



## School Library Association of Victoria

August 4, 2022

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP  
Minister for Education

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your appointment and we look forward to working with you in this vital role. The School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV) is the teaching association representing professionals working in school libraries in Victoria. We write to draw your attention to the very challenging situation our schools are facing in terms of being able to support students with properly resourced and staffed school libraries. School libraries are staffed by a mix of teacher librarians, librarians, library technicians and library assistants. SLAV maintains that high quality teaching programs in school libraries are best delivered by teacher librarians supported by a range of school library professionals.

Research at a national and international level emphasises how a well-resourced school library program, conducted by a professionally qualified teacher-librarian, advantages student literacy and learning outcomes. Several studies highlight that school libraries are: vibrant hubs for learning; vital in developing a culture of reading and research; and supportive spaces for student wellbeing. Further research shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the employment of teacher-librarians, higher school funding of libraries and higher than average NAPLAN Reading results (<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/219959/>). Our advocacy flyer, *What a school library can do for you* (<https://slav.org.au/research-links>) also highlights these findings.

The *Parliamentary Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools* recognised the importance of school libraries and teacher librarians in the light of national initiatives such as the Digital Education Revolution and the Australian Curriculum. The Victorian Curriculum emphasises active inquiry learning approaches which highlight the importance of teacher librarians in designing educational interventions to scaffold students' learning in collaboration with classroom teachers and other stakeholders.

School libraries are education-focused and integral in providing support for teachers and students to further their educational journey. We know you champion literacy (Jenkins, Olivia, "Push to make reading for fun compulsory in

our schools”, *Herald-Sun*, 14 July 2022) in our educational system and we believe it is essential to emphasise to School Principals that sustained improvement in student literacy requires a well-resourced school library staffed by qualified school library professionals who promote wider reading to all. International and Australian academic research indicates that it is “school libraries that are the primary enablers of access to, or advice about, good books.”  
([https://teenreadingdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/teen-reading-folio-report\\_email.pdf](https://teenreadingdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/teen-reading-folio-report_email.pdf), p.7)

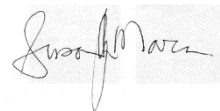
The most recent data from the *SiAS (Staff in Australian Schools, ACER)* survey, indicates there are now dwindling numbers of trained teacher-librarians in Victorian schools. Early career teachers tend not to choose teacher-librarianship as there is no clear pathway available in Victoria to undertake studies in this discipline. Those now seeking a qualification in this area complete the online Masters of Teacher Librarianship at Charles Sturt University. The NSW Department of Education has offered bursaries to teachers to take on studies in teacher-librarianship, and as a result that State is not facing the same shortfalls in staffing currently being experienced in Victorian state schools. Most recently, the ACT has also announced a similar scheme <https://canberraweekly.com.au/act-government-to-fund-training-for-50-teacher-librarians/> to attract teachers to studies in teacher-librarianship. SLAV is currently receiving many requests from Principals to employ teacher librarians but in many cases there has not been a trained teacher librarian to fill the vacancy.

We would welcome an opportunity to speak with DET on issues relating to the provision and training of teacher-librarians in the State of Victoria to ensure that our students have quality expertise made available to them within the state system. We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns with you and welcome any initiative that supports vibrant and active school libraries within our education community.

Yours Faithfully,



Di Ruffles  
**President**



Dr Susan La Marca  
**Executive Officer**

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