

## Petition supports the role of teacher-librarians



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Federation's call for all NSW public school students to have access to qualified teacher-librarians and well-resourced school libraries has been reinforced by a new [online petition](#) to Members of Parliament in the NSW Legislative Assembly.

The petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to:

- acknowledge the evidence and support the appointment of qualified teacher-librarians and support staff
- ensure that NSW public schools use their allocated departmental funding to fill the specialist teacher-librarian role
- strengthen and value teacher-librarians by ensuring they are used in the capacity for which they were employed, allowing their expertise to benefit NSW public school students.



The petition will be presented to parliament by Ballina MP Tamara Smith, and is being backed by the Students Need School Libraries national campaign.

This petition is the latest in a series of discussions around the important role of teacher-librarians that have taken place in the NSW parliament this year.

On 26 February all political parties represented in the NSW Upper House agreed to a motion calling on the NSW Government to ensure every public school student in NSW has access to a quality school library and a qualified teacher-librarian. NSW Education Minister Sarah Mitchell is a member of the Upper House that passed the motion unanimously.

In Budget Estimates in March, the Department was asked by the Upper House Education Committee if there was a set ratio for teacher-librarians to schools. Deputy Secretary Murat Dizdar responded: "Every school is provided a teacher-librarian allocation. The allocation is based on student enrolment."

Mr Dizdar made further comments in relation to the role of teacher-librarians more recently during the COVID-19 update livestream for schools on 18 August when he said: "A big call out to our teacher-librarians who do a fantastic job across the state enriching the learning experiences for young people in continuing library activities."

One of those teacher-librarians is Kayla Frost, member of Federation's Teacher-Librarian Special Interest Group and teacher-librarian at Niagara Park Public School. Kayla's school library display celebrating the Children's Book Council of Australia annual Book Week celebrations was [showcased](#) widely by the Department

on its social media channels.

As Kayla says, a vibrant, well-managed library does so much more than provide much needed resources to staff and students. “It builds community and positivity; it gives those that feel separate a space to come and connect; it's a safe place to relax or calm; it's a space where imagination, creativity and fun can blossom, a place where student well-being is supported and a space that shows the high value that the school places on literature and reading.”

“In our library we bridge the gap for our students between primary and high-school, by providing them opportunities to develop independent inquiry and research skills in a scaffolded, supportive and information-rich environment.

“Spending time matching students to texts that are matched not only to their reading level and age, but also to their interests, is an invaluable part of what teacher-librarians do. Being both a qualified teacher and a librarian provides us with the skills not only to source, catalogue and manage a collection that is current and that students enjoy, it also allows us to support teachers by aligning our lessons with the outcomes and content learnt in class, and extend students' knowledge and skills in order to support that content.”

Another Federation member and teacher-librarian who is kicking goals and getting recognised for doing so is Jade Arnold at Galston High School. Jade recently received a Secretary's Award for Excellent Service for her work in the library. Her stunning library displays like her NAIDOC Week display light up Instagram and draw student and staff's attention to the library, but more than that, Jade says: *“As a teacher-librarian it's important that a library's collection reflects the diverse society it serves, and NAIDOC Week was a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase our vast range of fiction and non-fiction resources with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. Diverse fiction helps break down negative stereotypes and develops empathy in readers.”*

It is tempting to describe the situation the students at Galston High School and Niagara Park PS as lucky. Local Schools, Local Decisions literally means that there is inconsistency across the system.

But it shouldn't be that way. Public education is about equity in opportunity and access for all. No students should miss out.

As [previously reported](#), Federation's survey of teacher-librarians earlier this year showed clearly that a widespread campaign is necessary to inform and educate all Federation members on the value of the specialist teacher-librarian role and a thriving library in every school, as well as the Department's policies in relation to both.

It also demonstrates the importance of members actively supporting and advocating for Federation's [staffing campaign](#) to preserve these specialist teaching positions in every school.