



OPEN LETTER

16 October, 2012

The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Re: School Libraries and Teacher Librarians

In the report from the Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools, the chair, Amanda Rishworth MP highlighted a number of issues in her concluding comments that continue to be of major concern for the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

It has been nearly twelve months since the Government Response was tabled in Parliament and very little action for school libraries and teacher librarians has been transacted. A recent Australian School Library Survey indicates that:

- There is a positive relationship between well-resourced libraries and higher student literacy and learning outcomes
- School library resourcing is inconsistent across school type (primary, secondary, P-12) and education provider (Government, Catholic, Independent)
- The majority of school libraries had no change in budgets in the past 12 months
- Very few school libraries received additional resources for implementing the Australian Curriculum
- Staffing levels have remained unchanged for the majority of school libraries during the past 12 months
- The purchase and use of eBooks will be a strong focus in schools in the coming year and thereafter.
- Mobile technology (iPod, iPad, smart phone and tablet) use by students is widespread across all school types and education providers and is having a significant impact on the role of the school library.

We have enclosed a copy of the survey report for your convenience.

We seek to raise two important issues with you that are essential to the successful delivery of a high-quality and high-equity education for every young Australian.

The first is the need for access to quality electronic resources. Australian libraries, including school libraries, have together selected quality electronic resources covering general reference (including encyclopaedia), Humanities & Social Sciences and Science & Technology through a national consortium (<http://era.nla.gov.au/>). These products have been selected through a tender process and represent sources which all schools should have access to. At present only a small number of schools can afford these resources and we recommend that your school funding reform consider purchase of these resources to support quality learning outcomes for every student and teacher.

Secondly, Australian students need support from qualified teacher librarians to enable them to gain on-line research skills and essential digital literacy capabilities to be effective and responsible users of information and the technology they access and use. At present it is not mandatory in schools to have qualified teacher librarians. National and international research has shown that having the school library staffed by qualified teacher librarians has a positive impact on student learning. Teacher librarians contribute significantly to student technology and information literacies, and have a critical role in the promotion and effective use of information and communication technologies.

The Executive Officer from ASLA and Executive Director from ALIA would like to meet with you to discuss both the potential for access to quality information resources and qualified teacher librarians to support the delivery of an Australian Curriculum and the integration of general capabilities across curriculum learning areas.

We look forward to meeting with you and discussing these issues.

Yours sincerely



Karen Bonanno
Executive Officer, ASLA



Sue McKerracher
Executive Director, ALIA