



**Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training
Leader of the Legislative Council**

Your Ref: A895031; Petition 017
Our Ref: 61-30092

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster

Thank you for your letter dated 23 June 2021 regarding Petition 017 – Staffing of school libraries. I appreciate the Committee granting an extension of time to respond.

Libraries continue to be important teaching and learning facilities in public schools. The Department of Education has advised that in May 2021, the staffing of school libraries consisted of 482.65 full-time equivalent (FTE) library positions across all public schools. As some staff work part-time, there were 809 individuals employed in these positions. The staff included:

- 45 qualified teacher librarians in 37.5 FTE positions;
- 695 library officers in 410.62 FTE positions;
- 62 library assistants in 31.42 FTE positions; and
- seven others in 3.52 FTE positions.

It is acknowledged that library staffing trends reflect a shift away from the traditional teacher librarian role in schools. With the evolution of library spaces to keep pace with technology and contemporary teaching practices, it is recognised that a range of qualifications, skills and experience are valuable, and these may or may not be formal library qualifications.

In public schools, principals have the autonomy to make staffing and resourcing decisions that reflect their school's context, needs and priorities. A principal may employ a qualified teacher librarian and a library technician or library officer if they consider this to be the most appropriate use of resources to support the identified needs of students in their school.

I note that improved student achievement, the teaching of critical research skills, enhancing literacy skills, providing access to quality resources and encouraging a love of reading are primarily the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Library visits and resources are only one strategy among many used by teachers to achieve these outcomes.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to respond to the petition as part of your preliminary enquiries.

Yours sincerely



SUE ELLERY MLC
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
27 JUL 2021