



## Students Need School Libraries

# Joint Statement on school library inclusion in the National School Reform Agreement

We, the undersigned members of the School Library Coalition, note the following:

1. The Productivity Commission's *Review of the National School Reform Agreement Study Report* released on 20 January 2023 found that the initiatives under the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) have done little to improve student outcomes so far.<sup>1</sup>
2. Tens of thousands of Australian students do not reach basic levels of literacy and numeracy each year.<sup>2</sup>
3. Australian and international evidence shows that access to a school library run by qualified staff improves student outcomes.<sup>3</sup>
4. Research indicates that significant numbers of Australian students do not have access to a school library managed by qualified staff.<sup>4</sup>
5. Teacher librarians play an important role in teaching and resourcing for whole school literacy, general capabilities, curriculum, and teacher support.<sup>5</sup>
6. Positive impact on students' literacy skills is strongly correlated with the level of qualification of the library staff.<sup>6</sup>
7. School libraries play an important role in improving student wellbeing.<sup>7</sup>
8. The NSRA currently contains no requirements for data collection about the provision, resourcing or staffing of school libraries.
9. The NSRA contains no targets or requirements for state and territory governments to ensure student access to well-run school libraries.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission (2022). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement: Study report*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> ACT Government (2019). *School Libraries: the Heart of 21st Century Learning*.

Scholastic Library Publishing (2016). *School libraries work! A compendium of research supporting the effectiveness of school libraries*.

<sup>4</sup> House Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2011). *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools*;

Dix, K. et al (2020). *School libraries in South Australia 2019 Census*.

<sup>5</sup> Merga, M. (2023). *Creating an Australian School Literacy Policy: A Research-Informed Guide to Designing a Policy that Fits Your School*

<sup>6</sup> House Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2011). *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools*;

Dix, K. et al (2020). *School libraries in South Australia 2019 Census*.

<sup>7</sup> Merga, M. (2021). Libraries as Wellbeing Supportive Spaces in Contemporary Schools. *Journal of Library Administration*, 61(6).

Jackson, B. (2015). The state of Canadian library data. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, 10 (1).

In light of the above, we call on the Federal, State and Territory governments to commit to the following:

1. A target being set for every Australian school student to have access to a well-resourced school library with a qualified teacher librarian and qualified support staff.
2. A support measurement to be implemented against this target for each state and territory to collect and report annually as to:
  - a. The percentage of schools that have, and students that have, access to a school library 5 days a week.
  - b. The non-capital resourcing budgets for school libraries
  - c. The provision of qualified and other staff in school libraries.
3. Support of national collaboration and bilateral agreements to reinforce innovative programs through school libraries.

Signed - School Library Coalition



Australian Library and  
Information Association

