

Teacher Librarians: An endangered species



Role title: Teacher librarian (TL)

A **teacher librarian** is **dual qualified** in the fields of education and librarianship. They hold a recognised **teaching qualification** that meets eligibility for teacher registration, **as well as a university qualification in library and information science** that ideally includes specialisations related to the school library context.

Workforce status: Endangered

Australian school libraries report understaffing and school libraries not staffed by qualified teacher librarians



56%

of schools report their library is not adequately staffed
Source: The 2025 Softlink Australian School Library Survey



15%

of all South Australian schools have a dual qualified TL,
most employed well below the recommended time
Source: The School Libraries in South Australia: 2024 Census



57%

of schools only have non-librarian qualified staff
Source: The School Libraries in South Australia: 2024 Census

Critical educational roles of a dual qualified TL



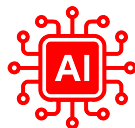
Curate resources to support teaching and learning

Digital, physical, databases, pathfinders



As information specialists, equip students with digital and information literacy skills

to support students becoming effective, ethical and informed producers and consumers of information



Teach AI and algorithmic literacy

Understand how AI is trained, the limits of AI, biases and learn strategies to engage critically with information



Promote a reading culture - in a format that supports the reader

Learning and recreational reading



Support student wellbeing

Safe spaces, inclusive collections, clubs, programs

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Threats



Lack of mandated staffing standards

Since the 1990s Australian states have removed mandates to have a qualified TL in every school library (New South Wales is the exception)



School autonomy in staffing decisions

With no requirement to employ a qualified TL, Principals may remove or replace the role entirely and determine library staffing. This leads to inconsistent staffing, loss of specialist expertise and inequity between schools.



Lack of national data

Difficult to track trends or advocate to decision makers



Misconceptions about the role

Minimising and deprofessionalising the TL role erodes its legitimacy and negatively impacts student learning, access to resources and development of skills



Misused expertise - TLs used as relief not specialists

This disempowers the role and prevents TLs from delivering the specialised teaching and expertise that teachers and students benefit from



Replacement of dual qualified TLs with unqualified staff

Qualified TLs are increasingly replaced by staff without teaching or library qualifications, reducing students' access to specialist support



Funding and budget constraints

Cuts lead to inadequate or ageing spaces, insufficient collection development and limited access to digital resources