



Australian Council of State School Organisations

The National Voice of Parents of Children in Australia's Public Schools and Their School Communities

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

School Libraries Special

8 April 2010

- [THE INQUIRY: \(7 items\)](#)
- [THE HUB: \(4 items\)](#)
- [IN THE NEWS: \(6 items\)](#)
- [TAKE ACTION: \(2 items\)](#)
- [CONFERENCES & EVENTS: \(11 items\)](#)
- [ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS](#)

THE INQUIRY

Request for a national school library review

Letter to the Rudd Government, Australian School Library Association, 24 November 2009

The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) acknowledges the work of the Rudd Government in the area of education, in particular, the Building the Education Revolution (BER) investment in providing world-class libraries in primary schools.

A number of our members have been actively involved in the decision making around the purpose, function and design of these school libraries. Of significance is the role the school library plays in supporting student learning.

In light of the developments of the BER, teacher quality and national curriculum, our association believes it is timely for the Rudd Government to undertake a national review of school libraries. The last national review was undertaken by the Gorton Government over four decades ago.

ASLA's joint policy position with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is that professional and support staff are essential for the effective functioning of the school library and information services centre and the achievement of the school's teaching and learning goals.

In particular, the professional staff should be fully qualified teacher librarians who hold recognised teacher qualifications and qualifications in librarianship. Within the broad fields of education and librarianship, teacher librarians are uniquely qualified. This is valuable because curriculum knowledge and pedagogy are combined with library and information management knowledge and skills.

Read entire letter: <http://www.asla.org.au/advocacy/government/letter241109.htm>

[< top >](#)

Response from the Office of the Hon Julia Gillard MP

Amanda Lampe, Chief of Staff, 17 December 2009

Thank you for your co-signed letter of 24 November 2009 to the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, concerning priority issues identified by the Australian School Library Association. The Minister has asked me to reply on her behalf.

... in relation to your proposal for a review of school libraries, I must advise that the management of school libraries, including resourcing and allocation of staff, is the responsibility of the government and non-government education authorities in each state or territory.

Read more at: <http://www.asla.org.au/advocacy/government/letter241109.htm>

[< top >](#)

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 18 March 2010

On Wednesday 10 March 2010 the Minister for Education, Hon Julia Gillard MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

Submissions are invited – and must be lodged by **Friday 16 April 2010**.

Public hearings will be scheduled in due course, probably from latter April 2010.

As you will see from the background correspondence below, the last such review was conducted some 40 years ago – so it is important that everyone with an interest in the vitally important role of school libraries and the provision of a qualified Teacher-librarian as an important adjunct of 21st century learning needs and the new Australian Curriculum should consider preparing and lodging a formal Submission by 16th April.

Further details: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm>

[< top >](#)

Open Letter to Education Minister Julia Gillard

Marj Kirkland, President, Children's Book Council of Australia, 29 March 2010

Thank you for launching an inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian Schools. The Federal Government's Building an Education Revolution stimulus package showed us your vision for 21st century school libraries. Now it's time to consolidate that vision by staffing those buildings with professional teacher-librarians.

All Australian students deserve 21st century schools staffed by 21st century professionally qualified teacher librarians.

Australian education stands at the crossroads of technological educational and cultural reforms. As a specialist in both information literacy and reading, the teacher-librarian is uniquely placed to deal with such change.

The Lonsdale Report (2003) found that active school library programs run by trained teacher librarians made a significant difference to student learning outcomes. Students in schools without a teacher-librarian were educationally disadvantaged.

Teacher librarians are digital information literacy specialists.

Teacher librarians are familiar with both the curriculum and how students learn. They work across all curriculum areas to resource the curriculum with suitable resources catering for the individual student. They collaborate with teachers,

help students develop research skills and guide students to become independent learners who can negotiate myriad complex digital sources of information..... Teacher librarians connect people with each other through reading.

Read more: <http://hubinfo.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/b-march-30-libraries-at-risk.pdf>

[< top >](#)

School libraries are the lifeblood of learning - let's not lose them

Karen Brooks, Courier Mail, 30 March 2010

WITH very little fanfare, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's office has announced an inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

It is the first of its kind since the 1970s and will, among other things, look into the policies, economic and pedagogical investments in school libraries; and evaluate the role played by, and the benefits of, dual-trained teacher librarians (TLs).

This inquiry is long overdue and critical to the future. It is not simply about books, IT, specialist teachers and the curriculum, though they are at the core. This is also about demonstrating to our students that we value not just information in all its forms - print, graphic, online and audio-visual - but also the long-term benefits of literacy and imagination to the individual, the nation and the globe.

This is not a debate about books versus computers, although it is sometimes diminished in this way. For years now, books and the internet, along with other media, have existed side by side in school libraries.

Librarians and TLs are the gatekeepers and mediators through which children discover the different and amazing worlds at their fingertips.

No one is asking children to choose, though some adults believe that computers and the internet have rendered the role of the TL and even the library, if not books, redundant. But never have they been more important.

....Submissions to the inquiry close on April 16. We have a small window of opportunity to remind the powers that be that school libraries, TLs and librarians are our culture's heart - let's do all we can to keep it beating.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/school-libraries-are-the-lifeblood-of-learning-lets-not-lose-them/story-e6frerfo-1225847663682>

Dr Karen Brooks is an associate professor of media studies at Southern Cross University.

[< top >](#)

Too good to lose

Letter to Editor, The Age, 3 April 2010

Thank goodness people are becoming aware of what we risk losing if school libraries suffer the death of a thousand cuts.

From my experience as a teacher, parent and now children's author who visits primary school libraries, I have seen how well-funded ones run by experienced, enthusiastic teacher-librarians, with the support of their principals, can make a huge difference to how children explore and learn through language and literature.

But now these libraries fight to survive across Australia. In high schools the situation is much worse.

Hopefully for the sake of young Australians, the federal government inquiry and report into school libraries will provide solutions.

Sheryl Gwyther, Ashgrove, QLD

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/letters/plan-publish-and-debate-reforms-20100402-rjr8.html>

[< top >](#)

You surely wouldn't read about it

Letters to Editor, The Age, 6 April 2010

Readers would be right to be somewhat bewildered by Sheryl Gwyther's reference to the federal government's inquiry into school libraries (Letters, 3/4).

With submissions to the committee due by April 16, there has been no report of it in The Age since it was announced.

The trend to remove teacher-librarians from schools threatens to turn school libraries into the world's most expensive closets, instead of active, vibrant centres of learning that support literacy, develop research skills, promote literature, and manage a collection that enriches the teaching of all staff.

This inquiry offers the chance for teachers, parents and students to speak up, but only if they know the opportunity exists.

Leonie Paatsch, Lara, VIC

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/letters/use-pilots-on-reef-or-pay-the-awful-price/2010/04/05/1270374171064.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap2>

[< top >](#)

THE HUB

Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia

<http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/>

THE HUB is about improving the quality of education in Australia. It refers to the one thing that should be at the heart, the hub, of every school – the school library.

We are a gathering of educators united by a common concern that too many Australian students no longer have regular access to a well resourced, adequately staffed library.

Federal funding was removed from Australian school libraries almost thirty years ago.

Research has consistently shown that school libraries make a difference to student learning and academic achievement, yet in recent years, anecdotal evidence tells us that library budgets have plummeted across the country.

Staffing levels have also been greatly reduced in an effort to save money. Faced with global budgeting shortfalls, principals are forced to make cutbacks, and unfortunately, the library has often been the easiest place to do this.

At a time when literacy and information literacy is at the forefront of educational concern, libraries in schools have never been more crucial.

Read more about The Hub at: <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/about/>

[< top >](#)

School Libraries Can Make a Difference to Student Learning

A review of the research literature

Over 60 studies in the US, Canada, Australia and the UK have provided strong evidence that school libraries can have a positive impact on student literacy and learning.

A review of the research in Australia, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement*, concluded “a strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community.” (Lonsdale, ACER, 2003)

Lonsdale goes on to state there is evidence to show that:

- collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers;
- test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library;
- a print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability and writing style;
- the extent to which books are borrowed from school libraries shows a strong relationship with reading achievement whereas borrowing from classroom libraries does not;
- integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students’ mastery of both content and information-seeking skills;
- libraries can make a positive difference to students’ self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning; (Lonsdale, 2003, p.1)

Studies such as “*Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries*”, show “that an effective school library, lead by a credentialed school librarian who has a clearly defined role in information-centered pedagogy, plays a critical role in facilitating student learning for building knowledge” (Dr. Ross Todd, 2003).

Indeed, a California study has shown the difference having a school librarian can make to students attending college. And this New York schools study demonstrated that students attending schools with certified school librarians scored almost 10 points higher in their English Language Arts test.

Read entire study: <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/background/research/>

There is also a survey of international research available on the website of the International Association of School Librarianship at: <http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html>

[< top >](#)

New statistics available on school libraries in Australia

The results of the jointly sponsored Australian School Library Survey Project undertaken in 2007 are beginning to be available. Of Australia’s 9612 schools, 692 participated in this online survey. While this does not represent a large proportion, it does provide much needed data on the state of Australia’s school libraries.

A joint media release by the sponsors states, “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.” In fact, 50% of government schools have budgets of under \$5000, while 3/4s of Anglican school libraries have budgets over \$20,000 (10% over \$100,000!).

In regard to staffing, 35% of Australian school libraries responding to the survey have no or limited professional staffing. (Many more without staff would not have even responded.) This included 20% of schools with no professional staff at all. In the Northern Territory, 95% of schools, most of them remote, have no teacher librarian. Tasmania, WA and Victoria had the lowest number of TLs employed although one third of Anglican schools have 2 or more teacher librarians.

In fact, Anglican and Christian schools have more full time professional staff in their libraries with TLs receiving higher salaries than TLs in other school types.

The picture is bleak for government schools. The decline in staffing and funding shown in the 2003 research review on school libraries by Michele Lonsdale has continued.

Read entire article: <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/background/few-statistics/>

[< top >](#)

Points to consider for House Committee Inquiry Submissions

Here are some points you might like to discuss in your submission.

You certainly don't need to cover them all.

Draw upon your own experience and expertise.

What are you able to do well in contributing to student success?

What would you do if helped by government policy and programs?

As a teacher, parent or grandparent, what do you want to see in terms of future school libraries?

Read more at: <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/2010/03/19/points-to-consider-for-house-committee-inquiry-submissions-27-days-to-go/>

[< top >](#)

IN THE NEWS

In Web Age, Library Job Gets Update

Motoko Rich, The New York Times, February 15, 2009

Some of these new librarians teach children how to develop PowerPoint presentations or create online videos. Others get students to use social networking sites to debate topics from history or comment on classmates' creative writing. Yet as school librarians increasingly teach students crucial skills needed not only in school, but also on the job and in daily life, they are often the first casualties of school budget crunches.

Mesa, the largest school district in Arizona, began phasing out certified librarians from most of its schools last year. In Spokane, Wash., the school district cut back the hours of its librarians in 2007, prompting an outcry among local parents. More than 90 percent of American public schools have libraries, according to federal statistics, but less than two-thirds employ full-time certified librarians.

Lisa Layera Brunkan, a mother of three in Spokane, said she recognized the importance of the school librarian when her daughter, who was 7 at the time, started demonstrating a PowerPoint project. "She said, 'The librarian taught me,'" Ms. Brunkan recalled. "I was just stunned."

Read more at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/16/books/16libr.html?_r=1

[< top >](#)

Every primary pupil deserves a school library

UK Schools Library Association, Media Release, 15 February 2010

Investment in school libraries must start early, argues the School Library Association (SLA) with the launch of its new Primary School Library Charter. The charter will help primary head-teachers and governors set up and run a school library or increase the contribution that their current library makes to the school's effectiveness and the pupils' wellbeing and learning.

Despite the lack of national statistics on primary school library provision, the SLA has anecdotal evidence that primary school libraries, where they exist, suffer from lack of appropriately trained staff, dedicated space and investment. This reflects concerns expressed by Booktrust after its research on school libraries in 2007.

Children's author and former primary teacher Alan Gibbons recently collected more than 5,700 signatures to a Campaign for the Book petition to make school libraries statutory.

Sir Tim Brighouse, associate professor at the Institute of Education, University of London and former Schools Commissioner for London, welcomed the charter, saying: "The school library is one of the key indicators of whether a school environment is as best fitted as it can be for learning. If the library is a desert, you start to worry."

"A good primary school library is visually and aurally delightful with a lot of attention paid to display and image and new technology working alongside old. It is a centre for the school's development of language and an essential part of our commitment to each new generation."

Read entire release: <http://www.sla.org.uk/primary-charter.php>

Download the UK Primary School Library Charter from www.sla.org.uk/primary-charter.php

[< top >](#)

Why every primary pupil needs a library

Children who read do better in school - yet, amazingly, many primaries have closed their libraries and replaced them with ICT suites

Geraldine Brennan, the Independent, 18 February 2010

Many primary school pupils don't have the use of a library in Britain, which is why the School Library Association is on the warpath. It has just published the Primary School Library Charter to show head-teachers and governors how they can afford a proper school library – an attractive space set aside for books with a designated member of staff in charge – and why they should have one.

The association wants to create a climate of reading; they want children to be taught how to sift information and to use their judgement about it, and they want libraries to have links with families.

Tim Brighouse, associate professor at the Institute of Education, University of London, always checks out the library when he visits a school. "A primary school library should be exciting and welcoming, a place for children to delight in stories and a sign that the school is making its environment fit for learning," he says.

School libraries are not compulsory and there are no official figures on the number of primary schools that have libraries compared with secondaries, but the association has anecdotal evidence of libraries closing, dwindling budgets for resources and staff who are not connected with the school's teaching team.

Read entire article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/book-smart-why-every-primary-pupil-needs-a-library-1902376.html>

[< top >](#)

Australian innovation could open new chapter for UK school librarians

Helen Ward, Times Educational Supplement, 26 March 2010

An overhaul of the school librarian's role that would see them become part of the teaching process is under consideration. The idea of "teacher librarians" - which comes from Australia - is being examined as part of a review by the School Library Commission.

The role, which involves librarians also being trained in pedagogy and classroom techniques, entails them working across all curriculum areas and collaborating with teachers to help students become independent researchers. Making librarians' role in children's learning more explicit could be one way of improving their status among unconvinced head-teachers, campaigners have argued.

Alan Gibbons, children's author and organiser of the Campaign for the Book, has called for school libraries to be made statutory.

"The outcome of a school library should be about raising standards, pupils' well-being, literature and learning in general; the fact that the library is not just an adjunct to the English department," he said.

Sue Shaper, of Broxbourne School, Herts, is a chartered librarian with a masters degree in education. She is researching the state of school libraries for the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professions. "I think there is ignorance as to what a librarian's role can be; the basic thing is that a room of books without a librarian is just a room of books."

Read entire article: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6039828>

Find out more

at: http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press/releases/2010/School_library_commission_invites_submissions

[< top >](#)

Libraries at Risk

Feature in the Courier Mail, 30 March 2010

A great deal of research in recent years has shown school libraries make a positive contribution to students' learning outcomes. While most of these studies have taken place outside Australia, there is little doubt school libraries in Australia contribute to learning.

However, the quality of library services offered by many schools and community libraries has been eroded by shrinking budgets and fewer qualified staff.

Libraries are a significant societal asset and need to be seen as an educational investment – not a cost.

There are numerous reports of schools "cashing out:" teacher librarian positions and choosing to use teachers without library qualifications or administrative staff to run libraries.

Teacher librarians are concerned about the quality of school library staffing, funding and scheduling. They are worried about the lack of awareness of administrators, policy makers and government of the importance of their role in the development and promotion of literacy.

These grave concerns have forced teacher-librarians to lobby for change....

"In reviewing libraries in Australian schools, it is to be hoped that the situation in small and remote schools is not forgotten. We used to have dedicated library aides and regional library advisers to support these schools with a set budget for resources. All gone! Library budgets in small schools today are so small or non-existent it is impossible to maintain a collection that will entice your readers – even if they had the staff to select and manage the resources"

Read entire feature: <http://hubinfo.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/b-march-30-libraries-at-risk.pdf>

[< top >](#)

How to hook kids on books

Reading is not only key to academic success, but a source of lifelong pleasure.

Susan Elkin, the Independent, 4 April 2010

Children who can't read can't learn," remarked David Blunkett when he was education secretary. Of course he was right – although that's not the only reason reading matters. Books also bring tremendous enjoyment and satisfaction. Reading them breeds tolerance and understanding of other ways of living, places, times and cultures. It develops concentration, self-reliance and confidence, as well as building vocabulary, use of language and general knowledge.

A recent ChildWise survey found that 42 per cent of boys aged 11-16 never read books for pleasure. And last year's Government figures showed that nearly a tenth of 14-year-old boys have a reading age of just nine.

"Too many boys simply aren't aware of the concept that reading can be for pleasure's sake alone," says the Football Association's editor-in-chief Dan Freedman, who also writes the Jamie Johnson novels about a football prodigy. Freedman is a frequent visitor to schools and promoter of reading.

One of the problems is that we have lost sight of what we mean by "can read" and "can't read". Nearly all children eventually learn to turn the squiggles on the page, paper or notice board into words. They may not be very quick or fluent, but when they see "Danger" or "Menu", they know what it means. Very few children in the developed world reach adulthood in a state of total illiteracy.

By the age of seven most can stumble through a passage from a book while an adult listens. It's decoding. Real reading is what you learn to do once you've cracked the code.

Read entire article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/how-to-hook-kids-on-books-1932452.html>

Susan Elkin is a journalist and former teacher. Her book 'Encouraging Reading' is published by Continuum

[< top >](#)

TAKE ACTION

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the terms of reference by Friday 16 April 2010.

Terms of reference: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/tor.htm>

Read more at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm>

[< top >](#)

Petition for a Qualified Teacher-Librarian in Every Australian School

So far this petition has attracted over 2,000 signatories – and climbing.

We, the undersigned, call on the federal government to ensure that all Australian primary and secondary students have access to a school library and a qualified teacher librarian.

As it has done in the past, the federal government is in a position to influence state school library funding and staffing. To do this, they can: collect national data on school library staffing, funding, and scheduling; tie funding so that states can and must adequately staff and fund school library programs and services; require that literacy programs and other national curricula should explicitly recognize the central role school libraries have in student achievement, literacy attainment, and preparation for post-secondary success; develop national school library standards; increase teacher librarian training positions in university programs.

All Australian students deserve 21st century schools staffed by 21st century professionally qualified teacher librarians.

Find out more at: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/a-qualified-teacher-librarian-in-every-school.html>

[< top >](#)

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Canadian Library Association 2010 National Conference and Trade Show

2-5 June, Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Program details, registration etc: <http://www.cla.ca/conference/2010/>

[< top >](#)

Special Libraries Association Conference & Information Expo 2010

13-16 June, New Orleans, USA

Further information on the 2010 Conference: <http://s36.a2zinc.net/clients/sla/sla2010/public/enter.aspx>

Information on prior and future conferences: <http://www.sla.org/content/Events/>

[< top >](#)

The American Library Association 2010 Annual Conference

24-29 June, Washington Convention Centre, Washington DC USA

For details of program, registration and associated events, see the website:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/conferencesevents/upcoming/annual/index.cfm>

[< top >](#)

Public Libraries of NSW Impact Conference 2010

13-16 July, Albury, NSW

Further information: <http://www.impact2010.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

World Library and Information Congress: 76th IFLA General Conference & Assembly - "Open access to knowledge - promoting sustainable progress"

10-15 August, Gothenburg, Sweden

Further information: <http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76>

[< top >](#)

School Library Association of New Zealand Annual Conference 2010.

2010 is the 10th anniversary year of SLANZA and an event program is in development. Last year's Conference was held in September.

For further details, keep an eye on their Website: <http://www.slanza.org.nz/conference.html>

[< top >](#)

Australian Library & Information Association Conference: Access 2010

1-3 September, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, Brisbane QLD

Further information, registration etc: <http://conferences.alia.org.au/access2010/>

[< top >](#)

Diversity, challenge & resilience: school libraries in action

School Library Association QLD & International Association of School Librarianship Conference

27 September-1 October 2010: Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, Brisbane QLD

Further information: <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/conf/2010/>

[< top >](#)

International School Library Month

October 2010

Diversity Challenge Resilience: School Libraries Have it All

The change to International School Library Month was approved by the IASL Board in December 2007. An announcement was made by the coordinator, Rick Mullholland of Canada - "In early January 2008, the executive of IASL, upon recommendation from the International School Library Day committee, approved the change from International School Library Day to International School Library Month effective October 2008. This change coincides with the tenth anniversary of IASL celebrating school libraries.

International School Library Month will allow those in charge of school libraries around the world to choose a day in October that best fits their specific situation in order to celebrate the importance of school libraries".

James Henri, IASL President, stated, "International School Library Day just got a whole lot bigger. In fact, it has grown into International School Library Month (ISLM). This means you can choose the day or the week or indeed fill up the whole month in dedication of your school library and what it means to the school community".

Further information: <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/islm/>

[< top >](#)

School Library Association of Victoria

Professional Development Program

November 2010

Month by month program details & registration form at:
http://www.slav.schools.net.au/downloads/01home/PD_ExplntForm.pdf

For more information about the work of SLAV and its 50th anniversary year: <http://www.slav.schools.net.au/slav.html>

[< top >](#)

Library & Information Association of New Zealand

28 November-1 December, Centennial Conference, Dunedin NZ

Further information and to register your interest: <http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2010/index.html>

[< top >](#)

ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/australian-education-digest/> (weekly)

- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup/> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Family School Partners : <http://www.familyschool.org.au/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/public-education-voice> (quarterly)

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