

Time ... for a strong coalition

Georgia Phillips

Lobbyist for school libraries, Georgia was a teacher librarian for over 30 years in NSW and a lecturer at CSU in teacher librarianship



I am writing this in March and the **YSL Conference Advocacy** is off to a flying start. I was particularly looking forward to conversations with Gary Hartzell.

Hartzell is thinking that twenty years of advocacy doesn't really seem to have done much (teacher librarians are losing jobs right and left in all too many American states). His idea is to target new audiences: the professors of educational administration for one, and principal associations. Yet how many principals actually get higher degrees in administration? That doesn't seem to be the path to leadership in our state systems.

I'd like to believe that Julia is hoping to address this knowledge gap through the **The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership**, which would develop a training course for principals on how to lead and manage local schools.

How else can her *Empowering Local Schools* policy work?

How else can *empowered* principals in WA, SA, Qld, the ACT, Tasmania and Victoria, where it is happening, increasingly understand that, when they eliminate teacher librarians, they will negatively impact literacy and learning in their schools? Or that laptops don't replace non-fiction and teacher librarians?

And you think it **won't** happen in NSW?

Think again.

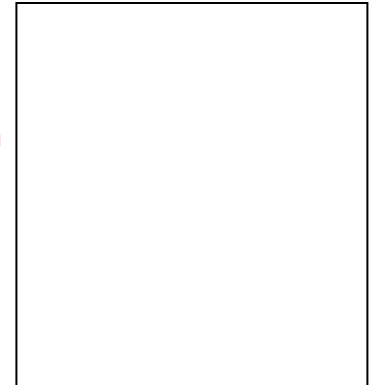
Principals, parents and the state and federal governments love the idea of **Empowering Local Schools** ([/www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/pm-gives-principals-control/story-fn59niix-1225900279704](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/pm-gives-principals-control/story-fn59niix-1225900279704))!

Under the guise of the National Partnership Agreements it WILL happen here. Some telling words from Hartzell wouldn't go astray::

Unfortunately psychology and social psychology research demonstrates that once we have structured the way we see things, it is very difficult to get us to change those perceptions. We discount information that runs contrary to what we already believe. Librarians need to capture teachers - and later administrators - in their professional infancy.

From the beginnings of The Hub in 2007, we have tried to target principal journals and teacher journals and parent newsletters and the media.

we require changes in current perceptions, we require a steady stream of information and argument to force changes in current perceptions says Professor Emeritus Gary Hartzell.



We rarely write for teacher librarians. If only more of us could speak at principals' conferences, something which ASLA should attempt to do as much as possible.

Perhaps ASLA needs to put a moratorium on Conferences designed for our profession, for say a year, in order to redirect effort towards principals' and teacher educators' and parents' conferences.

In other words, let's get out there and address conferences and jointly publish papers. Hartzell also commented that we require a steady stream of information and argument to force changes in current perceptions.

I agree. Absolutely!

That is why we keep up the campaign. Keep up the messages. Don't rely on any one report... federal inquiry report notwithstanding.

You've written one letter to the editor? Write another.

You have published one article for principals? Now do another.

You have sent one email to an education academic, a parent association president?

Time for another!

Rung up your local federal and state member?

Ring again!

You wear them down.

Those academics training teacher librarians are also in a valuable position to speak to other academics who are training teachers, noted Hartzell.

Yet we have so few of them here in Australia. Many of them already do so much to address these groups.

It's principals themselves who must be recruited to speak to their colleagues.

Where we find knowledgeable and supportive principals, we must urge them to publish and to address conferences of their colleagues.

We can offer to co-publish with them (i.e. do the draft but give them top billing).

This campaign still has far to go, even if the *Inquiry Report* has, by now, been tabled. Another ten years at least, suggests Hartzell.

Can we stick it out?

Will the national ASLA body be completely restructured so that it can speak with one strong voice for all of us nationally?

Will there be any teacher librarians left in Australia by then?

There will be if we build a strong coalition of teacher educators, principals and parents.

And that will happen if you, and I, **start now**.