

# Teacher librarians step up campaign

*22 September, 2011 | [Print this story](#) | [Send this story to a friend](#)*

**Australia's teacher librarian community is maintaining the pressure to get government to address inadequacies at Australian school libraries, reports Natasha Egan.**

Advocates fear that a parliamentary inquiry report into teacher librarians will be passed over in a busy parliament.

The report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment was tabled in May but has yet to be debated.

Co-founder of advocacy group The Hub, Georgia Phillips, said the government needed to debate the issues raised in the report so it could give a much-needed response.

"It's been four months, we were hoping to get something after three months and there's only a limited amount of time really while the report is fresh," Phillips told *Education Review*.

The report cited previous research which showed the declining numbers of teacher librarians in schools, and said many of the libraries built under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) are not properly staffed.

It quoted a 2008 study that found 54 per cent of government schools had library material budgets of less than \$5000. Many school libraries had budgets below their 1975 levels.

The report offered 11 recommendations including funding for the collection of statistics from all school libraries and their staff to be included on My School.

Phillips told *ER* the collection of data was a critical issue so accurate information on library staffing levels could be obtained, in particular for the libraries built under BER.

She said of the 2650 BER libraries built in government and other sectors, she estimated there were 979 without any qualified teacher librarians.

"There's a problem of course with the federal government building libraries. They can provide money for infrastructure but of course they don't have direct control over their staffing."

Phillips said the data could link library school staffing with NAPLAN results to correlate the link between teacher librarians and reading scores.

Among its other recommendations, the committee called for the funding of a core set of online database resources to be made available to all schools.

Further, it called for a "workforce gap analysis" of teacher librarians nationwide, and an examination of the pathways into the profession and ongoing training requirements.

In addition to the recommendations, Phillips said that during debate, the issue of national guidelines would have to come up.

"We need the federal government to back national guidelines that will make these states and territories stand up and take notice," she said.

In turn Phillips said each state and territory would have to have their own debates.

## Call to action

This latest action instigated by Australian Library and Information Association schools is calling for people to contact the minister for education by sending a bookmark.

Victorian Mercy College Head of Information Services, Anne Girolami said in a statement “there is an urgency to make this noise”.

“It is vital that the office of the Minister of Education and Employment takes notice of our concern to have the report debated,” she said on behalf of ALIA Schools.

Girolami said it was essential the report was debated in Parliament so the 11 recommendations could be accepted but urged the action because “this debate is competing with a number of other societal issues”.

**Read Education Review’s previous coverage on the issue here:**

[\(ER, 16.06.11\)](#)

[\(ER, 15.06.10\)](#)

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