



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education**

Your ref :
Our ref : D11/0488355
Enquiries :

Ms Barbara Combes
President
Western Australian School Library Association

Email: b.combes@ecu.edu.au

Dear Ms Combes

The Hon Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA, Minister for Education, has asked me to respond on her behalf to the issues raised in the 'open letter' addressed to politicians, schools and parents from the Western Australian School Library Association (WASLA), published on the WA Teacher Librarians Network (WATLNET) on 4 August 2011. I am taking this opportunity also to address associated issues raised in WATLNET notices under your signature dated 2 and 3 August 2011.

You will have already received from me a response to a further email you sent on 2 August 2011 to the Institute for Professional Learning.

In all emails you raise issues that are of concern to you and your Association's membership. A consolidated list with responses has been compiled and is attached for you to share with WASLA members. Given the number and complexity of some of the issues, I would also suggest there is more dialogue between WASLA and the Department of Education and, to this end, will be asking Mr David Axworthy, Deputy Director General, Schools, to contact you with a view to arranging a meeting.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely


SHARYN O'NEILL
DIRECTOR GENERAL

24 AUG 2011

Att.

ISSUES RAISED BY THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

1. Email to the Institute of Professional Learning

Devolving teacher-librarian duties to unqualified people	Discussion to be had around the number of specialist teacher-librarians (TLs) being employed by schools. Department refutes teaching elements are being carried out by unqualified people.												
Seeking involvement with development of the Institute's program	Department encourages professional associations to feed into its professional learning system for the development of their members. Recommend discussion with Institute's Managing Director.												
Teachers/students being deprived of information specialists [teacher-librarians] in schools	Recent trends in terms of library staff: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2008</th> <th>2010</th> <th>2011</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>TLs</td> <td>176</td> <td>144</td> <td>138</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Library officers (LOs)</td> <td>921</td> <td>930</td> <td>922</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>To be discussed.</p>		2008	2010	2011	TLs	176	144	138	Library officers (LOs)	921	930	922
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Students entering university ill-equipped to undertake high-level research	Research and analysis is embedded across all learning areas. Planning the education for all Western Australian students aligns with the Curriculum Framework, in which Overarching Learning Outcome 3 requires that "Students recognise when and what information is needed, locate and obtain it from a range of sources and evaluate, use and share it with others". The need for providing a core first year unit to students who are leaving schools "unable to source information, and use it appropriately and ethically" is for discussion. Also discuss need for universities to address pre-service teacher courses for training in the use of new technologies in schools.												

2. Open letter

Duty of care issues and lack of support "if something goes wrong"	A qualified teacher is expected to be near and accountable whenever students are in a library as part of their formal studies.
Personnel participating in duties "way beyond their level and capability"	LOs have responsibility for managing library budgets and performing general administrative tasks, not teaching.
Lack of reimbursement for additional duties undertaken	There should be no issues of duties being undertaken in addition to those prescribed in the JDF for LOs appropriate to classification levels.
Demise of the Department's CMIS Evaluation services	The Department is streamlining a number of areas of support to consolidate and render more efficient its service delivery. CMIS Evaluation and Cataloguing teams (now referred to as K-12 Evaluation and K-12 Cataloguing) are working with the newly established E-Schooling branch to migrate relevant Library Support and cataloguing content to the DET CMS. In terms of evaluation, new projects are being developed and various activities are underway (for example the evaluation of digital resources and websites aligned to the Australian Curriculum). New Library Support content will be made available through the A-Z links on the new Department website as well as through the Curriculum Support Website. The Department is reconceptualising delivery of reviews of resources for all media types - print, websites and digital objects. A comprehensive website will be available publicly around library support services – this involves a consolidation of five current websites owned by the Department. It

	<p>will be possible to provide reviews of resources in this public space. Some resource reviews will be made available for DOE teachers on the Department's secure K-12 resources site. While the huge catalogues of Primary Focus and Fiction Focus may not exist as such – or just transferred as is to electronic PDF forms – the idea of reviewing print materials will continue and be published in a more dynamic style – perhaps through blogs or RSS feeds.</p>
<p>Devolving to school level "all resourcing and support for Govt schools and their libraries"</p>	<p>All public schools are resourced by the Government through the Department of Education. While modes of delivery of support evolve as the environment changes, especially with respect to new technologies, support is not withdrawn.</p>
<p>Shifting responsibility for managing libraries to unqualified personnel</p>	<p>The real issue is not around 'managing' libraries but having specialist TLs to run them.</p> <p>The move from the passive consumption of information to the active creation and/or remixing of information in collaborative environments requires new pedagogies. The Department agrees that dual-qualified teacher librarians, with their backgrounds in both education and information management, are well-placed to guide and support their teacher colleagues in applying these new pedagogies. Issues of supply need to be discussed.</p>
<p>Newly-built school libraries not being staffed by teacher-librarians</p>	<p>Under the BER, WA public schools have built 188 new school libraries. The matter of supply of TLs again flagged is for further discussion.</p>
<p>Resources that do not reflect best selection/are not relevant to curriculum</p>	<p>An assertion to which the Department does not subscribe. For discussion.</p>
<p>Lack of anyone in schools "whose role is to teach, support and maintain literacy and information literacy skills" (citing "our 15 YO's have some of the lowest literacy NAPLAN scores in Australia")</p>	<p>TLs are not the only staff involved at school level in teaching literacy/information literacy skills.</p> <p>The comment "our 15 YO's have some of the lowest literacy NAPLAN scores in Australia" is misleading. The difference between the Australian national average and Western Australian students' averages was 1.5% in reading and 1% in writing. It should also be noted that the average age of Western Australian Year 9 students who took NAPLAN in 2010 was 14.1 years old, six months younger than others tested around Australia. While the results were barely lower than the national average, it needs to be borne in mind that Western Australia's demographics are not typical of the rest of Australia.</p>
<p>Reference to the 2010 Federal inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians (citing that NSW has just legislated for a TL in every school)</p>	<p>School Libraries and Information Literacy Manager of the NSW Department of Education and Communities is unaware of any "legislation". NSW has had a commitment for many years and an allocation for TLs is included in each school's staffing formula.</p> <p>Discussion to include recommendations made in the March 2011 Commonwealth Government publication <i>School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in 21st Century Australia</i>.</p>
<p>WA "moving forward according to an outdated devolution agenda"</p>	<p>In the past two years, some 30% of Western Australia's public schools have signalled their desire to operate more flexibly under the independent public school (IPS) initiative. IPS control many functions which used to be directed from the centre, reducing bureaucracy and the prescriptive "one size fits all" approach.</p>

<p>2012 is the National Year of Reading</p>	<p>Reading is already a high priority in public schools and the Department is represented at a high level on the State Library Foundation. This is a wonderful opportunity and the Department is already working with the State Library Foundation in support of the campaign. The Department would be interested to hear about any initiatives WASLA is considering.</p>
<p>2-tiered education system in WA and equal opportunities for all children</p>	<p>Western Australia has always operated a multi-tiered system that acknowledges the need to provide for educational equity across the State's diverse communities. This has found expression in a range of variable conditions being accessible to staff in different contexts through schemes such as the Remote Teaching Service and the Country and Metropolitan Teaching Programs.</p> <p>Empowerment via the IPS initiative is designed to build on this tradition by enabling greater expression of difference and diversity at the local school community level. It is also important to note that IPS is simply a mechanism by which a greater level of autonomy is extended to all public schools. The Department has embarked on a carefully staged and responsible journey, based on the experience of IPS, by which it can learn what flexibilities schools most value.</p>
<p>Out of step with other Australian States and current Federal Government initiatives</p>	<p>On the contrary, Western Australia is leading change. Please refer to the Gillard Labor Government commitment to <i>Empowering local schools</i> with a mandate to "drive improved student performance and outcomes by giving principals, parents and each school community greater power to determine how their local school is run – including greater responsibility for school budgets, determining the right mixture of staff, and setting local priorities."¹</p> <p>In December 2008, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), all States and Territories became signatories to the Federal Government's National Education Agreement (NEA), acknowledging that high-quality schooling, supported by strong community engagement, is central to Australia's future prosperity and social cohesion, and agreeing to a package of reforms to enable the education system to pursue high-quality schooling for all Australian students.</p> <p>NEA reforms are being implemented by the Department through a number of National Partnership Agreements. Focus during 2010/11 was on the Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements - Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, and Improving Teacher Quality.</p> <p>Other National Partnership Agreements being implemented or planned for implementation across schooling and early childhood will provide new or improved facilities in schools, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers and leaders, improve early childhood development outcomes and enhance pathways to further education and work.</p>

¹ Source: <http://www.alp.org.au/agenda/education---training/empowering-local-schools/>

Collectively, the National Partnership Agreements aim to reduce educational disadvantage for target groups of students and to improve outcomes for all students.

The Department is engaged with the National Partnership Agreement on the Digital Education Revolution, designed to contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools to prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world.