



In an increasingly information- and knowledge-based age, one of the many elements of a world class education for all Australian students is access to high quality modern library services through the provision of professionally staffed 21st century school libraries.

School libraries and teacher librarians make a significant contribution to school communities and student learning outcomes.

There is a strong relationship between the presence of a qualified teacher-librarian in an accessible well-resourced school library and student achievement.

The severe decline in the number of qualified teacher librarians staffing libraries, in the number of teacher librarian training programs, in school library funding, and in centralised school library services and policy advisers over the last several decades is incompatible with this important educational outcome.

Despite the demonstrated importance of teacher-librarians and libraries, library services have been seriously affected by budget constraints and changing funding and staffing policies and practices. This has undermined the capacity and quality of library services provided by schools; library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities.

Devolution of aspects of decision making and financial management to the local level means that funding for school libraries relies on the resource allocation priorities established at the local level, which might or might not place a high priority on the need for a well-staffed library service.

This has led to marked differences between schools where library funding and staffing is at the discretion of the individual school and there are competing budgetary demands within schools.

Without an appropriate funding formula and guidelines for school libraries, the existing inequitable funding arrangements will continue. This will increase the marginalisation of some libraries through underfunding and neglect, while others are prioritised within their schools and are able to provide quality print and multimedia resources as well as access to emerging technologies, electronic databases, the internet and other online resources. This is a basic requirement for any school library and should be the norm rather than the exception.

Such marked differences between schools are incompatible with the stated commitment of governments to provide a world class quality education for every Australian child. Equitable access to an appropriately funded and well resourced school library and the services of a fully qualified teacher librarian is the right of all students and schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angelo Gavrielatos".

Angelo Gavrielatos
Federal President
AEU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vanessa Little".

Vanessa Little
President
ALIA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isobel Williams".

Isobel Williams
President
ASLA