

20 February 2012

Education and Training Workforce: Schools Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic 8003

Dear Commissioners

The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) is pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Productivity Commission Draft Research Report: Schools Workforce.

Teacher librarians have a key role in the school workforce and are supported by non-teaching personnel and parent volunteers in the library of every school community.

1. Data

ASLA strongly supports recommendation 5.1 for the commission of a longitudinal data collection. This recommendation aligns with two recommendations from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment report, *School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia* (2011).

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/schoollibraries/index.htm

These are as follows:

“Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority include statistical information about the breakdown of all specialist teachers, including teacher librarians, on the My School website.”

“Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government initiate an Australian-based longitudinal study into the links between library programs, literacy (including digital literacy) and student achievement, including their impact on improving outcomes for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.”

The inclusion of graduating teacher librarians in the sample to follow for five years will assist in the identification of the core knowledge, skills and capabilities these personnel bring to the teaching and learning delivery and support for the school community. Data of this nature will help to better inform employing authorities and principals.

2. Staffing

In addition to a recommendation linked to graduate training it is essential to consider re-training of teachers into specialist fields of work to meet a future workforce scenario. ASLA would endorse the availability of Commonwealth or State funded scholarships for re-training programs in teacher librarianship. Recommendation 9 from the *School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia* report refers to this by stating the need to “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.”

In regard to performance reviews, ASLA endorses that more than one method is used to gather evidence on teacher performance, including teacher librarians. The methods identified by Jensen (p. 98) and as recorded in Box 6.3 (p.99) should be informed by evidence-based practice. Performance reviews should provide the opportunity for the identification of professional development needs. Reference to “institutional impediments” (p.89) does inhibit the inclusion of teacher librarians in professional learning as these personnel are often not considered in the category of classroom teacher, yet they are required to provide teaching and learning resource support for the whole school community.

In addition, any identification of underperformance should be addressed, in the first instance, by providing access to professional learning. This should be a priority before deploying the teacher and/or teacher librarian to other duties in the school. Decisions to deploy staff should not be based solely on economic constraints but on what is the best outcome for the teaching and learning needs of the teachers and students.

ASLA endorses the interim recommendation of a smaller-scale experiment with teacher performance pay and recommends inclusion of specialist teachers, such as teacher librarians, in this experiment.

3. Clearinghouse

ASLA endorses recommendation 7.1 on the basis that AITSL consults with and provides the opportunity for professional association stakeholders to source appropriate and relevant research to inform school workforce composition and job design. International and national research strongly supports the link between having a fully qualified teacher librarian, a well funded and resourced school library, and improved learning outcomes for students.

4. Autonomy

Recommendation 10 from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment report, *School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia* (2011)

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/schoollibraries/index.htm reads as follows:

“The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood and Youth Affairs, discuss ways to enhance partnerships with state and territory and local levels of government to support school libraries and teacher librarians”.

This recommendation from the school library report reflects the sentiment of recommendation 8.1. It is important that those involved in school-level governance are informed by evidence-based research and effective leadership professional development to be able to take a holistic view of the appropriate staffing mix for the school community to effectively deliver a national curriculum. This recommendation may require state and territory governments to consider the establishment of central agencies that specifically address the representation of specialists such as teacher librarians.

Greater autonomy also requires greater accountability for principals. The *National professional standards for principals* needs to accommodate this capacity.

5. Community engagement

ASLA endorses recommendation 11.1 on the basis that the working group consults with and provides the opportunity for professional association stakeholders to source appropriate and relevant documentation to inform the decisions of the working group.

ASLA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report and looks forward to the release of the Commission's final report.

Yours sincerely

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