

Recruitment and development of teacher librarians

There is a catch-22 with teacher librarians at the moment...There are not a lot of teacher librarians out there and there are not a lot of teachers trained to be teacher librarians.¹

You have a situation where people are not opting to go into teacher librarianship because it is not seen as a career option. If people want full-time employment, or guaranteed part-time employment, they cannot necessarily get that in a school library.²

- 4.1 As more and more information and knowledge becomes available online it would seem that there was never a better time to become an information specialist in Australia's schools.
- 4.2 However, the Committee heard evidence to the contrary, that the profession appears to have been in a state of decline for some years and, in some states, is on the brink of extinction.
- 4.3 Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) statistics show that there is an uneven spread of teacher librarians across the country:

Tasmania only 50% of schools have teacher librarians.

Victoria and ACT [have] 65%.

NT [has] 5%. There are no teacher librarians in community schools in the Northern Territory.

1 Mrs V. Ainsworth, WA School Library Association and Professional Teaching Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 2.

2 Mrs Ryan, ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p. 7.

In 2002, “a third of school libraries around SA were understaffed and/or understaffed with underqualified personnel.

In 2010, the CBCA Library Survey showed that 19.6% of respondent school libraries were managed by people with no specialist training or certificate/diploma level only (no degree). This figure would have been higher if a cross-section of ALL Australian libraries had been reached.³

- 4.4 The Committee took a lot of evidence on issues surrounding the shortage of teacher librarians, difficulties with attraction and retention rates, and the somewhat limited professional development opportunities available to those who have secured a position. The poor morale within the profession was striking.
- 4.5 Some of the identified contributing factors include remote area teacher shortages; a move towards school-based decision making about resource allocation; and tied to this, negative, erroneous perceptions and undervaluing of the role of teacher librarians by school principals, education authorities and others in the broader school community. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teacher librarians constitute an ageing demographic. Most teacher librarians are middle aged or older women and there is a lack of succession planning in place for their replacement. There has also been a significant decline in librarianship courses and corresponding places for students at universities over the years; as well as a need for more flexible pathways for those wishing to enter and progress within the field.
- 4.6 The Committee considered three overarching themes that underpin these problems:
- a fundamental lack of quantitative and qualitative data to use as a basis for decision making (something already alluded to in chapter three);
 - a need to define the role of teacher librarians into the 21st century; and
 - a need to reposition the status of teacher librarians in school libraries and the broader community Australia-wide (to some extent this has also been discussed in chapter three).

3 Children’s Book Council of Australia, *Submission 50*, p. 4.

Remote area teacher shortages

4.7 Further to the statistics outlined by the CBCA at the beginning of this chapter, the Australian School Libraries Association (ASLA) reiterated the regional character of the shortage of skilled teacher librarians.⁴

4.8 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) clarified that there is not actually a teacher shortage in Australia, although there are certainly shortages in some subjects:

There are plenty of teachers. [However] we do have a shortage of highly experienced teachers who are willing to go into the low socioeconomic schools and very remote schools. It is distribution and shortages in particular subject areas – mathematics and science are the classic subjects.⁵

4.9 DEEWR went on to describe how the problems are compounded by inexperienced teachers and school principals in low socioeconomic and remote schools:

The trend in education is that it is the beginning teachers who go to the low socioeconomic and very remote locations. These are the teachers who need more support as they are starting their careers, and it is more challenging to be able to provide it. In the same way, there is often a beginning leader as well, who needs the support and is less able to provide it.⁶

4.10 DEEWR noted the need for incentives that will attract and retain good experienced teachers. The Department mentioned that the National Smarter Schools Partnerships includes reward payments for improving the quality of school leadership and teaching in the less advantaged schools, and that this is integral to making a difference.⁷

4.11 ASLA said that when other teachers are appointed to school libraries in lieu of teacher librarian specialists because none are available, they should be encouraged and supported to undertake librarianship qualifications.⁸ Ways to achieve this will be addressed in the flexible pathways section of this chapter.

4 ASLA, *Submission 332*, p. 10.

5 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 13.

6 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 13.

7 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 13.

8 ASLA, *Submission 332*, p. 10.

Devolution of financial management to schools and principal control

4.12 Devolution of financial management in schools was a subject addressed in chapter two, with a discussion of the relative merits of school based management versus a more centralised system, from a policy perspective.

4.13 The Lonsdale report for ASLA on school libraries and student achievement asserts that:

Devolution of financial management to schools means that funding for school libraries relies on the resource allocation priorities established by the school community, which might or might not place a high priority on the need for a well-staffed library system.⁹

4.14 The Committee heard from a number of librarians who either feel unsupported by their school principals or that their position in the school is solely dependent on their principal's endorsement and that is subject to significant uncertainty. Below is a selection of comments outlining some experiences:

[My] principal argued that fiction can be obtained 'if anyone is interested' from the council library.¹⁰

At my most recent school the principal had not programmed me any time to administer the library [when I advised them that the allocation should be about 20% of my time I was rebuffed]...I have a shared desk (with the school counsellor and my one day library assistant in a shared corridor).¹¹

It remains at the principal's discretion as to how much time a TL has in the library or if the library is left unmanned to be 'visited' by classes with their teacher. My library has a collection valued at \$645 000. Why should it be 'at the discretion of the principal' to allow these resources to be used for the benefit of the school.¹²

The power imbalance in negotiating is always in the hands of the principal.¹³

9 Lonsdale, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, a report prepared for ASLA, 2003, p. 5.

10 Ms G. Alexander, *Submission 1*, p. 1.

11 Ms C. DeLuca, *Submission 321*, p. 2,

12 CBCA, *Submission 50.1*, p. 18.

13 CBCA, *Submission 50.1*, p. 18.

4.15 The Committee took evidence that school principals generally do as much as they can, within the budgetary and other constraints they find themselves bound by. The CBCA said:

Library conditions are often risked by principals facing economically difficult and often mutually exclusive choices, such as choosing either to fund smaller classes or the position of teacher librarian, both of which would be advantageous to student learning.¹⁴

4.16 The Australian Education Union (AEU) agreed that principals face competing demands and argued that it is too simplistic to say that there are some schools where principals value teacher librarians so they make sure that libraries are well resourced and well staffed, and others where they do not.¹⁵

4.17 Some of the more nuanced reasons principals gave the AEU for not having a qualified teacher librarian in their school include:

- the unavailability of qualified teacher librarians;
- insufficient staffing points to cover a librarian within current staffing arrangements/entitlements/points too tight to maintain a teacher librarian;
- insufficient funding/unable to finance;
- school population being too small to sustain a teacher librarian;
- a teacher librarian not considered a priority due to conflicting pressure from other areas like Learning Assistance;
- and lack of provision in the current staffing points for the amount of administration time required for a teacher librarian to adequately undertake this role.¹⁶

4.18 Several witnesses alluded to the difficult spaces that principals find themselves in, describing school leaders' hands as tied by economic rationalism or staffing ratios.¹⁷

4.19 One teacher librarian from Mackay alluded to the immense pressure that some principals face in Queensland:

14 CBCA, *Submission 50*, p. 7.

15 Australian Education Union, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 29 April 2010, p.48.

16 Australian Education Union, *Submission 113*, p. 6.

17 See for instance, CBCA, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, p. 12, Sunshine Coast Teacher Librarian Network, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, pp. 22-23, Western Australian School Library Association and Professional Teaching Council of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p.7.

To perform for NAPLAN and things like that. There are budgetary pressures and principals trade off positions. I saw it happen in my home town...a full-time TL was traded off for a 0.6 position and then the other 0.4 was used for whatever.¹⁸

- 4.20 A Western Australian education departmental official told members that a great deal is vested in school principals in terms of local decision making but they are very able in that regard:

We would not do that if we were not confident that they have the capacity to make those decisions [about how best to serve their local school community].¹⁹

- 4.21 Ms Hay, Lecturer of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, told the Committee that 'a school principal can make or break a school library program.'²⁰ She had met many supportive principals:

...principals who you want to clone because you can see that they have got that big picture of how the school library can contribute to learning...we had some principals who submitted some really powerful statements about how they see the teacher librarian as being a central partner in learning in the school.²¹

- 4.22 Other witnesses spoke to their positive experiences as well:

I am blessed to have a principal and deputy principal who both share a passion for children's learning and literature. Both treat their staff with utmost respect and professionalism. We are encouraged to use initiative and be innovative. With such support I have implemented a successful whole school reading aloud rewards program and also a successful Home Tutor program for students 3-6 who are struggling or reluctant readers.²²

I was in a fortunate position when I obtained my position at the college I am now with, because their school principal was a teacher librarian, so he had his head round what a teacher librarian can do for a school...We have had two principals since then, and both of them had an open door policy.²³

18 Ms Spillman, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, p. 29.

19 Mr Thompson, Department of Education and Training, WA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 55.

20 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 13.

21 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, CSU, p. 13.

22 Ms L. Horan, *Submission 348*, p. 9.

23 Ms P. Worthington, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 45.

- 4.23 There is no doubt that the principal's experience of teacher librarians and their impact on student learning is one of a number of crucial factors in determining resource allocation. How that perception is shaped is the subject of the next section.

Stereotypical and negative perceptions of teacher librarians

- 4.24 Several witnesses referred to stereotypical old-fashioned images of librarians that continue to prevail, namely:

[someone] elderly, staid, ...a bit of a dragon...not the glamour career that will appeal to the young.²⁴

- 4.25 Witnesses from South Australia indicated that a lot of young people still had an outdated 'cardigan, pearls and bun' image of a librarian and that students they had surveyed, envisaged a quiet life as a teacher librarian, although that was far from the reality.²⁵

- 4.26 The Sunshine Coast Teacher-Librarian Network alluded to another preconceived notion, that teacher librarians do not do all that much:

Whenever you talk about libraries and teacher librarian, people say, 'Oh it's a cushy job...all you do is read books or newspapers or stamp books in and out.'²⁶

Lack of understanding about role and merit of modern teacher librarians

- 4.27 In fact, the Committee learnt that there is little understanding of and appreciation within schools, let alone the broader community, about what a teacher librarian actually does.

- 4.28 One NSW teacher librarian stated:

Most principals, teaching staff, students and parents are unaware of the responsibilities of a teacher librarian. Many of the duties performed by teacher librarians are unseen and undervalued. Students and teachers expect to be able to select and use resources in a library but have no idea of the time and effort it takes to

24 Ms G. Coghlin, *Submission 256*, p. 2.

25 Dr Janisch, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 31.

26 Sunshine Coast Teacher-Librarian Network, *Committee Hansard*, Tuesday, 6 July 2010, p. 29.

develop and maintain a library collection. Many primary school parents are surprised to learn that the teacher librarian actually teaches their children.²⁷

4.29 The Lonsdale review of school libraries supported these sentiments, citing research that showed:

- Minimal contact between parents and the teacher librarian, leading to a lack of awareness about the impact of the school library on their child's learning;
- Teacher librarians are viewed by their teaching colleagues as support resources, rather than fellow-teachers [or collaborators];
- The difficulty in assessing a teacher-librarian's contribution to successful projects; and
- The isolated nature of the teacher-librarian's role, which can make it difficult to establish relationships with other staff in the school.²⁸

4.30 Librarians typically feel undervalued, professionally isolated, unrecognised and constantly asked to justify their existence as school administrators look for greater economies.²⁹

4.31 One school principal stated that classroom teachers had indicated to him they were just as able to teach library and research skills [as teacher librarians], and he had moved away from employing a teacher librarian opting instead for:

...another role which skills children in a way that we have determined they need more than they need so called library skills.³⁰

4.32 Catholic Education Services - Cairns diocese informed the Committee that the majority of its schools had never had a teacher librarian so subsequently they had little idea what role they might play in the new digital era.³¹

4.33 The Catholic Principals Association of WA said there were no job descriptions for teacher librarians within their schools and that individual

27 Ms M. Cooper, *Submission 79*, pp. 4-5.

28 M. Lonsdale, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the research*. Report for ASLA, Australian Council for Education Research, Camberwell, Victoria, 2003, pp. 31-32.

29 See for instance, NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission 345*, p. 3, CBCA, *Submission 296*, Attachment B, p. 7 and Revesby South Public School, *Submission 342*, p. 2.

30 Mr Barns, Catholic Principals Association of WA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 33.

31 Catholic Education Services - Cairns Diocese, *Submission 274*, p. 6.

principals had to seek out information on what a teacher librarian might offer their school.³²

- 4.34 When the Committee asked a state education department official whether they had a position description for a teacher librarian the official replied that he was not sure.³³
- 4.35 The Committee wanted to know whether many school principals are being made aware of the existence of ASLA/ALIA standards for teacher librarians. The President of the School Library Association of Queensland responded that few probably are and that it is the responsibility of the teacher librarian to bring them to the attention of their school principal.³⁴

Underperforming and/or unqualified staff in lieu of teacher librarians

- 4.36 Underscoring the perception that teacher librarians do not make a significant contribution to learning outcomes is anecdotal evidence that principals regularly move underperforming teaching staff into the school library. For instance:

I have had a number of principals tell me they put the worst teachers in the library because that is where they will do the least damage.³⁵

- 4.37 The Australian Council of State School Organisations, the national peak body for Australia's public schools, stressed that 'school libraries should not be the 'dumping ground' for poor performing staff, those unable to cope with classrooms or returning from sick leave.'³⁶
- 4.38 In addition to libraries being staffed by 'underperforming teachers', ALIA indicated that many schools have libraries which are run by paraprofessionals, including library technicians, library officers or parents who do not have the skilled expertise of dual-qualified teacher librarians.³⁷ Several teacher librarians pointed out that this does not augur well for the implementation of the new national curriculum.³⁸

32 Catholic Principals Association of WA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 38.

33 Department of Education and Training, Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p.61.

34 School Library Association of Queensland, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2010, p.10.

35 Ms J. McKenzie, *Submission 156*, p. 8.

36 ACSSO, *Submission 326*, p. 5.

37 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 16.

38 Ms S. Spence, *Submission 124*, p. 3, and Mr J. Herd & Ms H. McGinnis, *Submission 65*, p. 2.

- 4.39 Ms Hay, Lecturer in Information Sciences at the Charles Sturt University, advised that this was a dire problem in Victorian primary schools, where, 'if you are lucky, you might have a qualified library technician.'³⁹
- 4.40 One teacher librarian questioned the acceptability of such practices, not just by principals, but by state education authorities when in no other subject is a teacher allowed to teach outside their expertise.⁴⁰
- 4.41 Several witnesses, including ASLA NSW, praised the NSW Department of Education's policy of mandating that each school library must have an accredited librarian and supporting the retraining of teachers as teacher librarians through the supported Graduate Certificate scheme run in conjunction with Charles Sturt University.⁴¹ However, according to The Hub: Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia, this has not always stopped teacher librarian positions being traded for non-teaching deputies.⁴²

Using teacher librarians as relief teachers and for supervisory duties

- 4.42 Another way that primary school teacher librarians feel undermined or undervalued is when they are asked to supervise classes while the classroom teacher has release from face to face teaching (RFF) so that teachers can fulfil administrative responsibilities. This reduces the scope for teacher librarians to both collaboratively plan and teach with classroom teachers and for the teaching of ICT skills to be embedded into the classroom program.⁴³
- 4.43 A teacher librarian from the Sutherland Shire Teacher Librarian Network commented:
- At our school 16 out of 17 teacher librarian classes are timetabled during the classroom teacher's RFF. This means minimum collaboration between the teacher librarian and teachers.⁴⁴
- 4.44 The increase in RFF by teacher librarians represents a cultural shift from the past:

39 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p.12.

40 Ms J. Osborne, *Submission 207*, p.4.

41 ASLA NSW, *Submission 347*, p. 3.

42 The Hub, *Submission 104*, p. 4.

43 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 3.

44 Sutherland Shire Teacher Librarian Network, *Submission 100*, p. 4.

...for over 22 years I did no or minimum RFF, now, in my primary school I do 32 classes or 100% RFF, this has had a huge impact on students, on teachers, on learning programs.⁴⁵

4.45 The Committee learnt that teacher librarians are also sometimes used to take subject classes or as de-facto computer teachers.⁴⁶

4.46 In secondary schools, teacher librarians are routinely expected to accommodate and supervise or 'babysit' senior students having study periods, often during their administration time, allocated breaks and while teaching lessons to other students.⁴⁷

4.47 These usages of teacher librarians discourage prospective enthusiastic teacher librarians:

Young, vital, constructive, creative teachers with visions for leading the school's information services into the future will hardly be attracted to embark on special training for simply a 'relief from face-to-face job.'⁴⁸

4.48 Having teacher librarians teach separate library classes that have little connection with the classroom curriculum is not considered the best use of skilled information specialists:

You do not take 80-90% of the time that a teacher librarian has in their position and expect them to do that...if you want relief from face-to-face you employ a casual...⁴⁹

4.49 ASLA NSW summarised:

These additional duties rob the teacher librarians of the time they need to collaborate with teachers, team teach with teachers [and] assist students and teachers with their research and reading needs.⁵⁰

4.50 The NSW Department of Education agreed that supervisory functions and release from face-to-face responsibilities can compromise the core, flexible role of teacher librarians.⁵¹

45 CBCA, *Submission 296*, attachment 2, p. 20.

46 Mrs. L. Skinner, *Submission 334*, p. 8.

47 Sutherland Shire Teacher-Librarian Network, *Submission 100*, p. 4 and CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 12.

48 Ms M. Roc, *Submission 208*, p. 5.

49 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, 3 June 2010, p. 12.

50 ASLA NSW, *Submission 347*, p. 4.

51 NSW Department of Education, *Submission 112*, p. 4.

- 4.51 ASLA ACT said that the reality was that so many conflicting demands are made on the time and money of the school (with priority given to having teachers in classrooms) that teacher librarians invariably end up assuming a lesser role. The reality is that teacher librarians are considered 'a service, a support and additional.'⁵²
- 4.52 The Committee was informed that these negative stereotypes are, slowly, changing for the better,⁵³ but much more work remains to be done in overcoming them.
- 4.53 Interestingly, these negative stereotypes do not exist in the independent school sector, where there are in fact quite positive perceptions of teacher librarians. This is especially the case in the independent secondary schools. This sector appears to regard teacher librarians highly with well-resourced, professionally staffed library resource centres a real drawcard for independent schools:

They tie academic achievement very closely to literacy and numeracy and to a well stocked, well-staffed library. Most independent schools use their library as a major selling point.⁵⁴

Inadequacy of technical and clerical support

- 4.54 Another way that teacher librarians feel undermined is the lack of or diminished support from library technicians, computer technicians and clerical assistants or library officers. Friends of Libraries Australia stated:

There is a need to ensure that schools employ more paraprofessional library technicians to ensure that teacher librarians do not have their time usurped by library collection management, administration, operational and technology support requirements – as well as by school administration expectations of their substitution for absent classroom teachers.⁵⁵

- 4.55 One teacher librarian commented that, were it not for the assistance of library support staff, jobs like book covering, repairing, shelving and setting up book displays would never get done.⁵⁶

52 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 11.

53 See Ms B. Voigt, *Submission 135*, p. 6 and Ms G. Coghlin, *Submission 256*, p. 2.

54 Ms Combes, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 7 and Ms Nicholls, CBCA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 20.

55 Friends of Libraries Australia, *Submission 319*, p. 2.

56 Ms K. Garson, *Submission 185*, p. 3.

- 4.56 The NSW Teachers Federation noted that provision of support staff for school libraries is shrinking.⁵⁷ Many primary schools have no clerical assistance.⁵⁸
- 4.57 It seems that many school libraries are increasingly relying on the generosity of parent volunteers (see chapter five).
- 4.58 The Committee heard that not having sufficient additional support impacts on the quality of programs and services that a teacher librarian can provide.⁵⁹
- 4.59 DEEWR advised that the Teacher Quality National Partnership program has a focus on paraprofessionals in schools, including library technical support roles:

Once again, several jurisdictions are looking more generally at how the support staff in schools can support teachers in their role or undertake greater responsibility. So it is more that the industrial arrangements, pay scales and the qualification requirements are being looked at. It is more a structural general issue about the workforce that is being worked through rather than teacher librarians specifically.⁶⁰

Demographic of the workforce

- 4.60 ASLA stated that teacher librarians are an ageing population with serious issues associated with succession planning and sustainability.⁶¹
- 4.61 The ASLA School Libraries Research Project snapshot of Australian teacher librarians shows that teacher librarianship is an overwhelmingly female occupation comprised of an ageing demographic with almost 90 per cent of the survey group aged 40+ years, almost 80 per cent aged 45+ years, 55 per cent aged 55+ years and 10 per cent aged 60+ years. Only three per cent are younger than 30 years.⁶²

57 NSW Teachers Federation, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 19.

58 Ms Nethery, *Submission 4*, p. 3.

59 Illawarra School Libraries Association, *Submission 107*, p. 7 and Education Services Australia, *Submission 119*, p. 4.

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

61 ASLA, *Submission 332*, p. 16.

62 B. Combes, *Australian School Libraries Research Project: A Snapshot of Australia Teacher Librarians*, 2008, referred to in Australian Education Union, *Submission 113*, p. 9.

- 4.62 Ms Hay corroborated that the majority of her students at Charles Sturt University are female (a trend indicative of teaching in primary schools in general) and that teachers often do not come to the discipline of teacher librarianship until their late 30s or early 40s. This invariably means that they only have about 15 years of work in schools. There is, she said, a real need to attract younger people, (which is not to say that those librarians in their 40s and 50s do not have energy or enthusiasm).⁶³
- 4.63 The Committee understands that the ageing demographic of the teacher librarian cohort is reflective of a broader trend, which is the ageing population in general: 'we have a lot of teachers who are nearing retirement.'⁶⁴
- 4.64 Members heard that there are some older teacher librarians who are less adept at or willing to teach new ICT.⁶⁵
- 4.65 Some strategies have been put in place to redress the age issue, particularly in NSW, and these are meeting with some success. For instance, the NSW Government currently provides a Teacher Librarian Retraining Program, in partnership with Charles Sturt University, which targets graduates. The program has been developed to meet the demand for teacher librarians, and provides support for teachers to undertake a 12 month program of part-time post-graduate study by distance education which leads to the Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship.⁶⁶
- 4.66 Since its inception, from 2003 to 2009, 287 teachers in NSW public schools have completed teacher librarian studies through this program. It is anticipated that a further 48 will complete the program by the end of 2010.⁶⁷
- 4.67 Ms Hay noted that a number of younger teachers are now coming through the graduate certificate teacher librarianship program.⁶⁸ While this is a positive start, she pointed out that the graduate certificate does not equate with the full teacher librarian qualification.⁶⁹
- 4.68 In order to try to capture the school leaver market, which had hitherto been untapped, CSU's Faculty of Education has also recently developed a five year undergraduate Bachelor of Education course that specialises in
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63 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, 3 June 2010, p. 1 and p. 14.

64 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 7.

65 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 7.

66 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission 112*, p. 4.

67 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission 112*, p. 4.

68 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 8.

69 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 8.

K-12 middle schooling, and is negotiating a dedicated teacher librarian strand being built into it. Students complete eight subjects in library and information management and teacher librarianship in their 3rd and 5th years of study. This is, however, a new program with the first batch of teacher librarian graduates not due to appear until 2015/2016. The value of this program lies in the long-term, 'as a longer term strategy for bringing new blood into the profession.'⁷⁰

Decline in teacher librarians courses and places for students

- 4.69 ASLA advised that the number of tertiary institutions offering librarianship courses has diminished over the past two decades, making it much harder to access and gain qualifications.⁷¹
- 4.70 CBCA NSW said that there used to be some 15 courses in Australia from which to gain school library qualifications.⁷²
- 4.71 The ASLA website describes the courses that are currently available for students to pursue teacher librarianship studies at the following five universities: Charles Sturt University (CSU); Edith Cowan University (ECU); Queensland University of Technology (QUT); University of South Australia and University of Tasmania.⁷³
- 4.72 Only three universities (CSU, ECU and QUT) offer postgraduate qualifications for teacher librarians at graduate diploma and masters level courses. These graduate courses are only available by distance education. Normally a teaching qualification, sometimes with recognised teaching experience, is an entry prerequisite.⁷⁴ Teachers thus trained to be teacher librarians are referred to as 'dual qualified'.
- 4.73 Ms Hay elaborated on the courses available at CSU. She described the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) as the principal or flagship course. The Masters is targeted to meet the needs of teachers who wish to

70 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 3.

71 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 11.

72 CBCA NSW, *Submission 103*, p. 2.

73 ASLA, 'Courses for Teacher Librarianship Offered across Australia,' 3 November 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/courses>>.

74 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 16.

become teacher librarians and also practising teacher librarians without a full specialist qualification in teacher librarianship.⁷⁵

- 4.74 The Masters degree at CSU comprises eight subjects completed by distance education coursework and is normally undertaken part-time over two years. The course is open to qualified teachers holding a Bachelor of Education or equivalent.⁷⁶ Ms Hay observed that increasingly students are taking longer than the two-year period to complete their training, quite often preferring to do just one subject per semester. This is usually because they are working full-time and juggling family or other commitments. The upshot is that 'the numbers that are graduating do not look as good as the numbers commencing studies.'⁷⁷
- 4.75 A Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship is also offered at CSU.⁷⁸ The NSW Department of Education and Training supports government school graduate teachers to gain a base level qualification in teacher librarianship with this course. Ms Hay explained that the graduate certificate is an intermediate step:
- This is designed to kick-start their training as a teacher librarian, with the idea that these students return to complete the remaining four subjects to gain their full qualification...[which is] recognised by ALIA as a full library and information qualification.⁷⁹
- 4.76 ECU offers a post-graduate Diploma of Education that is eight units and the equal of the CSU coursework masters.⁸⁰
- 4.77 QUT offers a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship). The course is offered online and incorporates eight units of study with 60 hours of Situated Professional Practice. The course duration is one year full-time, two years part-time. Like the Master of Education at CSU, the entry requirement is an appropriate Bachelor of Education degree and students must be qualified teachers.⁸¹

75 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, CSU, p. 1.

76 ASLA, 'Courses for Teacher Librarianship Offered across Australia,' 3 November 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/courses/>>.

77 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 1.

78 ASLA, 'Courses for Teacher Librarianship Offered across Australia,' 3 November 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/courses/>>.

79 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 2.

80 Ms Combes, ECU, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 9.

81 ASLA, 'Courses for Teacher Librarianship Offered across Australia,' 3 November 2009, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/courses/>>.

- 4.78 Northern Territory witnesses described how the territory's only teacher library qualification, the Charles Darwin University's Bachelor of Library and Information Studies, was recently replaced with a library technician qualification.⁸²
- 4.79 ASLA ACT referred to the impact of a lack of local teacher librarian courses physically situated in the ACT, namely:
- That we are likely to be in a situation within the next five years where few students will have access to the services of a trained librarian [from the ACT].⁸³
- 4.80 Similarly, the School Library Association of Victoria lamented the discontinuation of teacher librarian courses that existed there until the mid 90s, giving the message to those interested in a career in the library and information industry that becoming a teacher librarian is not an option.⁸⁴
- 4.81 A representative from the NT Department of Education and Training said that the reason why the course had been dropped at Charles Darwin University [and in fact everywhere] was because the university was not able to get a financial return for the courses due to a decline in student numbers, so 'it is just not going to run [a course] no matter how much we ask.'⁸⁵
- 4.82 DEEWR stated that the supply and demand for university courses is a matter for the tertiary sector and not for the Government to determine.⁸⁶

Lack of placements for teacher librarian graduate students and mandating teacher librarians in schools

It costs \$10 000 of your own money to get that master's degree....to have no guarantee of a job at the end of it is a major issue.⁸⁷

- 4.83 Despite apparent teacher librarian shortages, the Committee heard that there are few job prospects or little job security for teacher librarian graduates, with teacher librarian jobs being the first to go when there are funding problems.⁸⁸

82 Ms Denniss, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 3 July 2010, p. 12.

83 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 3.

84 School Library Association of Victoria, *Submission 114*, p. 15.

85 Mr Green, Department of Education and Training, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 29.

86 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, pp. 10-11.

87 ASLA Tasmania, *Committee Hansard*, Tasmania, 30 April 2010, p. 6.

88 ASLA Tasmania, *Committee Hansard*, Tasmania, 30 April 2010, p. 6.

- 4.84 ASLA Tasmania said that there needs to be a dedicated allocation for teacher librarians in schools that is outside the staffing formula to redress the situation.⁸⁹
- 4.85 ALIA's members also urged the Commonwealth Government to redress the shortage by endorsing the principle of having 'a teacher librarian in every school.'⁹⁰
- 4.86 It is worth restating that the responsibility for determining staffing allocations for schools, including school libraries, rests with various education authorities across jurisdictions and not the Commonwealth Government.
- 4.87 As mentioned in chapter three, states have their own formulas for teacher librarians at the secondary school level. NSW has a formula to ensure that there is a teacher librarian presence in all its primary and secondary schools.

Non-uniformity of teacher qualifications and requirements for working in a school library

- 4.88 Another issue brought to the attention of the Committee was the non-uniformity between qualifications for teacher librarians, namely that one could obtain a Masters from some universities in the same time that it takes to complete a graduate diploma in others.
- 4.89 For instance, it is unclear why the ECU graduate diploma could not be upgraded to a Masters in order to make it a more attractive qualification to prospective students.
- 4.90 Ms Combes of ECU told the Committee that there were a number of reasons why this had not occurred, but ultimately, her students come out with a diploma that is exactly the same as the CSU masters degree, if not more technical than the CSU qualification. The ECU degree is also equivalent to the QUT masters accreditation. Ms Combes said that the graduate diploma, as it stands, offers students maximum flexibility so that that graduates are highly sought after in the public library sectors as children's librarians.⁹¹

89 ASLA Tasmania, *Committee Hansard*, Tasmania, 30 April 2010, p. 6.

90 ALIA, *Submission 322.1*, p. 2.

91 Ms Combes, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, pp. 9-10.

4.91 The different states and territories also have different qualification requirements for the staff working in their school libraries. NSW is the only state that mandates the use of dual qualified staff.

More flexible pathways into the profession

4.92 ASLA pointed to a number of determinants and obstacles that prospective students face when commencing teacher librarianship qualifications. In addition to the uncertainty concerning future job prospects, enrolment by distance education is not an attractive option for everyone; high fees that may require students to continue working at the same time as they are studying; and employers may not support or recognise their additional qualifications.⁹²

4.93 ASLA ACT made a number of suggestions regarding encouraging people to enter the profession. These included:

- providing access to flexible teacher librarian courses that are structured around less busy professional times in the teaching year;
- offering targeted scholarships to assist teachers or librarians to meet the cost of undertaking further study to attain the dual qualification of a teacher librarian;
- providing opportunities for teachers to work in tandem alongside an existing teacher librarian for a period of time to gain a greater understanding of the position and to see if that is something they would like to pursue as a career path; and,
- providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to complete a unit of studies related to school libraries and information literacy.⁹³

4.94 Other witnesses supported the reinstatement of undergraduate courses such as those offered years ago in NSW and WA.⁹⁴ The Western Association of Teacher Librarians NSW said that 'this type of course would complement the post-graduate course which attracts more mature age teachers.'⁹⁵

92 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 11.

93 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2010, p. 3.

94 Western Association of Teacher Librarians NSW, *Submission 105*, p. 2 and CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 9.

95 Western Association of Teacher Librarians NSW, *Submission 105*, p. 2.

- 4.95 However, Dr Bales, President of the Australian School Library Association in Tasmania, endorsed the current means of gaining teacher librarian qualifications, namely that students undertake post-graduate studies rather than expanding undergraduate courses:

To be an effective teacher librarian you need teaching experience, which means that you need a degree.⁹⁶

Scholarships

- 4.96 ALIA emphasised the need for additional scholarships to support education options for qualified librarians to be able to become qualified teacher librarians with minimum disruption so that vacancies can be filled.⁹⁷
- 4.97 A number of witnesses, including ASLA and the Joint Use Libraries Association, endorsed the NSW/CSU model where student teachers are given financial support to complete a graduate certificate in teacher librarianship⁹⁸ and which is, according to CSU, yielding results. The NSW Department of Education and Training advised that 287 public school teachers in NSW had completed the course from 2003-09 and a further 48 were expected to complete the program in 2010.⁹⁹
- 4.98 Brisbane Catholic Education described scholarships for teachers in its schools to complete the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) program at QUT in order to redress its teacher shortages:
- We have a long running sponsorship program where we identify needs in our schools. This became a need. We are an ageing population and in the last couple of years when we have sought suitable teacher librarians, we have noticed that the pool has become smaller....it is a popular course.¹⁰⁰
- 4.99 In 2009 and 2010, 36 scholarships were offered by Brisbane Catholic Education and a further round will be offered for students commencing courses in 2011.¹⁰¹

96 Dr Bales, *Committee Hansard*, Hobart, 30 April 2010, p. 10.

97 ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 7.

98 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 17, and Joint Use Libraries Association, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 11.

99 NSW Department Education and Training, *Submission 112*, p. 4.

100 Brisbane Catholic Education, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, p. 51.

101 Brisbane Catholic Education, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 July 2010, p. 54.

Broadening teaching opportunities in general

4.100 DEEWR agreed that addressing these issues and 'expanding pathways into teaching is very important.' The Department advised the Committee that the new national professional standards for teachers would encourage students who were beginning their teaching career to progress into specialities like teacher librarianship and be recompensed accordingly.¹⁰²

4.101 Whilst teacher librarians courses are a matter for universities to determine and not the Commonwealth, DEEWR advised of a number of Commonwealth initiatives that seek to broaden teaching opportunities:

The overall spirit of the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership is to broaden the pathways into teaching from the traditional entry points, particularly through employment based programs. 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 traditionally have not thought of going into teaching and also reforming the methodology for how teaching can occur.¹⁰³

4.102 DEEWR indicated that there is currently no specific program in existence (at the Commonwealth, state or territory level) for facilitating greater entry into teacher librarianship.¹⁰⁴

4.103 Under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership work is being done to address workforce shortages identified by employers, namely paraprofessionals and support staff, including library technical support.¹⁰⁵

4.104 DEEWR stressed that the changes are:

Focused more on structural reforms across the entire workforce rather than on individual strategies that might look particularly at teacher librarians [or indeed any other specialty teacher].¹⁰⁶

4.105 ASLA noted that it advises potential students on ways to enter the profession and requires them to be qualified teachers before undertaking a Graduate Diploma of Education. At the same time ASLA continues to explore other pathways into the profession:

102 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 16.

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

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

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

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

Of course, we are always trying to look at exploring different ways of bringing people through from, say, the paraprofessional level on a pathway of library technician to librarian and into teaching.¹⁰⁷

Limited professional development

4.106 The Australian School Libraries Research Project on teacher librarians provides statistics and commentary on the level of professional development (PD) activities being undertaken by teacher librarians in government and non-government schools.¹⁰⁸ The study surveyed 863 teacher librarians from all states and territories and found:

that teacher librarians are generally a pro-active and engaged group with regard to accessing and participating in PD. However greater access and participating can only benefit the group as a whole.¹⁰⁹

4.107 The study found that some 45–50 per cent of teacher librarians are actively engaged in PD activities ranging from conferences, outside school PD and publishing in professional journals.¹¹⁰

4.108 About a third of the sample group, 30.5 per cent, did not participate in or appear to have access to PD activity. Those with the lowest participation rates were from Christian, Catholic or schools designated as Other.¹¹¹

4.109 About half of the teacher librarians surveyed accessed a range of electronic PD resources (including OZTLNet, a list community hosted by CSU¹¹² for information professionals in Australian schools). However, approximately

107 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 16.

108 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

109 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

110 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

111 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

112 Centre for Studies in Teacher Librarianship, 'OZTL_NET: A list community for information professionals in Australia, 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <http://www.csu.edu.au/cstl/oztl_net/>.

19 per cent of teacher librarians reported using no form of online PD resources.¹¹³

- 4.110 There are discrepancies between the states. For instance, the lowest participation rates in PD are in WA and VIC. The ACT and Tasmania have the highest participation rates. Teacher librarians in ACT, QLD and SA are less likely than the other states and territories to access PD using electronic resources.¹¹⁴ Even in NSW, where teacher librarians are said to average 9-12 days of PD, teacher librarians commonly report receiving less.¹¹⁵
- 4.111 The Committee sought to glean some of the reasons behind the lack of PD occurring and to gain a fuller picture of the situation in its entirety. It struck members that it was not so much that teacher librarians did not seek out PD activities - some were in fact very active - but rather that it is only available on an ad hoc basis, with disparities experienced across Australian jurisdictions. Some schools support their teacher librarians to attend conferences, but other teacher librarians need to pay for their own PD and participate on their days off.¹¹⁶ One teacher librarian stated that her principal told her, 'she had no money left in the professional development budget.'¹¹⁷ In some cases teacher librarians have been turned away from courses because the course provider does not have the capacity to cater for them.¹¹⁸ It can also be difficult for teacher librarians to take a day away from their school (or schools, if they happen to be working in more than one) to attend PD as it can mean that classroom teachers miss out on having their RFF.¹¹⁹
- 4.112 ALIA and ASLA highlighted the work they do in promoting PD:
- To identify and promote continuous improvement to ensure the library and information profession is recognised as strong, vibrant and responsive to clients' changing needs.¹²⁰

113 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

114 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

115 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission 345*, p. 6.

116 AISWA Libraries Inc, *Submission 181.1*, p. 12 and Ms Dianne Ridley, *Submission 272*, p. 2.

117 Ms C. Owen, *Submission 320*, p. 7.

118 Mrs Worthington, AISWA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 47.

119 Ms N. Jackson, *Submission 131*, p. 4.

120 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 17.

- 4.113 ALIA runs a PD scheme, professional development workshops and seminars organised by the ALIA Schools Group.¹²¹
- 4.114 ALIA advised that professional development should be a shared responsibility between teacher librarians, employers and trainers to ensure that teacher librarians have opportunities to update skills and enhance services.¹²²
- 4.115 Smaller associations like The Western Association of Teacher Librarians NSW (WATL) and Illawarra School Libraries Association provided evidence of a strong commitment to PD activities.
- 4.116 WATL described the conference it runs for teacher librarians in the region, saying that it is often the only PD available for their teacher librarians who travel great distances to attend from regional and remote areas. WATL expressed concern about the sustainability of this sort of course, which is reliant on the good will and hard work of committee members, many of whom are approaching retirement age.¹²³
- 4.117 The Illawarra School Libraries Association similarly depends on the generosity of volunteers to run its courses and an ability to run programs on very tight budgets.¹²⁴
- 4.118 A NT teacher librarian described the only PD she had received as biennial days that she and a colleague had arranged themselves to get together with other teacher librarians from government and private schools across the Top End.¹²⁵
- 4.119 Several witnesses emphasised how important PD is for teacher librarians in today's environment with new technologies and online resources coming on board. ALIA noted that Commonwealth Government schemes like the DER computer fund rollout and having the new national curriculum available online, will necessitate additional training.¹²⁶
- 4.120 As mentioned in chapter two, DEEWR advised that government schemes like the Digital Education Revolution (DER) do have training components built into them.
- 4.121 The Committee agrees that appropriate training should accompany Commonwealth Government reform rollouts. The Committee
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121 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 17.

122 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 17.

123 WATL, *Submission 105*, p. 3.

124 Illawarra School Libraries Association, *Submission 107*, p. 8.

125 Ms Short, *Submission 86*, p. 4.

126 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 17.

acknowledges that this is to occur with the DER rollout and recommends similar for the new national curriculum rollout.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the rollout of the new national curriculum, which is to be made available online, include a component of training for teacher librarians.

Limited promotional opportunities

4.122 In addition to limited PD opportunities, teacher librarians stated that there is little scope to move up in the school hierarchy. Comments on this matter included:

There are few promotion possibilities for teacher librarians within government schools...

The lack of promotion opportunity in primary school as we are nearly all part time.

The profession requires the [person] in the role to exhibit leadership, to integrate technology applications into the curriculum, and help teachers to do this, but is rarely seen as a stepping stone to promotion.¹²⁷

4.123 As discussed in chapter three, it is largely incumbent on teacher librarians to pursue their own leadership opportunities within their schools.

Lack of national data on staffing situation

It would be useful to have an accurate snapshot of what is currently happening around the country in regard to school staffing.¹²⁸

We urgently need to collect national data, rather than bumbling along on anecdotal information. The current picture is not a very

127 CBCA, *Submission 296*, Attachment C, p. 5.

128 M. Lonsdale, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 32, 2003.

positive one and the need to review this in order to prepare for appropriate future planning is critical.¹²⁹

- 4.124 Anecdotal evidence from around the country indicated that libraries are not being staffed by qualified teacher librarians to the same level that they were in the past. Some new primary schools will not have a library and other new libraries will merely be staffed by library technicians. All libraries and staff appear to have more asked of them than in the past, with a greater administrative burden placed on them and more students per staff member.¹³⁰
- 4.125 One of the dominant themes that emerged is a lack of hard data, especially collated at the national level relating to staffing issues, specifically determining the actual numbers of teacher librarians in Australian schools, their qualifications, and part-time/full-time status).
- 4.126 ASLA provided a rough estimate, saying that there is a shortage of around 2 500 or 3 000 teacher librarians.¹³¹
- 4.127 ASLA stated that the shortage of teacher librarians in Australian schools was of greatest concern in primary schools:
- It would be fair to say that in secondary schools Australia wide there are teacher librarians. The issue is more in the primary sector.¹³²
- 4.128 DEEWR acknowledged upfront the difficulties of gathering statistics:
- A lack of systematically aggregated national data makes it difficult to gain an accurate picture of national trends in Australia in relation to the staffing of school libraries.¹³³
- 4.129 This also appeared to be the case at the state and territory level too. The NT Department of Education could only provide 'a very rough figure' for how many teacher librarians were currently employed at primary schools.¹³⁴
- 4.130 Similarly, the Tasmanian Department of Education could not provide an exact number of teacher librarians:

129 Ms Pickersgill, *Submission 182*, p. 5.

130 Ms Denniss, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, pp. 1-3.

131 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, pp. 12-13.

132 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 4.

133 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 11.

134 NT Department of Education and Training, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 29

I believe there are 19, all part-time. That is not definitive; we were unable to extract that from our HR data. That is based on a phone around.¹³⁵

- 4.131 The Committee asked DEEWR to supply it with figures of the numbers of teacher librarians throughout the country. DEEWR advised that a 2006-2007 survey *Staff in Australian Schools* provided some data on primary but not secondary schools.¹³⁶
- 4.132 According to that survey, there were approximately 6 300 fully qualified primary specialist teacher librarians and an additional 12 000-plus primary teachers who had undertaken some specialist library training.¹³⁷
- 4.133 DEEWR advised that the survey is about to be repeated (focusing on demographics and supply and demand, and picking up on trends as a result of the BER), with the data to be made available in early 2011.¹³⁸ DEEWR later confirmed that the staff survey was completed in late 2010 but that the data would not be made available until mid 2011.¹³⁹
- 4.134 DEEWR expanded on how the survey was conducted:
- There is a random selection of schools and all the staff within that school is invited to respond to the survey. The principal has a specific survey that has quite a strong focus on supply and demand issues across all subject areas relevant to that particular school and all teachers are invited to participate. The sort of data that is gathered includes age range, intention to retire, intention to continue teaching and seek promotion so that collectively we can have a view about the whole workforce data. It does include opportunities for specialist areas such as the teacher librarian to be highlighted if they are in fact issues that are emerging – that is, from a schools’ perspective.¹⁴⁰
- 4.135 The Department added that data will be sought in relation to teachers and teacher librarians’ employment status, type of employment and time fraction employed:

135 Tasmanian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Hobart, 30 April 2010. p. 68.

136 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 9.

137 DEEWR, *Submission 344*, p. 11.

138 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2010, p. 9.

139 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 20.

140 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 20.

These categories are likely to include contract and permanent teaching positions for teachers, including specialist teacher librarians.¹⁴¹

- 4.136 The 2008 Combes report, *The Australian School Libraries Research Project Report 1: A snapshot of Australian school libraries and teacher librarians*, provided a breakdown of school library staffing by state. Ms Combes' research showed that large numbers of schools in Tasmania, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia had no or limited (less than 1.0 full-time equivalent) professional staff in their libraries. In those states professional staff are most likely to be replaced by library technicians or library officers. In total, some 50 per cent of schools in the survey had no professional staff or less than one full-time equivalent working in their library. The independent schools are generally better staffed than government schools.¹⁴²
- 4.137 Other studies on staffing levels, such as that undertaken by the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and the Western Australian School Library Association, sought responses from school libraries in Western Australia on issues they had pertaining to funding and staffing.¹⁴³
- 4.138 ASLA explained how difficult it is to establish a clear picture of the current staffing situation when there are inconsistencies in the way that data is collected across sectors and jurisdictions:

It is very difficult when we are dealing with the way that the data is collected...across the various government and non-government agencies...When we are looking at national school statistics, the statistics basically indicate that teachers are lumped in together...it is very difficult to identify the number of people who are actually employed in schools in the capacity of a teacher librarian...The other inconsistency is in the staffing allocation formulas across schools and how they allocate teacher librarian staffing to the particular primary or secondary school sectors. That is an area which causes confusion, particularly with the mobility of the

141 DEEWR, *Submission 344.2*, p. 1.

142 B. Combes, 'Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1,' 2008, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/report/teacher-librarians/profdev.html>>.

143 Mrs Worthington, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 July 2010, p. 42.

profession across various jurisdictions and various states and territories.¹⁴⁴

- 4.139 ALIA proposed that a thorough workforce gap analysis of teacher librarians be undertaken across Australia:

We would like to develop the research and evidence to be able to give a better picture of what is happening and where the gaps are—that is, where teacher librarians are required and they are not able to fill those positions.¹⁴⁵

- 4.140 The Committee agrees that there is a need to undertake research into the teacher librarian workforce. Without an adequate evidence base it is difficult to make appropriate recommendations to redress the staffing level issues.

- 4.141 DEEWR told the Committee that the Commonwealth Government is now working collaboratively with states and territories to produce a Workforce Dataset of the teaching profession that will improve knowledge of workforce gaps:

This is being conducted through the MCEETYA ministerial council processes and senior officers committee. The process requires states and territories to give up and share their information.¹⁴⁶

- 4.142 DEEWR pointed out that supply and demand trends have been estimated in the past but those trends are not always an accurate indication of the future. One example is the recent global financial crisis, which resulted in more teachers than predicted staying in their jobs. Collecting data may not necessarily predict whether there will be shortages of teachers.¹⁴⁷

- 4.143 DEEWR emphasised that the 2006/2007 Survey of Staff in Australian Schools did not indicate that there was a shortage in the teacher librarian sector at that time.¹⁴⁸

- 4.144 The Committee believes that once the workforce dataset has been collated, further research and analysis can help to determine where workforce gaps exist across Australian schools.

- 4.145 One of the other data collection problems brought to the Committee's attention is that whilst the numbers of teachers are collated nationally

144 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 4.

145 ALIA, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 4.

146 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 20.

147 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 21.

148 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 20.

(through each state's registration processes), there is no way to determine how many teachers there are in a given speciality, including teacher librarians:

Every state in this country registers people as a teacher, including a principal. There is no way that you can pull from that national statistical data who is actually a specialist teacher.¹⁴⁹

- 4.146 ASLA suggested that the absence of breakdown data may have serious ramifications for the delivery of the national curriculum.¹⁵⁰
- 4.147 The Committee considers that this information is vital. Discussion should take place between the Commonwealth and states and territories on ways to collect better data on specialist teachers.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government commission a thorough workforce gap analysis of teacher librarians across Australian schools.

Defining the role of a school library and teacher librarian in 21st century

- 4.148 The issue of whether 'librarian' is an apt descriptor for the role of teacher librarians in the modern age was one raised earlier in this chapter. Similarly, suggestions were made in regard to rebranding school library facilities as, in one case, to a 'series of resource pods.'¹⁵¹ ASLA ACT noted:

We have gone from resource centre to learning centre, and now we are back to libraries.....people just still call it the library.¹⁵²

- 4.149 Ms Hay suggested that 'the issue was not with the names per se, but ownership of the position:' however, the naming or labelling of librarians

149 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 12.

150 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 12.

151 Mr Green, Department of Education and Training, NT, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 21.

152 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 10.

and libraries was, she said, an interesting issue and perhaps one that students and teachers should be engaged in a dialogue about.¹⁵³

- 4.150 The notion of school libraries and teacher librarians making themselves relevant in a changing world was one repeatedly raised by many witnesses during the course of the inquiry. The CBCA echoed the sentiment of many when it iterated that:

Libraries must move with the times...respond to the new demands of curriculum and students and provide as much new technology as possible.¹⁵⁴

- 4.151 ASLA ACT added, 'maybe what we have to do is promote that libraries are not just books anymore.'¹⁵⁵

- 4.152 At the same time, CBCA warned that teacher librarians should not just become computer specialists:

...a teacher librarian has to be balanced, has to have both those skills and has to be able to deliver both the literature and technology.¹⁵⁶

- 4.153 The Committee queried why it was apparently so difficult to attract younger people into the profession. The Committee believes that there is scope for DEEWR, together with other stakeholders, including state and territory education authorities and the library associations, to conduct a range of forums across the country with interested parties, and relevant stakeholders about what a contemporary school library and teacher librarian does and should do in a 21st century learning environment.

153 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 6.

154 CBCA, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 29.

155 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 10.

156 CBCA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 20.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, establish a national dialogue, including with tertiary providers, on the role of teacher librarians today in schools and into the future. The dialogue should include an examination of the adequacy of the pathways into the profession and ongoing training requirements.

Repositioning the status of teacher librarians in Australia

4.154 A number of Australian teacher librarians indicated that they had been attracted to working overseas, especially in school libraries in Asia, where they are more highly valued. One teacher librarian described his personal situation:

I have been a teacher librarian for five years, but already in that time have found that I have needed to move offshore for work. The role of a teacher librarian is diminishing in Australia and with low pay and conditions, I find it much better to work overseas – where this profession is rewarded both professionally and financially.¹⁵⁷

4.155 ASLA said that teacher librarians are increasingly attracted to working in libraries other than school libraries, such as state libraries or the National Library, where they feel they are more valued.¹⁵⁸

4.156 Witnesses indicated that if conditions were to improve expatriate librarians might be encouraged to return to work in Australian school libraries.¹⁵⁹

4.157 Chapter three referred to the scope for teacher librarians to self promote and the peak library bodies to demonstrate the links between good teacher librarians and student achievement. State and territory education authorities also have a role to play.

4.158 Another way to elevate the status of teacher librarianship is to establish more chairs of teacher librarianship in universities. Dr Hanisch, a

157 Mr Farr, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

158 ASLA, Committee Hansard, Sydney, 28 April 2010, pp. 9-10.

159 See for instance, Mr Farr, *Submission 8*, and Ms M. Kittson, *Submission 197*.

researcher from South Australia, noted that there were too few professors of library and information management in existence. Additional professors may raise the profile and increase the research being undertaken in the field.¹⁶⁰

Marketing campaigns at state and territory education authorities level

- 4.159 There appeared to be limited marketing campaigns for the purpose of recruiting teacher librarians occurring at the state and territory government level.
- 4.160 South Australian representatives said that there were no obvious recruitment procedures in place in their state to encourage anyone into the profession.¹⁶¹
- 4.161 Mr Hagan, of the New South Wales Primary Principals Association, told the Committee that the most recent NSW general library policy document was some 23 years old and in need of renewal, especially in relation to new technology.¹⁶²

160 Dr Hanisch, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 30.

161 Joint Use Libraries Association, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 11.

162 NSW Primary Principals Association, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 20.

