

31 August, 2008

Hon. Alan J. Carpenter MLA,
Premier,
24th Floor,
Governor Stirling Tower,
197 St. George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Sir,

Prior to the state election, the Western Australian School Library Association would like your comments on the recent article in *The West Australian* on 20 August by Bethany Hiatt, *Cuts "hide teacher shortage"*.

In your letter to this Association on 28 March, 2008 you assured our members that the value of teacher librarians is recognised by the Department and that information about our role is provided to schools on the CMIS School Library Website. This article and the proposed staffing documents being put to Principals, clearly indicates this is not the case. A further article in *The West Australian* on 23 August by Bethany Hiatt, *Schools say teens cannot read* talks of computerised programs being trialled to improve student literacy. The reading programmes developed and implemented by teachers librarians throughout this state, contribute significantly to increased literacy standards for Western Australian students.

By replacing teacher librarians with non-teaching staff, our students are being severely disadvantaged. There is a lack of appreciation of the direct relationship between resource management implications and associated loss of literacy outcomes. Poorly acquired, collected and managed school resources in an increasing number of schools without adequate school libraries and fully qualified teacher librarians can only result in decreased literacy levels.

The ALP Campaign and Information Service responded to our national organisation, Australian School Library Association on Tuesday 13th November, 2007 with the following:

“School Librarians play an important role in promoting the importance of literacy and in fostering greater information literacy skills in students and teachers in our schools.

In an age where students are dealing with information on an unprecedented digital scale it is particularly important to ensure school librarians are properly qualified to assist young Australians in accessing and interpreting this information.

To be the best trained and best skilled workforce in the world, we must do more to encourage greater professional development, mentoring and induction, particularly in education, including our school librarians.”

School libraries can have a positive impact on a range of learning areas, including reading scores, literacy and broader learning. Our members would like your undertaking that should you be re-elected, we can expect:

- Recognition of the significant role of school libraries and teacher librarians in literacy and other Education initiatives.
- Inclusion of statements supporting the significant role of school libraries and teacher librarians in Education policy.
- State funded research into the impact of Australian school libraries on the literacy skills and academic achievement of students at all levels and across all sectors.
- Development and validation of standards for school library facilities and staffing.

In this election year, we look forward to hearing how your policies and programs will address the issues raised for schools libraries and teacher librarians. We ask that you give due consideration to all areas of education and the crucial role of school libraries and qualified, quality staff to assist students with their life long learning at every level of their education.

Yours faithfully,

Jenny Dickman
President

cc Hon. Colin Barnett MLA,
Mr. Robert Fry, President, WACSSO