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Faxed: 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2007

**DET Ref: RML07/2994 A 53910**

Dear Minister,

Please find on the following two pages the response I have received from Ms Kelly, to those issues that I raised with you some time ago.

I note that Ms Kelly has merely restated my concerns, and quoted sections of policy documents and memoranda. I already have the policies and memoranda. Unfortunately, none of the concerns have been addressed; notably, it is the contents of those policies and memoranda which raised the concerns in the first place.

It was my expectation, together with those of the 2000-plus Teacher Librarians who currently are employed by the DET, that the vagaries and bizarre nature of those policies would be investigated, revised and updated.

Please allow me to draw your attention to that part of my original correspondence with you, referring to the wide ranging "Principals' Discretionary Powers", which apparently do not include any accountability nor oversight. The result of those powers is the demonstrable inequity of student learning outcomes.

In the matter of providing adequate financial support to ALL NSW DET schools, Ms Kelly notes that funding is based on historical data. Minister, times have changed. The needs of the students have changed. Resources have increased in cost. The Departments' own documents recommend a complete renewal of school library collections over a 10 year cycle. And yet school libraries have books that are over 20 years old. The previous 'guaranteed funding base' was insufficient; and yet Ms Kelly has considered basing decisions on 'historical' data as reasonable.

Minister, at my current place of employment, the school library has only 39% of the fiction books that the NSW Department of Education and Training's own Library and Information Literacy Unit have indicated as for a \*core\* collection. That is, the absolute minimum of contemporary books that a DET school library would be expected to have.

And yet, at my current place of employment, the school's Annual Report for 2006 shows that of the (approx) \$1.5 million global budget allocated to the school, almost

\$500,000 (that is, one third of its budget) was not expended. You should however note that this situation is not unique. Minister, why is this? It is because the budget dissections for a school are based solely on Principals' Discretionary Powers. For which apparently there is no requirement for accountability or any rights to appeal.

Minister, Ms Kelly's letter on your behalf states, "the current approach to school funding arrangements has strong support from the vast majority of schools". Can I presume that all the stakeholders have been surveyed as to their support of global budgeting? If so, please note that it appears that no Teacher Librarian was consulted.

Again I am making assumptions, but I believe that Ms Kelly is actually indicating that it is the Principals who provide "strong support" for Principals' Discretionary Powers. Similarly, while Ms Kelly refers to budget committees within schools, it should be noted that Principals have the power of veto over all budget committee proposals. Again, without any requirement for accountability.

Having sat on such budget committees myself in the past, I can guarantee that in general, the stakeholders in any school would not support 'rolling over' one third of the budget whilst the school was in dire need of a number of items requiring expenditure.

In the matter of providing appropriate personnel support for ancillary duties in the library, to enable the dual-qualified Teacher Librarian to attend to professional tasks, I must admit that I fair better than many of my colleagues. I do have one full-time assistant, in a school with an enrolment approaching 1000 students. However, a colleague at a high school of my acquaintance has one full time library assistant - in a school with an enrolment of 700. Another colleague at a primary school of my acquaintance has 10 hours a week of library personnel support - in a school with an enrolment of 600 students.

Minister, could I ask if you believe that the students in the above three examples all have equal access to the professional services of their school's specialist in Library and Information Literacy? It is manifestly obvious that reduced clerical support mean that the Teacher Librarian has less time to spend with students as "someone" has to complete the necessary clerical tasks.

Ms Kelly also notes that "as a general guide, 20% of a Teacher Librarian's time is considered a reasonable allocation to allow Teacher Librarians to fulfil their library management and resource administration responsibilities". This quote has been taken (unacknowledged) from a memorandum signed by Peter Riordon in 2005. The "20%" figure originally came from a memorandum from Virginia Chadwick when she was Minister for Education. However, Ms Chadwick's statement was " ... a minimum of 20% ... should be used as a guide ...".

Minister, this is effectively a reduction in time. The "20%" has been reduced in status from "a minimum" to "considered reasonable". This is itself is a concern. Please consider again the three examples of schools offered above. It is bizarre to say the least to consider that the amount of time (ie "20%") is equally adequate for a school library collection of 12,000 resources and 600 students when compared to a school library collection of 28,000 resources and 1,000 students.

I would ask for the rationale behind this determination - except that the answer would be again Historical Precedent, followed closely by mention of Principals' Discretionary Powers. Minister, in some schools, The Principal allocates 100% of the Teacher Librarian's time to professional duties; and yet in other schools The Principal allocates the minimum - sorry, adequate - 20%.

Further, this does not even consider the impact that technology has made on increasing the workload of Teacher Librarians. Whilst they are no longer busily engaged in shuffling catalogue cards in wooden drawers, they have now become in many cases 'de facto' computer technicians. Computers in libraries have not decreased the work of Teacher Librarians. I can provide a list if required of many other examples of the additional work undertaken by Teacher Librarians as a result of Information Communication Technology.

In addition, the "20%" rule was introduced before the creation of the Premier's Reading Challenge, the BoS All My Own Work mandatory HSC course, various Read-a-thons such as the Multiple Sclerosis fund raiser; but as stated previously the allocation of time to facilitate such events has effectively been reduced.

Do not all of the state's 760,000 students enrolled in Public Education have the right to expect the same level of learning support, literature promotion, Information Literacy instruction, etc regardless of the school in which their voting parents have chosen to enrol them?

Ms Kelly inadvertently supports my contention on the matter of the status of Teacher Librarians; the only pathway to formal recognition of the work that the Premier states that he values so highly is, ironically, to either reduce their attention to their valuable work, or abandon it entirely.

If I may point out a possible error in Ms Kelly's communication, on the matter of career opportunities for Teacher Librarians (which is not an issue I raised - I stressed that Teacher Librarians should be given adequate recognition of the work that they do as Teacher Librarians, not in some other role); Ms Kelly states that "Teachers with accreditation in Library are ... eligible to apply for Head Teacher Learning Support positions".

Minister, within your portfolio of Education and Training, I am sure you could locate appropriate personnel who will support the fact that "Learning Support" promotional positions require qualifications in Special Education.

Despite extensive enquiries since I received Ms Kelly's letter, I have not yet been able to locate one Teacher Librarian within the NSW Department of Education and Training who has been appointed to the position of Head Teacher Learning Support.

I would greatly appreciate any details of any such personnel, as I am sure that many of my colleagues would be interested in pursuing that as a possible path to salary and workload recognition, as from Ms Kelly's correspondence it would appear that that is

the only pathway open to them.

Personally, I wish to remain as a Teacher Librarian, although it may be a 'lonely' profession given the current low level of morale amongst so many of my Teacher Librarian colleagues.

Whilst Teacher Librarians are indeed very well (and dual) qualified, our specialist qualifications in resource selection, cross-curriculum and multi-stage educational outcomes, Information Literacy, etc, post-graduate School Library courses do not cover the specific learning needs of intellectually, behaviourally or emotionally challenged children beyond those in mainstream classes. Let alone Special Education Learning Support units.

Minister, I am greatly disappointed. I did not contact you for the purposes of delegating an officer of the Department to quote policies and memoranda. I raised concerns that are shared with many of my 2000-plus colleagues in NSW Government Schools. I requested that the Department of Education and Training investigate the issues, undertake an independent survey, and revise and update the policies with a review of the requirements for accountability to accompany Principals' Discretionary Powers.

However, I am not completely disheartened. I hope you will review my original correspondence with you, and re-examine the issues from a fresh perspective.

As always, I am happy to provide any further information and input that may be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Credaro  
[Private address supplied on original transmission]