

TEACHER-LIBRARIAN

## Treloar a champion of Queensland literacy

BY DENIZ UZGUN

AT a time when the teacher-librarian role is becoming ever more precarious, Clare Treloar is bucking the trend.

With school library budgets slashed and jobs in the field disappearing, the teacher-librarian from Harristown State High School in Queensland is proving how a well-resourced, professionally staffed school library can make a huge difference for students.

Nominated by proud colleague Neil Hegarty, Treloar is the winner of EducationHQ's Unsung Heroes – Teacher-Librarian Award, a deserving recipient from an outstanding field of nominees.

Despite having a demanding workload – working at one of Queensland's largest and most diverse secondary schools of nearly 1700 students – Treloar hasn't shied away from responsibility in her 10 years at the helm.

With access to redevelopment funding, Treloar managed a major refurbishment of the library, transforming a "dreary and under-utilised facility" into a vibrant, busy and innovative learning hub.

The space is now open and flexible with a variety of furniture arrangements, ever-evolving displays and learning spaces that can

be reconfigured to suit student needs.

"We studied other libraries such as the State Library of Queensland, Brisbane Grammar and Lourdes Hill, and looked at what was working and what was popular in their libraries and then

**"... it's good to know that there's people out there who really value a library."**

brought it back to ours," Treloar says.

Through a significant purchasing program, Treloar also modernised and expanded the school's book collection, introducing a broad array of graphic novels, as well as specific sets of texts that meet the needs of EALD learners.

"We surveyed the students to work out what they were interested in, looked at our collection and decided on our genres, which happened in consultation with

the English department," she says.

On top of her library duties, Treloar also conducts a series of lessons with students to develop their research skills and raise awareness of referencing and copyright expectations.

This is in addition to her significant commitment to the school's literacy program.

"Her previous experience as an eminent teacher of English is enabling her to make a very positive contribution to the development of reading, writing and critical literacy across the whole school curriculum," Hegarty wrote in his nomination letter.

Incredibly grateful for her nomination, Treloar is well aware of the challenges facing the teacher-librarian profession.

Once a staple of schools, it has been described as a "dying breed" by the media, and late last year, the ABC reported "an alarming loss in the number of qualified teacher-librarians in schools, warning student literacy will continue to suffer if the trend is not reversed".

Treloar says that because the role is underappreciated, libraries are left understaffed or run by underqualified and overworked aides.

"Particularly in Queensland, we have a situation where the teacher-librarian is not yet a specialist teacher position, and so what that means is that if a teacher-librarian



One of Clare Treloar's many roles includes helping students to develop their research skills and awareness of referencing and copyright expectations.

retires, the principal doesn't have to replace them.

"While you have teacher aides or teachers in charge of these libraries, it is more of a part time responsibility.

"So that reading engagement that is so vital in a school library isn't being facilitated consistently and because it's not mandated that you have to have a teacher-librarian, it falls by the wayside in some schools."

Despite the challenges, Treloar is adamant her work at Harristown SHS will continue to make a difference, especially with a supportive team and community right by her side every step of the way.

"We've got a wonderful library and IT team who have worked in this library for the last 10 years... and it's good to know that there's people out there who really value a library."