

Amanda

From: "Amanda Credaro" <acredaro@optusnet.com.au>
To: <paul.gibson@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 28 August 2007 11:19 PM
Attach: kelly_21Aug_07.pdf; kelly_21Aug_07a.pdf
Subject: Library Concerns in NSW Government Schools

Attention: Mr Paul Gibson MP
Member for Blacktown
107-109 Main Street,
BLACKTOWN NSW 2148
Phone (02) 9671 5222
Fax (02) 9671 5266
Email paul.gibson@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Gibson,

Please find attached a copy (as two pdf files, for each of the two pages), which is the official response I have received from Trish Kelly on behalf of the Minister for Education and Training.

You will note that she merely restated my concerns, and quoted sections of policy documents and memoranda. I have the policies and memoranda; none of the concerns have been addressed. Notably, my concerns relate precisely to the contents of policies and memoranda and the need to revise and update them.

Specifically, my original correspondence to the Minister largely pivoted on the wide ranging "Principals' Discretionary Powers", which are apparently have no accountability nor oversight. The result of those powers is the demonstratable equity 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. Mr Gibson, 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.

Mr Gibson, at my current place of employment, the school library has less than 50% 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. Mr Gibson, 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 rights to appeal.

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.

Mr Gibson, 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? Or would lesser clerical support mean that the Teacher Librarian has less time to spend with students as "someone" has to complete the necessary clerical tasks? A rhetorical question, of course.

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 ...".

Mr Gibson, this is effectively a reduction in time. The "20%" has been reduced in status from "a minimum" to "considered reasonable". This 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. Mr Gibson, 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 also 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.

Mr Gibson, I did not request the Minister to delegate 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.

In an earlier conversation with you, I recall your mention of the fact that prior to my contact with you, were not aware of these concerns. You may already know that the NSW Teachers' Federation is now mounting a campaign relating to the work of Teacher Librarians. Whilst my concerns are not identical to Federations, there is considerable overlap. You can view an online copy of Federation's most recent communication with Teacher Librarians at http://warriorlibrarian.com/LIBRARY/PDF/nswtf_aug_07.pdf Attached to this document was a copy of Peter Riordon's 2005 memorandum, also online at http://www.nswtf.org.au/TeacherLibrarians/files/tl_admin.pdf

In conclusion, may I ask if you are prepared to pursue these issues further? I am happy to supply further information, documentation, contact details, or assist in any other way that would be beneficial.

I greatly look forward to hearing from you,

Amanda Credaro
[Personal Address Previously Supplied]