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Proof Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: School libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

THURSDAY, 3 JUNE 2010

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 3 June 2010

Members: Ms Bird (*Chair*), Dr Jensen (*Deputy Chair*), Ms Collins, Mrs D'Ath, Mr Irons, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Sidebottom, Dr Stone, Mr Symon and Mr Zappia

Members in attendance: Ms Bird, Ms Collins, Dr Jensen, Mr Irons, Mr Sidebottom, Dr Stone, Mr Symon and Mr Zappia

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

WITNESSES

HAY, Ms Lyn, Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University.....	1
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Committee met at 9.36 am**HAY, Ms Lyn, Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University**

CHAIR—I declare open this sixth hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training as part of its inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools. I welcome the representative from the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University. I should indicate that, although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses of parliament. We have your written submission. Do you want to make some opening comments to the committee?

Ms Hay—There are a few things that I would like to open with which will give you a little bit more background about what we do and why we do it. The teacher librarianship team at Charles Sturt University is committed to the development of teacher librarians as dynamic leaders committed to enriching teaching and learning across the school, as successful collaborators working with teachers to incorporate information literacy and literature technologies into the curriculum, as skilful practitioners providing information services to support programs within the school, as information specialists who develop and implement resource and inquiry based processes and strategies to improve student learning, and as informed educators who value the importance of evidence based principles to support professional practice.

The Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) course is our principal, or flagship, course. It is targeted to meet the needs of teachers who wish to become teacher librarians, and practising teacher librarians without a full specialist qualification in teacher librarianship. We are currently phasing out the Graduate Diploma in Education (Teacher Librarianship), which was the original teacher librarianship qualification for teachers to complete to become a qualified TL. This qualification has been recognised by the Australian Library and Information Association for over two decades—probably closer to three, but that was before my time at CSU.

We also had a Master of Applied Science (Teacher Librarianship) course, which was introduced in the mid-1990s and of which I have been the course coordinator for a few years. This course had two functions. It was to provide three-year trained teachers with a masters in teacher librarianship as well as teacher librarians who had already completed a qualification at the graduate diploma level a relatively short pathway to complete a few subjects in order to gain their masters qualification.

With few three-year trained teachers in schools looking at retraining now, we have consolidated our efforts into providing the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) course, which consists of eight subjects over two years part time. We are finding that increasingly our students are taking longer than that two-year period to complete their training, quite often preferring to only do one subject per session. That is partly because they are working full time and they are juggling family and other commitments. So the numbers that we are graduating do not look as good as the numbers that are normally coming in, so to speak.

We also provide a Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship, and I think that program has been mentioned before by other parties who have attended the hearings. That was specifically

designed with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training in mind, who sponsor a cohort of classroom teachers each year—and this has been happening since 2004. Those teachers study four of our teacher librarianship subjects while being placed in a school library position in either a primary or a secondary school in New South Wales. This is designed to kick-start their training as a TL, with the idea that these students return to complete the remaining four subjects to gain their full qualification. That full qualification obviously is recognised by ALIA as a full library and information qualification. That means that our graduates could also gain employment in other libraries and information agencies such as public, academic and special libraries and so on.

I do have a small handout that I wanted to give to the committee. In listening to some previous hearings I realised that the committee was pretty keen to get some hard data on what is happening. I have six copies there for you to have a look at, if you would not mind, to give you a bit of a snapshot of what we do at CSU in terms of our training. There are some course related statistics and graphs to give you an idea of our student enrolment, our completion figures since the mid-1990s as well as some demographic data which I thought the committee would also be interested in seeing in terms of gender, geographic location and age.

Basically, on the first page you will see our student enrolments. The total enrolments show the total enrolments that we have under each of those years. The total commencing enrolments are for those students who are entering in that year. We normally have an initial intake at the beginning of the year and then we would traditionally have a midyear enrolment as well so that people do not have to wait until the following year to come into the course. Now that our university has moved to a three-session model it means that we have three intakes across the year. So there is a lot more flexibility for people who decide that they might want to come in. There is not a 2010 figure there as yet, because the year has not finished and the database will not spit out the requisite number. But at the moment the figure so far is 171 commencing enrolments. That is actually up quite a bit from the last few years.

In the period of 1996-2010 we have had 1,089 people come out as qualified teacher librarians. I am not talking about the New South Wales Department of Education and Training graduate certificate; I am talking about the traditional Graduate Diploma in Teacher Librarianship, the Master of Education and Master of Applied Science, which is the ALIA accreditation. The second graph presents a squiggly line showing the different completions that we have had. As we have more people doing one subject, we will probably find over the next few years that our graduation numbers might increase a bit.

I have also provided you with a bit of a snapshot of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training graduate diploma program, partly to give you an idea of the numbers coming through. They are teachers who are currently working in schools who were asked whether they would be interested in taking a position when the principal knows that that teacher librarian position will be vacated at the end of the year. You will see that the numbers when we first started—our first intake—were just over 20, and we have had as high as close to 65. That gives you an idea of the vacancy rate across the schools in New South Wales. What is really great is that the department is committed to putting people into those positions—making them dedicated positions.

In terms of gender, I do not think you will be surprised that the majority of our students are female. This chart gives you an idea of the general trend, and there is quite a substantial trend there. I think it is indicative of teaching—certainly when you look at primary schools.

Even though we are based in New South Wales, we thought it might be interesting for you to see where else we draw our students from. We have quite a cohort coming from Victoria and Queensland as well as people scattered across other states. We also have a handful of people from overseas. They are full-fee-paying people; they do not get Commonwealth-supported places. I am sorry I cannot account for the two ‘unknown’s in 1996 and 1997, but that needed to be included, of course.

In terms of the age of our students, I thought that, given previous hearings, this would be of interest to you. I have provided you with the median age at the base of each of the years to give you an idea of what we are looking at. As you can see, we normally find in teacher librarianship that teachers do not actually come into our discipline, or find our discipline, until their late 30s or early 40s. So, if people are completing their training then, we may be looking, if we are lucky, at 15 years of leverage in their time and their tenure in schools. Obviously that is something that we are interested in pursuing in the future—getting younger people to come on board.

The final stat that has been provided may also be of interest to you. The Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary) Teacher-Librarianship program was running only up until the last few years. That was designed for people who are already qualified librarians who decide that they want to get a teacher qualification and get a position in a school as a teacher librarian. While the numbers are not great, that certainly was, I believe, an important pathway for us to be providing. I am not really aware of any other university that has done that. The reason there are no figures under 2008 and 2009 is that the graduate diploma has changed into a Bachelor of Teaching to fit in with the New South Wales Institute of Teachers requirements on the curriculum that needs to be covered. At this stage I do not have any data on that program, because we will not have any people coming through the program with that specialisation for probably at least another year.

To let you know what is on the horizon for us in trying to address other potential pathways, CSU’s Faculty of Education has also recently developed a five-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education course that specialises in K-12 middle schooling. That course has been running for a couple of years, and we are currently negotiating to have a teacher librarian strand built into it. This will require the BEd students to complete eight subjects in library and information management and teacher librarianship within their third and fifth years of study. Once again, we see that as providing a pathway—this time specifically attracting the school leaver market, which is not a market that we have really tapped into in the past. The only problem with this is that it is a longer term initiative. Because it is a five-year program, we would not really be seeing any TLs graduating from it until, at the very earliest, 2015 if not 2016. But we do see it as a longer term strategy for bringing new blood into the profession.

We teach our students that people in teacher librarian positions need to leverage opportunities for vision-building to become empowered as their school’s information professional. They need to be flexible and proactive in instigating conversations within the school community about the role of the school library and their role as a TL. The uniqueness of the teacher librarian position as a specialist teacher can have its challenges. I do not think there are really any other teachers in a school who have to negotiate their role. If you are a geography teacher, you are a geography

teacher. If you are a year 5 teacher, you are a year 5 teacher. I think that is one of our challenges, which you will probably have discovered over the course of your inquiry.

Our students learn that they will be challenged by institutional, cultural, management, technological, interpersonal and staffing pressures. We try to provide them with strategies to deal with those pressures and to actually try to thrive on those challenges. We work with our students to prepare them to become an information leader in the school. Some people who enter our courses realise that our vision for what TLs are and do does not actually match their perceptions or expectations, so they decide to withdraw from the course. That is fine for us, because, ultimately, we need in teacher librarian positions people who can lead and effect change. The position is far too demanding for people who might be wishing to escape the classroom.

In 2007 our team developed a new marketing campaign for our courses. The key message underpinning the campaign was: 'shaping the profession'. The teacher population in general, and particularly teacher librarians, is aging. Many teachers do not find teacher librarianship until their late 30s or early 40s. We tried to get the message across to our profession that in addition to all the roles and responsibilities you have as a TL there is one other role: helping to recruit people into the profession to ensure that we start to develop a pool of duly qualified TLs to fill the positions of people who are intending to retire from their positions in the next five to 10 years. We wrote a number of articles for professional journals, presented at conferences and said to teacher librarians, 'Yes, we know you are qualified, but when you receive these brochures please pass one on to a good teacher that you know.' The message we wanted to get out about the future of our profession was that it depends on targeting good teachers, effective teachers, dynamic teachers and innovative teachers to try to retrain those teachers as TLs, because the instructional and teaching role of the TL is central to the future and success of the profession and to the work we do in 21st-century schools.

We believe the school library is an important part of school life and will remain so. However, we are at a critical turning point. We need to re-engineer a number of existing school libraries into flexible, dynamic, high-tech, 21st century learning centres that are designed to prepare students to function effectively in an increasingly complex informational and technological world. This depends on schools having in the TL position a person who plays a leadership role in the school; someone who has the skills and capacity to lead and to invest considerable time and creative and innovative thinking in steering carefully and considered strategic planning to make this vision for school libraries in the future happen. As one teacher librarian said, as part of an envisioning process that we had last year with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 'Imagine an activity and we will make a space for it.' To me, that captures the essence of the teacher librarian philosophy in a 21st-century school.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can you clarify for us one of the things that members of the committee have been interested in discussing: the perhaps less than well understood and well utilised capacity for collaborative teaching for teacher librarians? I indicated, as a former teacher myself, I do not think I was ever trained in what I could do in collaboration with the teacher librarian. There are probably a whole lot of teachers who do not really understand the role. That, combined with some evidence that some of the departmental people who have been presenting that the information literacy challenges are the responsibility of all teachers, led them to the argument that a TL is not necessarily a required position if all teachers are doing that.

I notice you talked about a strand in the Bachelor of Education course. I would be interested in hearing about those subjects being offered not only as providing a base if a teacher wants to go into teacher librarianship at a later stage—or straightaway—but also as a general part of the professionalisation of generalist teachers around collaborative teaching and working with modern information systems and their TLs. I would be interested to know what is happening with the strand that you mentioned.

Ms Hay—I agree. I think that is something that has been lacking in preservice teaching. Our school used to be in a faculty other than education, so it was difficult to have those sorts of conversations. Now that our school is within the Faculty of Education it provides us with more opportunities to be at certain tables where these discussions can occur. Certainly, some of the subjects that we are looking at offering in the middle-schooling strand would be appropriate subjects for any students to take as an elective. One, for example, is a subject that we are revising into a digital citizenship subject. I see quite clearly that that would be beneficial to all of the undergrad students in the BEd program. I know that collaboration has happened in a piecemeal fashion in some institutions. I know that there was quite a strong partnership between the University of Canberra's education faculty and some local teacher librarians who used to do some lectures to make students aware of the potential role of the TL when they graduated. I think that is something that we, at our university, need to look at. At the moment, we have been struggling with the need to revise our undergraduate teacher programs in order to meet all of the requirements of the Institute of Teachers, so it has been kind of a case of, 'Okay, where are we going to slip in our agenda?'

CHAIR—Yes, this committee in the previous parliament did a report on beginning teacher training and it was made clear to us over and over again: 'Stop adding other things'.

Ms Hay—It is difficult.

CHAIR—On the subject of collaborative teaching: I would think that, given the specialists that come into schools now for literacy and numeracy teaching and for remedial work and so forth, providing beginning teachers with some expertise in how to teach collaboratively would be useful.

Ms Hay—I think that we could possibly do that without actually having a separate subject, as such, but rather by ensuring that the understandings about working collaboratively, not just with the teacher librarian but the specialist teachers in the school, are embedded throughout all the different curriculum strands as one of those sorts of possibilities. Teacher librarians do take that on as part of their role in educating staff as to what they can do. As you say, many teachers can go through their career thinking that it might be seen as a sign that they might need assistance, when, in fact, the teacher librarian is there to provide that. The school library environment is different to a normal classroom in that it is a large open classroom. In high schools, for example, you might have three classes in there at one time with teachers working with their students, you might have a number of small groups come down to do work and you might have a number of senior students using it for their periods of study when they are not on class. It can be a very busy open classroom environment. I think that can be quite confronting for some teachers: they are used to the confines of their own learning space. One of the skills of a teacher librarian is that, if you are working in the school library, your classroom space is that open library space. Your teaching practice is observed from period to period; it is not a case of things happening

behind closed doors. You get to observe what other teachers do, so you are learning great practices as well.

Before working as an academic, I was a teacher librarian in central schools and high schools in New South Wales. The central school was where I got an incredible grounding in teaching, because I was secondary trained but was collaborating with primary school teachers, and that was a fabulous grounding. Working in that open classroom environment, I think, is something that some teachers might not feel that comfortable with. So it is really a case of teacher librarians working with teachers to show them what opportunities are there—have a go, plan, collaborate, try new things. As an educator, you need to be a risk taker and sometimes that is difficult to do—

CHAIR—Especially under observation!

Ms Hay—Absolutely. But if you are doing it with a partner you are learning together and I think that learning, team approach is something that happens quite a lot in primary schools, because that is how your KLA groups or your year groups work together for planning. In a secondary school that can be a little bit different. Certainly the learning teams model is something that I am exploring in my PhD and I think that is really powerful, if you are looking at diagnosing the individual needs of students. Having a teacher librarian and a teacher working with a student, especially if you are working with a fairly complex digital information landscape, to me, is a recipe for success—to have that kind of teaming approach.

CHAIR—The only other thing I want to ask about before I go to my colleagues is that it would appear the new information age is actually very exciting and might provide a real opportunity to attract young people. I think Mr Sidebottom raised the issue that being called a librarian sometimes has its own constraints.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I thought ‘excitement machine’ or something like that would be better!

CHAIR—However, it was explained to us at the last hearing that all sorts of new names had been tried but then people did not understand what they were and they came back to ‘librarian’. I think there are some real opportunities there for us. Another issue is that, clearly, if a person’s experience of a library is some poky little old classroom somewhere with a few books that have been there forever, it is hardly going to inspire them to see that as a career opportunity. How important are technology upgrades and facilities, from your perspective?

Ms Hay—I would just like to comment on the naming or the labelling, because I think that is a really interesting issue. You obviously have not attended any teacher librarianship conferences, because it is not as conservative and laid-back as you probably think. I really think the label of the position is something that needs to be negotiated within the school. I think it needs to be owned by all members of the school community. It might be fine for a person in a teacher librarian position to give themselves a new name but, really, it is not the name or the label—it is the actions. It is what you are doing. It is the outcomes. It is your output. So I am wary, at times. It might be nice to have a sexy title, but if your practice is still very traditional it is not going to work. But in schools where you do have a teacher librarian who is functioning in a really high-powered way in terms of engaging with teachers and students it would be really interesting to ask the students and the teachers what they would want to be calling their teacher librarian. So it really is the actions that speak, as to what we do. That is my comment on that.

The provisioning of school libraries in a digital age is a major challenge. I conducted a research study in 2004, *Student learning through Australian school libraries*. Just under 7,000 students, from years 7 to 12 in Victorian and Queensland schools, responded to a survey about how the school library helped them. It was a replication of the Ohio study that Carol Kuhlthau and Ross Todd conducted in the States. After the Australian replication, a Delaware replication was also done, and it was really interesting to see the results. In the feedback provided by Australian students, the students got the chance to write an open comment about how the school library helped them. It was interesting to see that, out of the seven key forms of assistance a school library could provide, the students rated most highly those that related to technology, but the teacher librarians and teachers of those students, who also completed the survey, did not see the provision of technological support by the library as being as important to the students as other forms of help. I thought that was really interesting.

The students want a place in the school where they have access, before, during and after school, to technology that works. While they might have internet access to technology at home, interestingly, some of the students said in their responses, ‘The school library really helped me before period 1 because I had a printing crisis,’ ‘I had a technology crisis,’ ‘I couldn’t get access to the internet because Mum was doing her assignment,’ or whatever, so they were desperate to get that kind of access. That flexible and open access is not always provided in school computer labs. Once the teacher has finished with the class, normally the computer lab is closed. So where in the school can a student go at any time of day, whether in class time or out of class time, to get that kind of assistance? The school library—if the school library has the facilities to support that.

One of the concerns I have had over the years is from hearing stories from my students as well as TL professional colleagues lamenting about basically the worst technology cascading down to the school libraries. They are where elephants go to die. Often the computer labs, and some classrooms and staff rooms, get the high-powered machines, the machines with grunt, and whatever is left ends up in the library. In response to the survey, a number of students said, ‘I get frustrated with the school library computers because they’re slower than a dead turtle.’ They were quite graphic in their expression of their displeasure in not having good technology available to them in the library. As far as I am concerned, for the school library to be the most open, flexible and available space for students to come and do work for whatever subject they are doing, it should provide access to all the computer programs that are used across all areas of the curriculum. Students should be able to come in at lunchtime and do their work rather than having to get special permission to go into a lab to get that access.

Some students do not have the right kind of software at home so they depend on getting access to it at some time during the school day. If you are on a bus for an hour in the morning to get to school and you bus out again in the afternoon, you do not have those opportunities. About 50 per cent of the students in the sample came from schools in regional areas, and the rest came from capital cities. The only place that some regional students get access to technology is at school, so, if they do not get access in the classroom—

CHAIR—Supported access—somebody there who can help them work through it.

Ms Hay—Absolutely. A lot of the responses from students described their relief that they had actually had someone at school to help them fix whatever dilemma they had—whether it was a

technical dilemma, a learning dilemma, information illiteracy or a reading dilemma. That was a very powerful study in terms of student voice.

CHAIR—Is there a summary of that that you could supply to the committee?

Ms Hay—Yes, there is. It is actually freely available. I published two articles in the School Library Association of Victoria's *Synergy*.

CHAIR—Could you give us the references for those so the committee secretariat can bring them up?

Ms Hay—The URLs are available; they are downloadable.

CHAIR—Could you please leave them with us at the end of the hearing?

Ms Hay—Yes.

Dr JENSEN—We have been talking about technology and access and that sort of thing, but it strikes me that if we do not have teacher librarians a lot of this discussion becomes moot. One of the issues that you mentioned is the fact that people that are going and doing teacher librarian courses are typically in their late 30s and early 40s. Have you got any idea why it is occurring at that time of life rather than earlier on?

Ms Hay—We have noticed some younger teachers coming through the graduate certificate teacher librarianship program, so that is good for us to see.

CHAIR—They are the teachers who are in New South Wales schools

Ms Hay—They are. They do not come out with a full qualification, but they are on their way. So we are seeing some younger people coming into that program. But ultimately when teachers go out into schools it does take a number of years for them to find their feet. You can get caught up in your discipline area in a secondary school—

CHAIR—Or having your own kids and not wanting—

Ms Hay—Absolutely. But ultimately I think it is that some people get to a point where after being in a classroom for a period of time they are looking for a change, and they see this as a change.

Dr JENSEN—But it is obviously a question of the teacher librarian stream not being sold well at all to students who are in uni doing their teacher training. It is obviously not seen as a career option.

Ms Hay—Not at that point, because after four years at uni you are hungering to get out there and earn some decent money.

Dr JENSEN—But I guess the point is: why aren't they thinking about this in the first two years at uni?

CHAIR—Lyn, would you like to comment on this too. A lot of your focus is on New South Wales, where there are many mandated provisions of teacher librarians to schools, whereas in other states there are not so many positions available. I think that goes some way to Dennis's question.

Ms Hay—I would just like to say in terms of targeting younger students that there used to be undergraduate programs. I came out of an undergraduate program. As a school leaver I went to Macquarie University and trained as a teacher librarian. When I walked out my first-year position was a TL position. UTS used to have a program. A few other universities did have programs, but they diminished. Another problem too—as I think you already know—is that there are not too many universities in Australia that have a teacher librarianship specialisation.

Dr JENSEN—In that case, which was the chicken and which was the egg?

Ms Hay—I think a lot of it has to do with students in schools looking at the teacher librarianship position and asking, 'Is this something for me? If I am interested in being a teacher, is this an option?' Each individual teacher librarian represents our profession. If you are a teacher librarian who is doing interesting things and showing that there is a breadth to your role there will be some young people who will see it as an option. In fact, I know of one person who is just finishing their undergraduate BEd qual and they are concerned about not being able to get a job in a primary school because they live in a regional area. They are now looking at enrolling in our master's program as a way of shoring up their chances of possibly getting a permanent position in the region.

Dr JENSEN—But you were saying, for instance, that when you did your teacher librarianship qualification there were a number of universities that are actually had that course and that has now diminished. What was the reason for that diminishing of the number of courses offered? Was it that the student numbers were decreasing or was that a decision that the universities took that actually then lead to a reduction in the number of students?

Ms Hay—You are never going to get 100 students enrolling in an undergraduate program to be teacher librarians unless there was some major initiative that was going to support that. When I did my undergraduate I was in a cohort of about 15, and that was considered a healthy sized cohort. But over time when universities look at the size of programs there can be a magic number which ends up being the cut-off point as to whether something is a viable option or not. And that is what happened. It is what happened at UTS.

The other thing is that a number of the universities lost that specialisation. The specialisation as we have it at CSU became part of the general program. People would come in, do general library subjects and do a couple of teacher librarianship subjects, and that was the course that they did. When you are looking at, say, two subjects being available that focus specifically on teacher librarianship, then if that person leaves, the university would look at it and ask whether it was worth getting another academic in to cover that program. We saw that happening in the mid-nineties. By 2000, that was it. I think UTS was one of the last.

Dr JENSEN—You were also looking at the other aspect—librarians going into teaching. You were saying that it shifted from a graduate diploma and is now a bachelor's degree. What is the difference in the time period for study with both of those?

Ms Hay—It is an extra year.

Dr JENSEN—It is an extra year with a bachelor's degree?

Ms Hay—Yes.

Dr JENSEN—You said you did not have numbers for 2009-10, because it is a new course; but what about enrolments, rather than people coming out the other end?

Ms Hay—The problem is that for the people who are enrolled in a Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary), their specialisations are not listed as a separate course.

CHAIR—You do not pick your subjects until the third year of the degree to specialise.

Ms Hay—Absolutely.

Dr JENSEN—But there should be some data on the number of librarians who are actually undertaking it. Do you see what I am getting at?

Ms Hay—Yes, I know what you are saying.

CHAIR—It is an undergraduate degree in secondary teaching, like I would have done. In the third year, when I would do my—

Dr JENSEN—I know, but the question I have is about librarians coming to do teaching.

CHAIR—Re-training.

Ms Hay—Yes, I know what you are saying.

Dr JENSEN—The question is this. Obviously they now have to do this Bachelor of Teaching instead of the grad dip. A certain number of the students undertaking the bachelor's degree will be ex-librarians. I would like to know what effect this has had on those librarians going in and getting a qual as a teacher.

Ms Hay—I would have to go and speak to the course coordinator of that program. Because each of the strands is not listed as a separate course specialisation, we cannot go into the database and just pick out that data. Basically what it is going to mean is that they will have an indication of who they think would be taking that course. I could provide that.

Dr JENSEN—Yes. Perhaps you could get that information.

CHAIR—The difficulty, too, is that you cannot presume that someone who is a librarian and who goes into secondary teaching wants to be a teacher librarian.

Ms Hay—That is true too.

CHAIR—They may actually want to be a history teacher or an English teacher.

Dr JENSEN—Agreed. But it would be an interesting statistic regardless.

Ms Hay—I think it would be only a very small group of students.

Dr JENSEN—Understood. Having a look at the numbers, it is a small cohort anyway.

Mr SYMON—I read your submission with quite some interest, because there were a few things in there that were, I suppose, opposite to what I had heard at other hearings, and I certainly want to explore those. One of them is that I seem to get from your submission that there is an increase in demand for teacher librarians. But later on in the submission I came across what we have found so far, and that is that various state systems are actually pushing teacher librarians out, because those positions are put up for grabs amongst all sorts of other jobs. I have certainly spoken to schools in Victoria with 500-plus students and said, ‘Do you have a teacher librarian?’ And they say, ‘No, we have an integration officer instead’ or ‘We have others that do various things, because we only get a certain amount of money.’ In my state particularly, and in some of the other states where we have had hearings as well, is there an increasing demand for teacher librarians from schools that actually matches what is coming through the university?

Ms Hay—There is a demand for teacher librarian positions and the creation of teacher librarian positions. For example, earlier this year I was working with a group of principals, curriculum coordinators and a couple of TLs up in Cairns with the Cairns diocese. With the Building the Education Revolution funding they had something like 22 or 28 fabulous new school library buildings that were being built for these primary schools. In that diocese there is one teacher librarian in one school for three days a week. The provisioning for the positions is not part of the diocese’s provisioning. It was the curriculum coordinator who used part of her curriculum coordination budget to invest in employing a teacher librarian for three days a week to help with the curriculum and technology innovation that she wanted to implement in her school. I am pleased to say that after a 6-month trial of having someone in that position, the person in the position showed the potential of that role. As a result that curriculum coordinator and principal have committed to a contract position for two years, and I am pleased to say that it is one of our students who is about to graduate who has that position.

All of these schools up there have fabulous new buildings and the principals have done a fabulous job in developing a vision for what they want from their school library. But they do not have teacher librarian positions as part of the teaching complement and that is certainly something that I believe they are working on a business case to look at.

Mr SYMON—Is that just government, or non-government?

Ms Hay—That is the Catholic system.

Mr SYMON—So that is just the non-government.

Ms Hay—Yes. My understanding is that Queensland does have a staffing complement in terms of the teacher librarian, although I do not know whether those positions are actually filled to their maximum complement or if a principal has done a little bit of creative accounting in

terms of staffing. But I do know that in Victorian primary schools it is a dire problem. We have primary schools where, if you are lucky, you might have a qualified library technician. We have not had a history of fully trained library tech staffing for school libraries. As a teacher librarian myself, I know that it is another of your roles to teach school assistants or admin assistants to take on those sorts of library technician tasks. And that certainly takes time for the person in the position. If you do not have a teacher librarian in that school, I am concerned about the quality of the collection. I am concerned about the kind of services that can be provided to staff and students. My guess is that there is not going to be much.

In primary school students are developing as active readers, developing their literacy skills and developing independence as a learner. But where are they getting that? You may have a library in a school down there but how effectively is it being used? We are looking at a major initiative from the federal government in building fabulous new facilities for schools and, overall, I think most parents want to see their kids become literate, engaged, informed young people. I think they acknowledge that the library can contribute to that significantly. If you were to take away from a community a very active school library program and a qualified teacher librarian who is doing great stuff, I think there would be an absolute outcry. But that was part of a complete renewal process, if I could call it that, in Victoria. There were some significant redundancies of staff, and not just in primary schools but in high schools.

Mr SYMON—I have a second question that relates back to the first. We have heard previous evidence that many teacher librarians and associated people in libraries are quite often used as relief teachers and therefore cannot do their job as the teacher librarian because they are looking after a class that has been dropped in on them or to which they have been sent away. Do you have any further comment on that, because we have heard that at several hearings up to now?

Ms Hay—When it comes to a relief from face-to-face program, like some states might have, if you want a relief from face-to-face teacher, my view is that you employ one—employ a casual, bring them in and get them to do whatever it is you want them to do during those periods. But you do not take out 80 to 90 per cent of the time that a teacher librarian has in their position and expect them to do that. As far as I am concerned that is not a smart way of using the information specialist in a school.

We do have a lot of schools that do use teacher librarians for RFF in a variety of ways. Within our program we acknowledge with our students that this can be the harsh reality that you face in your school. What do you do about it? Ultimately we know that teaching separate library classes that have no relevant connection to the classroom is really a waste of time. There needs to be some kind of connection to the curriculum. So if in fact at least the teacher librarian gets an opportunity to plan with the teacher in terms of what kinds of activities they want the students to be experiencing during that time, I would say at least we are starting to get on the right track.

Ultimately though, if a teacher librarian is locked in to a fairly heavy schedule of RFF, what happens to the teacher who wants to run a three-week guided inquiry unit where the students are actively engaging in fairly demanding intellectual activities is that they end up having to try to do most of that in the classroom because they cannot get into the library because it has been locked out as a resource, as a babysitting device, and the students are not getting that instructional support from the person who is trained as an information specialist. There is a whole scale here of principally RFF through to a fully flexible timetable, and ultimately we

would like to see more activity happening up at that flexible timetable end of the scale. I think there are ways of working around that. Once again, it comes back to the conversations that the teacher librarian has in schools with teachers, with parents, with the principal.

The principal is a very important person in this whole puzzle when it comes to the role of the teacher librarian. We have research going back to the 1930s about the importance of the school principal in working with teacher librarians—school librarians back then. We have got incredible research literature that supports the important role of the principal in working as a collaborative partner and leader with the teacher librarian. When I talk to some of my students, those that are buzzing and really excited when they start their training, and they are in a TL position, a supportive principal can make or break a school library program and a teacher librarian. As far as I am concerned, that is an area that we need to look at.

I have met many supportive principals, principals who you want to clone because you can see that they have got that big picture view of how the school library can contribute to learning. In our envisioning process that we did with the New South Wales DET last year that I co-facilitated with Dr Ross Todd, we had some principals who submitted on our blog consultation some really powerful statements about how they see the teacher librarian as being a central partner in learning in the school. So, just as you have good and bad teachers and good and bad TLs, the same goes for principals.

Dr STONE—I think you very aptly summed up the library's status in schools by being the elephant graveyard in terms of technology. You have the torn beanbag in the corner and the worn-out carpet and so on. You see it again and again in school libraries. I think the same often tends to apply to the personnel you find there. They are often refugees from the classroom—middle-aged women who have got, as I mentioned before in my interjection, two options: they can go to the library or become the career counsellors. I stress the fact that they are usually women. The problem with the principals you mentioned before is that I am not aware of any trained teacher librarian who became a principal.

Ms Hay—There are.

Dr STONE—There are?

Ms Hay—Absolutely. The one thing I can say about the teacher librarian position is that you learn considerable people skills, negotiation skills, management skills and strategic planning skills. One of my students is currently an AP. She was a qualified TL. She came back to finish her master's and she can provide incredible guidance in terms of where the school is going.

Dr STONE—I am sure she can. That is my point. There are so few of them. One of the issues is their gender. As middle-aged women retreating from the class-room, their status in the school in terms of being able to argue for better resources is often very small or diminished in terms for their capacity to be influential in the school. So we have to somehow reposition libraries in the way that you have been describing. Obviously it is not a way to get out of the hard stuff in the classroom when you have been teaching for too long and you need a break. It also has to be an occupation that men are as likely to take up. Your graph shows us—very graphically!—that not very many men are choosing to be teacher librarians. If you ever want to see where the power, status and pay are you follow the track of the men. So you can see that this is where the women

are congregating, and that is reflected in libraries being the dead-elephant graveyard of schools, too often.

Your reference to rural and regional areas really concerns me because a lot of those country kids do not have technology at home, or it is very slow or they only have one line. So if mum is on the phone they cannot use the computer. All of that is very typical of a country area. So if the library at school is also pretty hopeless for them they are significantly disadvantaged.

Ms Hay—Absolutely.

Dr STONE—So we have to do something better about all of that. But I am wondering how we can reposition the status of teacher librarians so they are more likely to be seen as having a powerful position in the school that can make a difference in terms of resources allocation, and so that it is also a clever career move to become teacher librarian, not what you do when you are wondering, ‘Oh my gosh, do I leave now?’

Ms Hay—You are right. We find that some people who come into our course are, in their first subject, absolutely shocked when we outline what the expectation of the role is.

CHAIR—That goes with all your evidence about drop-outs not being a bad thing.

Ms Hay—Absolutely. We might feel pressure from the university because we are not retaining these people but for the future of the profession—I’m sorry!—I am not interested in that. We want gung-ho people. The other thing is that you can be gung-ho in your forties and fifties. So I am a bit concerned about—

Dr STONE—Of course you can. I am not suggesting for a minute that you cannot. I am just looking at your graph.

Ms Hay—I can see that it is not that attractive for young teenage boys thinking about having a career as a teacher librarian. But how many young boys are seriously thinking about a teaching career—full-stop?

Dr STONE—They are mostly the principals and the deputy principals—the men. So somehow we have to get women also in that career path and the library—

Ms Hay—There are some pathways. There are teacher librarians who might take on a head teacher role. There are pros and cons to that. Ultimately they can take on a head teacher role but unless there is some kind of provisioning to replace them—to do the work that they would do as a teacher librarian—it means that the school library and the school library program suffers. So there are two sides to that coin, as well.

There are some schools—in the independent sector, granted—that have quite considerable school library teams. So there are a number of people working as teacher librarians who might be in a position as head of information services, who are—

CHAIR—Very powerful in the leadership of the school.

Ms Hay—Absolutely. These people have a very strong information understanding and view of the world and when you look at these information policy issues that schools are now dealing with, who is the specialist in the school that is going to be dealing with that? Most principals are not going to get that training. One of the subjects that we teach in our course is specifically on the role of the teacher librarian as an information leader who works as a partner with the principal to ensure that schools develop sound policies to help deal with a number of the sorts of information policy issues that are of concern—such as cyberbullying and so on. There are certainly opportunities there; there is no doubt about that. The only problem—

CHAIR—Can I just indicate for Dr Stone, at our hearing in Sydney there were two reasonably young gentleman who were members of information leadership teams in a very well-resourced private school library—

Dr STONE—That is really good to hear.

CHAIR—and we indicated to them it was very interesting that the only two male teacher librarians we had met were at a private school that really valued the role of information technology in the students' future.

Ms Hay—They are also obviously, as you say, providing role models for the boys in the school, that is for sure.

Dr STONE—That is the other issue. If you always see the teacher librarian as the female matron, there is a very distinct set of understandings that flow from that in what those people are likely to be able to assist you with and their interest in your future, if you are a young teenage guy. I hear what you say, that there are opportunities and we just have to make sure those opportunities are realised.

There was a movement about 20 years ago to have school libraries become community libraries, with access to the community as well. Some of these were purpose-built, some simply got a few additional books and other stock to allow an older group to come and feel that there was something for them in those libraries. Where that has occurred, where there is a community accessed school library, have you seen any difference in the way that library is resourced or whether the librarian functions as a communications specialist?

Ms Hay—The joint-use library brings a whole lot of different issues, especially when the library is being funded by different sources, such as councils funding the public library part and the Department of Education funding the school library part. I can see, in theory, that it does provide a potentially rich model—certainly for some regional communities that may not be able to support both kinds of facilities—but I think they have to be managed very carefully and if, in fact, you had one of the stakeholder groups managing it I think that would be far better. Politics can get in the way of making a good idea work, and joint-use libraries is one of those. There are joint-use libraries here in Canberra. It is really up to the individuals to make it work, and it is a different way of working. I am not convinced that that is the best solution. But I would be very keen to see, even in regional areas, even in some small schools, that students are getting access to a customised school library service to support their needs.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that, Lyn. It has been very useful for us. If you could leave the URL reference, I am sure many members will be keen to have a look at that research as well. In our previous inquiry on work-school balance we surveyed young people directly ourselves, so we like to hear from the young people, so if you have some data on that it would be great. I would like to thank you for your attendance here today. The additional information can be provided to the secretariat. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Thank you for your participation at our inquiry.

Ms Hay—Thank you.

CHAIR—We need to formally accept the documents. Mr Sidebottom, would you like to move that the documents circulated be accepted as evidence and authorised for publication.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It is so moved.

CHAIR—There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Resolved (on motion by **Dr Jensen**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 10.39 am