

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### New research reveals school libraries hovering on the poverty line

The results of two new research studies are showing that Australia's school children are in danger of not getting what they need to support development of critical skills in information and reading literacy.

The studies reveal that 50% of Australian school libraries surveyed are trying to do their job on an annual materials budget of under \$10,000 per year, while teacher librarians are under pressure to spend more and more time outside the school library.

Australian Library and Information Association Executive Director, Sue Hutley, says the two studies, just completed by Edith Cowan University – *'Snapshot of Australian School Libraries'* and *'Snapshot of Australian Teacher Librarians'* show that Australian teacher librarians are highly committed with over half actively involved in further professional development, but infrastructure is failing to cope with issues as basic as adequate seating for the student population, let alone access to information and communication technologies.

"It's the first time we've had reliable national data to work with, data that can play a critical role in the future of our economy because it means we know what's going on now and what's needed to support children's education in the future," Ms Hutley said.

"The overall picture is one of very dedicated staff playing a critical role in teaching our children the information literacy skills that will last them a lifetime but the pressure on those libraries and teacher librarians to perform with the resources they have is enormous," she said.

In a 2007 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Australia had slipped from second to sixth place in reading literacy, out-performed by Finland, South Korea, Hong Kong, Canada and New Zealand.

Australian School Library Association Executive Officer Karen Bonanno said teacher librarians and school libraries are an important catalyst for improving reading skills and information literacy.

"These skills are the building blocks of a thriving national economy and culture," Ms Bonanno said.



“Effective resourcing rests on understanding what’s actually happening now,” she said.

“These studies have given us a snapshot of the environment and the resourcing in Australia’s school library sector and we hope Governments at both state and federal level will use this knowledge to ensure Australia’s children get the resources they need to develop their lives - and go on to contribute to our nation’s growth and prosperity.

“That means ensuring there are enough qualified teacher librarians as well as maintaining and improving infrastructure. Having a new or refurbished school library is important but the full potential of these resources cannot be realised without a qualified teacher librarian in place as well.

“The teacher librarian brings skills and expertise in both teaching and learning to the mix, enabling the school to make the best of library and information services and programs in educating our children.”

## ***ENDS***

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- ALIA Media Room: <http://www.alia.org.au/media.room/>
- For downloadable copies of the reports, go to:  
<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php>

Issued on behalf of

**Australian Library and Information Association  
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The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional association for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. ALIA represents the interest of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

<http://www.alia.org.au>

**Australian School Library Association**

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The Australian School Library Association Inc (ASLA) is the national authority and peak forum in the field of teacher librarianship and school library resource services. Its aim is to maximize opportunities for students to obtain independent lifelong learning and decision making skills.

<http://www.asla.org.au>

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