining specifically to teacher librarians.²⁸

2.30 However, key reform activities under this initiative include establishing a national teacher workforce dataset and a component, Staff in Australian Schools Survey. DEEWR stated that it expects that data on specialist teacher librarians will be included in both the dataset and study.²⁹

National Professional Standards for Teachers

2.31 Throughout 2010 MCEECDYA oversaw stakeholder consultation with the teaching profession and wider education community regarding the development of new national professional standards for teachers (a

26 See the Smarter Schools website: DEEWR, 'Smarter Schools – Overview,' accessed 18 February 2011 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/_default.aspx and DEEWR, *Submission 344*, pp. 4-5.

27 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 22.

28 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 22.

29 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 4.

process which commenced in 2009).³⁰ The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has had carriage of producing the standards.

2.32 The School Education Minister, the Hon. Peter Garrett MP, unveiled the new national professional standards for teachers on 9 February 2011.³¹

2.33 The new standards apply to all teachers, including teacher librarians.

2.34 The standards describe what teachers should know and be able to do at four levels of professional expertise: Graduate; Proficient; Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. The standards make explicit, for those within and outside the profession, the knowledge, skills and dispositions required of teachers at each level.³²

2.35 DEEWR explained how the new standards will be formalised:

For instance, the first standard is the graduate standard, which describes the level of achievement that all teachers who are leaving the pre-service training will be up to. A set of program standards goes with that. So what we are moving towards, probably by 2012, is that all pre-service teacher education courses will have to go through accreditation with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.³³

2.36 The standards provide a basis for planning professional learning needs and determining career pathways.³⁴ DEEWR elaborated:

The standards are a platform that in themselves do not make any difference; it is how they are going to be used that is essential.³⁵

The next piece of work that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership will need to undertake is to exemplify

30 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 6.

31 The Hon. Peter Garrett, MP, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, *Media release*, 'Teachers set to raise school standards,' 9 February 2011 and Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) website for standards: AITSL, 'National Professional Standards for Teachers,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/go/home/op/preview/pid/797>>.

32 AITSL, 'National Professional Standards for Teachers,' February 2011, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/webdav/site/tasite/shared/Standards/National%20Professional%20Standards%20Teaching/Teaching%20Standards%20January%202011/AITSL%20National%20Professional%20Standards%20for%20Teachers.pdf>>.

33 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 30.

34 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 9.

35 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 29.

those standards to see what they look like for a specialist area – for example, what it looks like for early childhood teachers, primary teachers and science teachers. I know there have been discussions with specialist groups such as the teacher librarians, school counsellors and so on...[and] this will be a critical stage of this year's work. This is intended to be a platform which embraces all the full range of teachers in schools.³⁶

- 2.37 ASLA and ALIA stated that the library associations had been involved in developing the standards and 'that teacher librarians fit in quite comfortably with where the standards are at this stage.'³⁷
- 2.38 They commented that teacher librarians by the nature of their dual qualifications already possess a highly accomplished set of skills.³⁸

The Australian Curriculum

- 2.39 In 2008, Australian education ministers agreed that a national curriculum would play a key role in delivering quality education and committed to the development of a Foundation to Year 12 national curriculum. While development of the curriculum is the responsibility of all Australian governments, implementation is primarily the responsibility of states and territories.
- 2.40 The Australian Curriculum is being developed progressively under the auspices of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and will start to be implemented by the states and territories from 2011. The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history is now available, with consultation on other draft curriculum areas, namely languages, geography and the arts, continuing throughout 2011. Future phases of Australian Curriculum development will focus on other key learning areas identified in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, such as ICT.³⁹
- 2.41 ICT has been identified as one of the ten general capabilities – alongside literacy, numeracy and others – that should be integrated across the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum will also be published online,

36 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, pp. 29-30.

37 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p 4.

38 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p 4.

39 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 7 and The Australian Curriculum website: Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 'The Australian Curriculum,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>>.

enabling it to be linked directly to online resources to support teaching and learning.

- 2.42 Two newly established bodies will support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), set up to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the professions of teaching and school leadership,⁴⁰ and Education Services Australia (ESA), a not-for-profit ministerial company, created by MCEECDYA to deliver innovative cost-effective services across all aspects of education.⁴¹
- 2.43 DEEWR stated that the Australian Curriculum could impact on libraries and teacher librarians in relation to their roles in:
- developing ICT competence in students;
 - supporting teachers' access to curriculum information and resources, as well as professional development materials; and
 - working with classroom teachers to embed information literacy across the curriculum.⁴²

Main concerns

Staffing and resourcing commensurate with physical infrastructure investment

A building does not make a library. It is about the resources inside, including qualified teacher librarians.⁴³

- 2.44 Inquiry participants welcomed the Commonwealth Government's substantial investment in school library infrastructure under the BER program.
- 2.45 The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia stated:

40 See AITSL website for details 18 February 2011 at <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/go>.

41 See MCEECDYA website for details: MCEECDYA, 'Education Services Australia,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/education_service_australia_-_new_mceecdya_company,29996.html#>.

42 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 9.

43 Ms B. McSwain, Public Libraries South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 34.

Member schools indicated that this recent investment has made a significant difference to school libraries and resource centres in terms of accessibility of resources, utilisation of resources and maximisation of resource area space for a range of educational activities.⁴⁴

2.46 ASLA also acknowledged the myriad of benefits conferred by the BER.⁴⁵

2.47 However, many expressed concern that the investment in new buildings is not being matched by a commensurate investment in staffing and other necessary resources. The following statements are typical of the views in this vein expressed to the Committee:

It is tokenistic and naive to assert that the mere construction of a physical library building is sufficient to yield any meaningful, tangible educational outcome. This is a first step which must be backed up by a commensurate commitment to the human resourcing of these facilities.⁴⁶

You can have the most wonderfully designed library space, but if there is no teacher librarian to provide for the educational, social and recreational needs of the students, and investment does not include an ongoing substantial library budget, the result will be a new room with outdated, worn and limited resources; and a library that is underutilised by the student and school community.⁴⁷

The billions spent by the Federal Government on library buildings will not translate into improvements in learning outcomes, unless that funding is accompanied by adequate resourcing, staffing, management, and administrative support for those libraries. In many Australian school libraries, this is presently non-existent.⁴⁸

Federal Government funding for the building of the new libraries has highlighted the lack of appropriately trained library staff within our primary schools.⁴⁹

2.48 ASLA described a worst case scenario where new libraries will not have qualified staff, citing the Northern Territory (NT) where 62 new or

44 Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, *Submission 372*, p. 5.

45 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 3.

46 The Children's Book Council of Australia, *Submission 50.1*, p. 19.

47 Ms Y. Barrett, *Submission 368*, p. 1.

48 Children's Book Council of Australia, *Submission 50*, p. 4.

49 Mr Barns, Catholic Principals Association of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 32.

refurbished libraries were approved for funding but only three had fully qualified staff.⁵⁰ The NT Government agreed that recruitment and retention of suitably qualified library staff at some sites, particularly remote ones, will present a challenge.⁵¹

- 2.49 The NT Government explained that many of its smaller schools had limited library services given the small numbers of teachers and students in them. Such schools are resourced, according to a staffing formula which may only entitle them to a 0.1 or 0.2 library technician or part-time teacher. To ameliorate the situation, local principals and directors of school performance tend to build networks and the NT Government is in the process of developing a set of online support programs for a host of needs in remote areas as well. At this stage, a library support program is not intended, 'but it is possible'.⁵²
- 2.50 ASLA Tasmania indicated that of the 57 government schools that had received library funding under the BER program, just seven had teacher librarians to make effective use of the new and refurbished facilities.⁵³
- 2.51 Like the NT Department of Education, the Tasmanian Department of Education indicated that resources were an issue in respect of staffing under the current staffing quotas.⁵⁴
- 2.52 Professor James Henri, President of the International Association of School Librarianship, summed up the concerns of many that the Federal Government's investment in school libraries is not being matched by the state and territory education authorities who are responsible for 'the funding of staffing and collections, and other information sources':

A building is a building but without personnel what is the point?
Without resourcing access to information what is the point?⁵⁵
- 2.53 DEEWR stated that there had not been any discussions regarding how new libraries would be staffed and whether there was a sufficient pool of qualified teacher librarians to work in the new or refurbished libraries because these matters are the responsibility of state and territory education authorities.⁵⁶

50 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 4.

51 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 376*, p. 1.

52 NT Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 23.

53 Tasmania Government, *Submission 121*, p. 1.

54 Tasmanian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Hobart, 30 April 2010, p. 62.

55 Your school library, *Submission 123*, pp. 1-2.

56 DEEWR, *Submission 344.1*, p. 1.

Technical support

- 2.54 ASLA referred to the additional pressures and expectations being placed on teacher librarians, with the rollout of computers on a 1:1 basis in secondary schools, through the National Secondary School Computer Fund. According to ASLA, where there is no IT technical support in the school, by default, the school library and its staff have become the central point for the management and maintenance or storehouse of laptops.⁵⁷

These tasks are above the usual tasks or role of a teacher librarian and yet no additional time has been provided...In an average six period day in a high school, 1.5 hours can be used in the circulation of laptops. This means that teaching and learning services are diminished by an equivalent 1.5 hours.⁵⁸

- 2.55 Ms Rosalind Winter, former Lecturer in Charge of Teacher Librarianship Education at Monash University concurred:

It is a shame that people who should be able to spend time working with students and teaching them actually spend an awful lot of time administering bits of machinery.⁵⁹

- 2.56 ASLA shed a more positive light on the extra responsibilities of teacher librarians: some teacher librarians enjoy performing that particular role and it is a way to develop and enhance the delivery of library and information services.⁶⁰

- 2.57 Mrs Skinner, Library and Information Services Director at Stuartholme School, advised that the laptops her school had received under the DER scheme had initially required library staff to take on additional responsibilities, specifically, developing policies and procedures needed to manage students' borrowing of the laptops, but:

Significantly, the use of the laptops provided greater opportunity for students to access on-line and digital resources, to develop research and note-taking skills and to create professional assessment items ranging from research papers to multimodal presentations.⁶¹

57 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p.5.

58 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p.5.

59 Ms R. Winter, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p. 28.

60 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 11 and ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra 24 June 2010, p. 2.

61 Mrs Skinner, *Submission 334*, p. 4.

- 2.58 DEEWR acknowledged that the support for technology in schools had been ad hoc and:

what we are trying to do with the DER funding is to provide sufficient funding for there to be proficient professional support.⁶²

- 2.59 The Department noted that in NSW and elsewhere, for example in the ACT, technical support and the presence of support officers are funded as part of the program.⁶³

Equitable access to quality online databases

- 2.60 ASLA observed that as students have increasing access to technology like laptops, they have a corresponding need for online resources. While teacher librarians provide online resources for student use, the Committee was told that there is limited funding available for user-pay services such as online databases, which hinders learning opportunities.⁶⁴

- 2.61 Online databases are often expensive to subscribe to. One teacher librarian stated:

...unless you have a large budget you would be lucky to have one...in my school library, about 25% of my budget goes on databases.⁶⁵

- 2.62 Another teacher librarian said:

One of the things that have become apparent to me over the past few years is the enormous number of databases that are out there and how expensive they are.⁶⁶

- 2.63 The Committee heard that schools vary in their technological and financial capacity to be able to subscribe to databases. This is especially true for small regional and rural schools and low socio-economic status areas.⁶⁷

- 2.64 ASLA commented:

I know from feedback we receive that small schools or schools not in high-socio-economic areas find it extremely difficult to access these online databases. While Electronic Resources Australia has

62 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 4.

63 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 4.

64 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 5.

65 Mrs Ainsworth, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 12.

66 Mrs Ainsworth, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 2.

67 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 4.

tried to provide these databases at a lower cost rate, because of the lack of a total licensing structure it has not been possible, and schools often tell us they cannot afford it. So it is a total equity and access issue. Every school should have access to these online databases, no matter where they are and no matter what their socioeconomic standing is.⁶⁸

2.65 As ASLA indicated, schools currently have access to a National Library Program administered program, Electronic Resources Australia, which subsidises database subscriptions on an opt-in basis. The Committee learnt that pricing for a school with 100 students typically can range from \$100 – \$200 to \$900 per product, whereas pricing for a school with 1 000 students can range from \$700 – \$800 to \$2 800 per product.⁶⁹

2.66 Electronic Resources Australia (ERA) elaborated on the National Library Program scheme which they administer:

We negotiate licenses for libraries in all sectors...there are quite significant discounts if we have more libraries buying in. We now have about 650 libraries [participating] including tertiary institution libraries and public libraries...about 8.8 million Australians have access to resources.⁷⁰

2.67 Presently only a small percentage of schools subscribe to the opt-in scheme, some 650 Australian schools out of a total of 9 500.⁷¹ By far, the majority of schools that do subscribe are those in urban areas. Few schools from rural areas hold subscriptions.⁷²

2.68 As alluded to in chapter one the school library budget of many schools is limited. According to the Children's Book Council of Australia Library Survey, the average school library budget of respondent schools equated to only \$25 per child and some 52 per cent of respondents reported receiving less than \$20 per child per year. The CBCA indicates that would not be enough to buy one book per child per year, let alone fund a subscription to an electronic database.⁷³

2.69 ERA supported subsidising the subscription of more, if not all, schools to the program, stating that for an indicative annual outlay of only \$ 4.8

68 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 4.

69 ERA, *Submission 265.1*, p. 1.

70 ERA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 2.

71 ERA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 2.

72 See Table, Breakdown of school libraries that are ERA members by government/non-government and rural, in ERA, *Submission 265.1*, p. 1.

73 CBCA, *Submission 296*, p. 4.

million by the Commonwealth Government every school in Australia could be provided with access to a set of 11 key electronic resources, including electronic encyclopaedias and other resources relevant to the curriculum. These resources: ⁷⁴

include thousands upon thousands of encyclopaedia articles, journals, electronic books and interactive learning products; we are talking about quite a rich array of information [being made] available to every school in Australia, irrespective of location or financial capacity.⁷⁵

2.70 ERA referred to two examples of best practice overseas:

- Iceland where the government buys a set of resources for everyone, able to be used at home, school, work or university; and
- New Zealand where there is a purchasing consortium for all libraries and the NZ Department of Education pays for the school library component of that.⁷⁶

2.71 An additional point made by ERA is that school students must also have after-school access to the resources. This is because international research shows that after-school use is as important to students as access during school hours is.⁷⁷

2.72 A number of witnesses endorsed the way that the New Zealand Government makes available electronic resources to all schools through the Electronic Purchasing in Collaboration consortium.⁷⁸

2.73 Public Libraries South Australia similarly thinks that there should be a national consortium of a suite of online databases available to any child in the country, especially secondary students.⁷⁹

2.74 The School Library Association of Queensland agreed, saying that a national purchasing agreement would make it easier for schools to budget for databases from year to year:

While this year you may be able to purchase access to a database, if there is a massive issue at the school where funds need to be

⁷⁴ ERA, *Submission 265*, p. 5.

⁷⁵ ERA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 3.

⁷⁶ ERA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 2.

⁷⁷ ERA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Ms Ainsworth, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Public Libraries SA, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 35.

directed somewhere else, the next year you may not be able to do it. There is no consistency, so having a national purchasing agreement would certainly make life easier.⁸⁰

2.75 In addition to a consortium having greater purchasing power, ERA suggested that the more schools that subscribe to the program, the more advantages will ensue for individual schools. For instance, vendors will often provide add-on services which can be as valuable as the products themselves. These can include training programs for staff and students.⁸¹

2.76 Some witnesses, however, were less enthusiastic about a centralised system where each school library would receive a designated set of resources. One teacher librarian from Byron Bay High School said that:

You also need the capacity at the school level for the school to identify resources that will meet its particular needs. At Byron Bay High School we have a big demand for surf related resources that might not apply somewhere else. So we need that type of flexibility.⁸²

2.77 Other librarians pointed out that secondary schools use the databases far more than primary schools and therefore membership of databases is not nearly as relevant in a primary environment.⁸³

2.78 DEEWR advised that database purchasing arrangements is one of the issues that the Department is looking at to ensure that schools have access to all the information they need to effectively deliver schooling through the structure of the national curriculum.⁸⁴

2.79 DEEWR noted that, in addition to a number of national committees looking into copyright issues, a roundtable of the publishing industry would examine better mechanisms for schools to access commercially produced material so that they do not have to go to a range of places with different intellectual property regimes. The roundtable would also look at a more manageable solution for schools to have access to both wholly government funded information and privately produced material.⁸⁵

80 School Library Association of Queensland, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, p. 16.

81 *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 May 2010, p. 4.

82 Mr J. Richardson, NSW Teachers Federation and Teacher Librarian, Byron Bay High School, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 28.

83 Ms Plowman, Catholic Education Office, and Ms Neilson, ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 12.

84 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 12.

85 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 12.

- 2.80 DEEWR reported that there had since been two, very positive, roundtable meetings held. At these meetings publishers agreed that, as a collective, they did not yet have a cohesive view of how they want to sell online products to schools, especially regarding licensing editions. They undertook to commission further work:

in that space around the generation of generic licences to be used for educational use of their products.⁸⁶

- 2.81 On the issue of how schools will be able to get the best access to products which support delivery of the national curriculum, particularly commercial products:

It was agreed that when [publishers] were sufficiently advanced in [developing generic licences] that there would be an opportunity for a joint working party between the public sector and the publishing industry to further advance that.⁸⁷

- 2.82 The Committee believes that funding a core set of online databases along the lines of that proposed by ERA could provide a foundation upon which schools, if they wished and had the means, could build on. A core set of online databases would need to be determined by relevant stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Government, state and territory education authorities, the National Library and library associations, taking into account the new curriculum. This could be achieved with relatively little expense to the Australian taxpayer.

- 2.83 The Committee is aware that it can be a common feature of database packages that licenses include materials that schools may use and others that schools may not. The Committee recognises that a degree of flexibility needs to be built into the system so that schools can have some say in selecting the resources most appropriate to their needs.

- 2.84 The Committee believes that whatever basic set of online databases is selected, it should be viewed as a base or integral component of the library services at that school rather than a panacea for the school library. Someone, ideally a teacher librarian, should manage the subscription.

86 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 23.

87 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 23.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government partner with all education authorities to fund the provision of a core set of online database resources, which are made available to all Australian schools.

Cybersafety

- 2.85 ALIA acknowledged the Commonwealth Government's interest and activity in developing policies and programs to protect children in the online environment.⁸⁸ This is something that the Parliament is also currently investigating via a Joint Select Committee inquiry into cybersafety.⁸⁹
- 2.86 In an environment where technology and teaching and learning are increasingly converging, the one-to-one computer initiative is being rolled out and iPads are introduced into classrooms, children need to be taught about the appropriate use of a wide range of digital resources and technology, including cybersafety, cyber-bullying, privacy and identity theft.⁹⁰
- 2.87 In ALIA's view, teacher librarians are ideally placed to provide this support and to facilitate the availability of this content across all years. Further, school libraries are also the platform to facilitate professional development to teachers in this area.⁹¹ The NSW Teachers Federation echoed this sentiment:
- Copyright issues, cyber-bullying, plagiarism and digital citizenship are all part of the vital role that we see teacher librarians playing.⁹²
- 2.88 Teacher librarians are already undertaking this educational role. A teacher librarian from Engadine High School stated that she had been active in her

88 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 21.

89 See the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety website for details. Accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jssc/index.htm>>.

90 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 21 and ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 6.

91 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 21.

92 NSW Teachers Federation, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 20.

school's teaching about cyber-bullying.⁹³ Another spoke of her experience in developing a school's cyber-bullying policy with the school principal.⁹⁴

- 2.89 ALIA elaborated on the positive role that teacher librarians can play in the advancement of cyber-security, identity protection and the like, indicating that there are a range of programs available for schools and pilot programs, which ALIA supports. These include the *e-Smart schools and Libraries Program* with the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation and corporate programs like *Think You Know*.⁹⁵
- 2.90 ALIA said that while there is a lot of activity in this area (including cybersafety programs through the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and indeed their work with the ACMA, to produce a cybersafety guide for library staff), ACMA was underfunded with regards to its ability to deliver cybersafety programs to schools and more work needs to be done.⁹⁶
- 2.91 ASLA suggested that the Commonwealth Government fund the development and delivery of a parent program on digital literacy and cyber-safety to help parents support their child's learning in partnership with ASLA.⁹⁷
- 2.92 At the same time, ASLA cautioned against rolling out additional programs for implementation by schools.
- Cybersafety is part of digital literacy...it should be embedded [in the national curriculum]...the last thing schools need is one more program that we have to do on top of everything else.⁹⁸
- 2.93 ALIA agreed that education on cybersafety matters is not something that is just the responsibility of the school library, but rather that of the wider school community.⁹⁹

93 Ms Yates, Sutherland Shire Teacher Librarians Network, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 35.

94 *Committee Hansard*, 24 June 2010, Canberra, p. 11.

95 ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p. 6.

96 ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p. 5 and ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 19.

97 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 17.

98 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 10.

99 ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p. 6.

Devolution of management to school principals and implications for resourcing school libraries

- 2.94 ASLA referred to the trend in recent times to devolve school management to school principals (otherwise known as school based management) (SBM). This means that principals are responsible for making decisions on matters related to the operational budget of their school. This has often resulted, in government schools especially, in a diminishing budget allocation to the school library for resources and staff. ASLA quoted the results of the Australian School Libraries Research Project:

Across the whole survey group 45% of schools received less than \$10 000 as their annual budget...12. 5% of the schools reported an annual budget of less than \$1 000...Few libraries reported budgets over \$50 000, and these tended to be large independent schools.

Staffing level results indicated over 50% of schools in this survey had no professional staff or less than one FTE [full-time equivalent] working in their school library.¹⁰⁰

- 2.95 The NSW Primary Principals Association acknowledged that the library and teacher librarian's role can be overlooked by principals. She said:

The perception around libraries is, 'Let's go and fund something else because the library is all in place.' The library physically might be all in one place but the learning, including the teacher librarian's learning – connecting with children – might not be in place, and, yes, I feel it has been neglected.¹⁰¹

- 2.96 Many submitters felt that school principals needed to be made more aware of the potential contributions of teacher librarians. Principals' perceptions of teacher librarians and how to shift negative views so that their recruitment is looked upon more favourably is a topic examined in chapter four.

- 2.97 ASLA Tasmania said that there are many advantages to school based decision making, not least that it allows principals and management teams to develop a staffing structure that meets the specific needs of their area. The problem is not SBM, but rather that:

There is never enough funding in a school to do all the things that you want to do.¹⁰²

100 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 6.

101 Ms J. Fogarty, NSW Primary Principals Association, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, pp. 24-25.

102 ASLA Tasmania, *Committee Hansard*, Tasmania, 30 April 2010, p. 5.

- 2.98 DEEWR spoke about the merits of SBM. The Department cautioned against centralised decision making by remote bureaucrats about what the local school structure should be and how teachers should or should not be rewarded, saying that decision making closer to the actual delivery and responsibility was generally considered to be a better model:

For example, it is the philosophy behind the My School website that you provide an accountability - a clarity - around what is happening at the local level and have a large number of people involved in the process at that local level, guiding what happens, rather than a small number of people remotely attempting to do so.¹⁰³

- 2.99 DEEWR referred to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's role in drafting professional standards for school leaders which can help guide principals in their decision making.¹⁰⁴

Consultation on national curriculum and teaching standards

The introduction of the national curriculum gives us an opportunity to revisit the way we support embedding expertise around ICT literacy into our schooling.¹⁰⁵

- 2.100 Charles Sturt University and Joint Use Libraries South Australia supported a general view about the important role that teacher librarians can play in helping determine and implement the ICT component of the national curriculum:

The role of the teacher librarian should be as an integral partner in curriculum design and teaching...and in managing the provision of digital and physical learning resources.¹⁰⁶

We feel that adequate and systematic attention to these cross-curriculum capabilities [like ICT] will definitely be at risk in schools where the teacher librarian, with their cross-curriculum perspective and knowledge, information literacy and ICT expertise, is not there to become an important change agent in these curriculum reforms.¹⁰⁷

103 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 5.

104 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 5.

105 Mr Green, Department of Education and Training, NT, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 26.

106 Charles Sturt University, *Submission 108*, p. 5.

107 Joint Use Libraries Australia, *Submission 217*, p. 3.

2.101 The Committee asked about the extent of consultation that library peak bodies and stakeholders had had during the development of the national curriculum.

2.102 ASLA noted that it had been involved in a range of different discussion forums managed by AITSL, including the negotiation of new teacher standards, and that the discussion process had been constructive:

We feel that the standards actually meet teacher librarian requirements quite well.¹⁰⁸

2.103 ASLA stated that there needs to be more communication between professional teaching associations and government but the main concern for them lies with how the new national standards will be interpreted or incorporated at local jurisdiction levels.¹⁰⁹

2.104 The Committee is of the view that there needs to be ongoing consultation and cooperation between the Commonwealth, state and territory education authorities, non-government sector and library associations on all major reforms.

2.105 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government continue its engagement with primary and secondary school stakeholders (including state and territory education authorities, the non-government sector and library associations) on the development of the national curriculum (especially ICT components), teaching standards and other reform initiatives that impact on school libraries and teaching librarians.

Leadership opportunities at the national level

2.106 ASLA said there is a need for strong leadership policy statements at the national level regarding digital information and 21st century learning skills:

...we have the opportunity now [building on recent reforms including development of the national curriculum and the National Broadband Network] to have some very strong leadership policy statements made [at the national level] in regard to digital information literacy and 21st century learning skills.¹¹⁰

108 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 1.

109 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 1.

110 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 4.

2.107 In today's world, in the words of Ms Bonanno of ASLA, 'digital literacy is as important as reading, writing and doing your sums.'¹¹¹

2.108 Yet, it is not necessarily clear what digital literacy or its conferred benefits are. ASLA told the Committee that a motherhood statement at the Commonwealth level would be useful because it would flow through to DEEWR and help set the direction, providing a framework for the deployment of appropriate resources and funding to schools.¹¹²

It gets the schools to start to focus on how they can bring together a lot of the current discussions and resources about education. It has to have a future focus. We cannot be dealing with traditional ways of doing schooling.¹¹³

2.109 ASLA envisages that such a statement would define digital literacy and seek to place it in the context of the national curriculum and the curriculum's focus on inquiry-based learning. It would also refer to the need for students to become good digital citizens (referring to cyber-etiquette and social responsibility) and the information skills tools and technological capabilities that students will require in order for them to become an 'independent global citizen type of learner who [has] the skills to survive the 21st century.'¹¹⁴

2.110 The Committee asked DEEWR to comment on the extent to which digital literacy is already incorporated in government policies. DEEWR responded that 'digital literacy skills are embedded in the details' of the national curriculum developed to date.¹¹⁵ Dr Arthur of DEEWR added:

Certainly, as ACARA [develops the years 11 and 12 curriculum], the issue will become a lively one and there will obviously be an opportunity for government to determine whether or not it wishes to make a policy statement in that area.¹¹⁶

2.111 The Committee also notes President Obama's proclamation of a digital literacy awareness month in October 2009. In his media release about it the President referred to the need for all Americans to be adept in ways to effectively navigate the information age. He stated:

111 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 8.

112 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 11.

113 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 8.

114 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 8.

115 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 26.

116 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 26.

Each day we are inundated with vast amount of information [through television, radio and an immense array of online resources]. Though we may know how to find the information we need, we must also know how to evaluate it... This new type of literacy requires competency with communication technologies, including computers and mobile devices that can help in our day-to-day decision-making.¹¹⁷

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with the states and territories to develop a discrete national policy statement that defines the importance of digital and information literacy for learning in the 21st century, which can be used as a guide by teachers and principals.

¹¹⁷ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, media release, "National information literacy awareness month, October 2009," Proclamation of the President of the United States, accessed 17 March 2011 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/presidential-proclamation-national-information-literacy-awareness-month/>.