

STUDENTS NEED School Libraries



Holly Godfree is the coordinator of the Students Need School Libraries campaign (studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au), a nationwide awareness raising campaign to challenge the perception that school libraries are irrelevant and replaceable by technology. In her own words 'there can be an assumption by non-library people, especially decision makers, that what happens in libraries is simple'. This superficial understanding of what happens in school libraries has led to a situation where many school libraries are staffed by people not specifically trained to do what school libraries can and should be doing.

The Students Need School Libraries campaign came out of the formation of the School Library Coalition and follows years of efforts by specialists to directly contact and influence decision makers, such as principals and politicians. This strategy generated the Parliamentary Inquiry into School Libraries in 2010, however, statistics continued to show a decline in funding for qualified staff in school libraries across the country.


The Students Need School Libraries campaign instead appeals directly to the general public. Holly believes that most parents assume that all is well in their children's school libraries and that they will be alarmed when they realise what students are missing out on without a strong school library service.

At its heart, the Students Need School Libraries is a grassroots campaign designed to harnesses community sentiment. We have taken to social media with videos, celebrity mentors, networks and critical research. Has it changed anything? Holly believes that it will be a slow burn. It needs to first get outside of the 'library bubble'. The general public need to be talking about it but it will take thousands of small conversations for us to achieve that end.

A previous campaign aimed at celebrating excellent school libraries was the ALIA FAIR (Freedom of Access to Information and Resources) Great School Libraries campaign which allowed library users to nominate a school library service which meets certain criteria in terms of staffing and programs. The campaign was a resounding success in 2015

and celebrated principals and school communities which value and invest in their

library services. This conversation within schools was very powerful and rewarded good libraries and their mentors and therefore, the School Library Coalition will relaunch the Great School Libraries campaign in 2020.

A good school library service should not be just for the lucky few. The clear goal of both Students Need School Libraries and Great School Libraries is to gain policy outcomes which support the substantial research base that a properly staffed school library is essential for the success of all Australian students. 

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The members of the School Library Coalition:

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
Australian School Library Association (ASLA)
School Library Association of New South Wales (SLANSW)
School Library Association of South Australia (SLASA)
School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV)
Queensland School Library Association (QSLA)
Western Australian School Library Association (WASLA)

For more information, research and resources see:

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