



## Creating a national voice for Australian libraries

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**Meeting:**

**87. Management of Library Associations, Library Theory and Research, Management and Marketing, Education and Training, Statistics and Evaluation, LIS in Developing Countries SIG**

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WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 76TH IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND ASSEMBLY

10-15 August 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden

<http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76>

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### **Abstract:**

*The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has embarked on a lobbying and advocacy project (2009-2012), which addresses two fundamental issues – firstly, the need to speak with a united voice to government, and secondly, the importance of focus.*

*Libraries tend to dwell on the factors which separate us, rather than those which unite us. Lobbying and advocacy requires a different way of thinking, because together, we are so much stronger and can influence government more effectively.*

*Libraries contribute to many government priorities – literacy, education, health, e-government, digital citizenship, social inclusion, economic vibrancy and innovation. Instead of dissipating our energy by chasing every lobbying opportunity, we need to focus on a few areas where we can clearly demonstrate a high level of impact. The rest will follow.*

*Looking at overseas models (most notably in the UK and US), ALIA has identified successful strategies and adopted four key areas of focus. Research is underpinning an exciting new approach that has already provided the association with a ‘seat at the table’ in Parliament House, Canberra.*

*The first ALIA Public Libraries Summit took place in July 2009. Quantitative data and qualitative information, expressed directly to Ministers and through social media and other new communications channels, have followed, enabling ALIA to achieve great strides in a very short space of time.*

*As well as new reports generating fresh insights (eg Edith Cowan University Better Beginnings; Centre for Youth Literature Keeping Young Australians Reading), Australian libraries are using evidence and statistics generated by academic partners in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS), to convince the Federal Government of the need to invest in the library network.*

*At the same time, work is being carried out at a grassroots level, with the Every Member an Advocate campaign, providing training, support and tools for library managers and staff.*

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## **CREATING A NATIONAL VOICE FOR AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES**

### **Introduction**

Australia has a population of some 22 million people and more than 50 library associations. There are independent public library associations in six states. There is not only a national school library association, but there are also small special interest groups such as the Catholic Primary Teacher Librarians' Association. There is the Council of Australian University Librarians; the Arts Libraries Society of Australia and New Zealand; the Australian Law Librarians' Association; the Australian Government Libraries Information Network.<sup>1</sup> Each has its own role, its own members, but when it comes to lobbying and advocacy, it is essential that the library sector in Australia speaks with 'one voice' – and this is where ALIA, the Australian Library and Information Association<sup>2</sup>, is able to provide a lead.

In 2009, ALIA launched a three year program of advocacy for the sector, which addresses two fundamental points: firstly, the need to speak with a united voice to government, and secondly, the importance of focus. Research is underpinning our approach and I am pleased to report that we already have success stories to share.

In this paper, I will discuss the broad principles behind our lobbying and advocacy activities; the various types of organisations involved that are working together; the factors affecting how we advocate for libraries – especially when government is a target audience; what we perceive to be the role of ALIA and the other associations; our Every Member an Advocate<sup>3</sup> campaign, and three case studies showing advocacy in action.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about these associations, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/links/organisations.html> (Accessed 31 May 2010)

<sup>2</sup> For more information about ALIA, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au> (Accessed 31 May 2010)

<sup>3</sup> For more information about Every Member an Advocate, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/every.member.advocate.html> (Accessed 31 May 2010)

## 1. Broad principles

### 1.1 The definition of lobbying and advocacy

Lobbying and advocacy are sometimes thought to be one and the same, but they are different.

- Advocacy (noun): the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending
- Lobbying (verb): to try to influence the actions of public officials, especially legislators

Advocacy is something library professionals do every day, almost without thinking. They spread the word about the fantastic things that happen in libraries and encourage people to come and experience the places, spaces and services on offer. It doesn't require a great deal of extra effort, although it is helpful to have a planned, rather than an ad hoc advocacy approach, with key messages constantly reiterated.

Lobbying is more specific. It seeks a tangible outcome. It may be an attempt to change policy, increase funding or build a new library. It requires a special effort – strategy, plan and actions.

### 1.2 Every Member an Advocate<sup>4</sup>

While every ALIA member may not have the need or the skills to lobby, it is our belief that every member of the peak professional body for libraries in Australia should be advocating on behalf of the sector. This year we will run a series of workshops in every state and territory capital, free for members, sharing and developing the skill of advocating for all levels of library staff. Several hundred library professionals will have participated in these events by the end of 2010.

### 1.3 Agreed set of messages

In terms of lobbying and advocacy, less is more. Government and other audiences don't find it easy to deal with a fragmented sector, where there are many voices, all calling for something a little different. The most effective lobbying and advocacy is achieved when there are a number of voices, all saying the same thing: one clear set of messages, coming from multiple directions.

Libraries tend to dwell on the factors which separate us, rather than those which unite us. Lobbying and advocacy require a different way of thinking, because together, we are so much stronger and carry so much more weight with government.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

In 2010 we gathered the other national library associations together for a roundtable<sup>5</sup> meeting to agree on federal election lobbying topics for which we would all consistently lobby.

#### 1.4 Lead body for lobbying

While many groups will have a part to play in constructing these messages, conveying them to their own audiences, and ensuring that their own interests are properly represented, there must be a lead body for any lobbying initiative, which has the mandate to negotiate on behalf of the sector.

Government does not want to sit down at the table with a number of groups to agree a settlement – that leads to complexity and compromise. Instead, it wants to sit down with one body, speaking on behalf of all the groups. Out of the roundtable meeting, ALIA will take the lead on behalf of Australian libraries with the agreed messages.

#### 1.5 The importance of focus

Libraries contribute to many government priorities – literacy, education, health, e-government, digital citizenship, social inclusion, economic vibrancy, innovation. Instead of dissipating our energy by chasing every opportunity for stating the case for libraries, we believe it is important to focus on a few areas where we can clearly demonstrate a high level of impact.

For example, public libraries in Australia are focusing on four themes for this period of advocacy: children and early literacy; digital citizenship; social inclusion; and, health and ageing.

#### 1.6 Research-based cases

Anecdotal evidence plays a part in lobbying and advocacy. We all respond to stories of families where there were no books being transformed by the discovery of their local public library, or the post-graduate student who discovers new material in the library that enables them to take their findings to a new level.

However, a firm base for lobbying and advocacy has to be created out of hard facts. As a sector, and certainly in Australia, we tend not to have the funds to undertake a great deal of original research, however, where we can, we do. For example, ALIA invests in a survey<sup>6</sup> every two years, tracking internet use in Australian public libraries.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about the ALIA Roundtable, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/roundtable/2010/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the Internet Access In Public Libraries Survey, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

## 1.7 Realistic expectations for lobbying

We can exert influence in four ways - by persuading opinion leaders of our point of view; by identifying what has been promised or committed and calling to account those who have failed to deliver; by catching the imagination of the public; and by systematically gathering facts which confirm or contest the received wisdom.

Lobbying comes with no guarantee of achieving our goals, but there are ways in which we can improve our chances. The first is only to fight battles where there is a chance of success, no matter how slim. There is no point wasting time and effort chasing an objective that is impossible to achieve. The second is to make sure we have a strong case, which will carry the community with us and enable us to bring partners on board. It is important to recognise weaknesses and deal with these up front, rather than ignoring them and finding our case undermined as a result. This is where it is so important to check the research to make sure that it fully supports the statements we make – and where there are alternative findings, that we acknowledge these. Thirdly, we have to be prepared to negotiate on some elements of our proposal. Politicians especially have their own agenda and may be willing to concede in some areas, while they are unable to do so in others.

## 1.8 Long term goals for advocacy

While advocacy often does not show immediate returns, a planned approach should include long term goals, for example, preparing and meeting with funding bodies well in advance of a request for a major investment or commitment.

Where advocacy has been a sustained feature, and strong relationships have been formed over time with key influencers and decision-makers, it is less likely that there will be a need for lobbying campaigns and when there is, they are more likely to have a successful outcome.

## 1.9 The importance of partnership

Libraries standing together, but alone, don't have the same power and impact as libraries in partnership with other groups, whether that's the local community or organisations representing other sectors.

## **2. Working together**

I am going to speak mainly with reference to lobbying in this section of my paper. Over the last 12 months in Australia, we have seen some excellent examples of how partnerships between library bodies and organisations outside our sector have brought about successful outcomes, specifically in the areas of public library funding, the profile of teacher librarians and Federal Government commitment to school libraries, and challenging the Australian Government's proposal to introduce mandatory ISP-level filtering of the internet.

ALIA has worked in concert with pressure groups, professional lobbyists, other associations, commercial companies, the media and celebrity champions, to bring about positive outcomes.

## 2.1 Pressure groups

Pressure groups are formed when there is a groundswell of opinion. They are created by passionate and committed individuals, who come together to fight for a particular cause, and when a successful outcome has been achieved, they generally disband. They use guerrilla tactics, confrontational language, and challenging statements to achieve their end.

There is the inevitable question “Why can’t our association do that?” We can certainly act as the catalyst, giving members the facts. We can provide the research-based facts and figures that give weight to the passionate argument. We can acknowledge and applaud their efforts, but we also have to be mindful of the broader picture.

As the peak body for the sector, we may well be negotiating with government in a number of areas and we have to be mindful of how our actions in one Department may affect our ability to secure the appropriate outcome within another.

We believe that professional bodies and pressure groups play a distinct and complementary role in lobbying.

## 2.2 Professional lobbyists

Professional lobbyists are costly, but worth their fee. They provide valuable advice, organise meetings at short notice with powerful figures, and use parliamentary processes to make sure our messages reach the right people.

While on the whole this works well, there are some politicians who dislike dealing with professional lobbyists representing a number of different clients. It can also create distance between the key messages and the people within the sector who can convey them with passion.

## 2.3 Associations working together

We believe that there needs to be one lead negotiator – a peak body – for any lobbying effort, but there is still a place for other associations at the table. In fact, by demonstrating our united front, we send out clear signals that we are strong and confident.

## 2.4 Commercial companies

Libraries have had a difficult relationship with commercial entities. While some libraries are happy to accept “cheque-book” sponsorship, they are

nervous about forming a closer partnership for fear that this will have a negative effect on their institution's reputation.

We see it differently. We have had first hand experience in the last year of partnering with Google and Yahoo!<sup>7</sup> over an issue which affects us all – mandatory ISP-level internet filtering. By taking a managed approach to the partnership, we have used their weight, funding and contacts to take us into places we would have not have reached on our own. There is no doubt the reach and profile of our campaign has been vastly increased by partnering with international companies and we do not believe the “library” brand has been in any way damaged by this collaboration.

## 2.5 Other partners

On a more general note, when it comes to lobbying and advocacy, partnerships with other organisations such as Adult Learning Australia, Blue Shield Australia and OCLC, again help us expand our reach and profile. Simply by connecting networks, they are also able to place our key messages in front of new audiences.

## 2.6 The media

Libraries are fortunate to have great public support, and this is reflected in the media coverage given to libraries, especially when there is a funding issue or the possibility that a library might have to close.

The best publicity is the kind where the community speaks out on behalf of libraries. It is far more powerful to have library users calling for action, rather than those of us with a vested interest.

## 2.7 Celebrity champions

We also cannot ignore the pull of a celebrity or VIP champion. Last year, we trialled the ALIA Public Library Ambassador<sup>8</sup> program in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. We now have five ambassadors: a Police Commissioner, a radio presenter, a well-known journalist, an author, and a local politician. They have participated in Library and Information Week and National Simultaneous Storytime<sup>9</sup> and we have asked for their help on other issues, such as where libraries have faced funding cuts.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about the Safer Internet Group, see URL: <http://www.saferinternetgroup.org> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>8</sup> For more information about the ALIA Public Library Ambassador program, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/publiclibraries/ambassadors/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>9</sup> For more information about these campaigns, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

### **3. Factors affecting how we advocate and lobby for libraries**

#### **3.1 Restrictions on lobbying activities**

Advocacy is a natural extension of library professionals' enthusiasm for their role, and their institution. However, government-funded libraries can find themselves in a difficult, if not impossible, situation when it comes to lobbying. For this reason, we advise members as part of our Every Member an Advocate campaign<sup>10</sup>, to support "friends" groups and recruit champions, who can speak out about issues when the library management team is effectively gagged.

Of course, this is where ALIA, as the peak professional body, can provide added value for members. We are able to lobby on their behalf.

#### **3.2 Relationships with lobbying targets**

Another reason for asking ALIA and other partners to step in, is where the long-term relationship between library managers and their funding bodies could be damaged by an aggressive lobbying campaign.

For example, in some states the Local Government Association (LGA) negotiates the public library funding agreement with the State Government. The LGA may advise public libraries to moderate calls for increased funding as the negotiations progress, but there is no compulsion on the part of others – ALIA, "friends" groups, or library associations in other states – to remain silent.

In this way, library associations and local pressure groups can play a complementary supporting role, enabling the libraries at the centre of the debate to remain on good terms with the lobbying target.

### **4. The role of ALIA**

We see the role of the Association in lobbying and advocacy as being to:

- Assist the sector to create a core set of agreed messages
- Act as a lead body in negotiations with Federal Government
- Give focus
- Provide access to research
- Identify and develop partnerships with other organisations to extend our reach and profile
- Create events and collateral
- Facilitate communication
- Enable all our members to participate

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 2



#### 4.1 Assist the sector to create a core set of agreed messages

As the peak body, we provide a central hub and information exchange, supported by the in-depth knowledge of the sector that our own staff possess. We have several special interest groups, including public libraries, special libraries and TAFE libraries. We have good working relationships with other library associations. We organise face-to-face meetings and teleconferences to enable everyone to have their say, at the end of which, we adopt a Cabinet approach, with everyone agreeing to the same core set of messages.

#### 4.2 Act as a lead body in negotiations with Federal Government

Over the years, and particularly in the last 12 months, we have worked hard at getting ourselves known in parliamentary circles. We now have relationships with politicians and their advisers, which we can leverage on behalf of the sector. We have been called to give evidence to Government Senate Inquiries and we regularly make submissions<sup>11</sup> to government and Royal Commissions. We are directly approached to make funding submissions on behalf of the Australian library sector for related funding.

#### 4.3 Give focus

Each section of the library community has its own issues, and from them come extensive wish-lists. It is our role to distill a few key strands that can drive our top-level advocacy on behalf of the sector. Reading for pleasure, information literacy, lifelong learning, digital literacy and the availability of electronic resources – these are themes which resonate with most libraries.

#### 4.4 Provide access to research

We are unable to fund more than one substantial piece of original research each year, but we are able to link to research published in Australia and around the world. As well as new reports generating fresh insights, for example Edith Cowan University *Better Beginnings*<sup>12</sup> and the Centre for Youth Literature *Keeping Young Australians Reading*<sup>13</sup>, we are able to use evidence and statistics generated by academic partners in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS)<sup>14</sup>, to convince the Federal Government of the need to invest in the library network.

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<sup>11</sup> For more information about ALIA submissions, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>12</sup> For more information about Edith Cowan University *Better Beginnings*, see URL: <http://www.better-beginnings.com.au> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> For more information about the Centre for Youth Literature *Keeping Young Australians Reading*, see URL: [http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies\\_reports/keeping-reading.html](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies_reports/keeping-reading.html) (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the Centre for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, see URL: <http://www.chass.org.au/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

Members can access reports and information through the ALIA website and we quote extensively from this work in our submissions<sup>15</sup> to government.

#### 4.5 Identify and develop partnerships with other organisations to extend our reach and profile

In Australia, we have a vibrant not-for-profit sector and many of these organisations are keen to align themselves with libraries at a national level. We partner with Vision Australia, the Big Book Club and others, creating opportunities to talk about libraries in the context, for example, of helping people with print disabilities, welcoming new migrants, and promoting lifelong learning.

#### 4.6 Create events and collateral

Each year, we run various events<sup>16</sup> which can be used by libraries as an advocacy platform. The biggest is Library and Information Week each May. This includes National Simultaneous Storytime, which takes place all around Australia and this year featured *Little White Dogs Can't Jump* by Bruce Whatley and Rosie Smith. There is also Library Lovers Day on 14 February, the Summer Reading Club and Information Awareness Month.

In 2009, we ran the first ALIA Public Libraries Summit<sup>17</sup>, in Canberra, inviting politicians and government advisers to meet senior people from the library world and discuss our four themes – childhood and early literacy; digital citizenship; social inclusion and health and ageing. Our 50 places were swiftly taken and from that initial session, we have had a number of projects move forward, including National Standards for Australian Public Libraries, a National Vision and Framework for Public Libraries, and our National Year of Reading 2012.

Also in 2009, we produced the *Little Book of Public Libraries*<sup>18</sup>, based on the UK publication but an Australian version. We sold 30,000 copies and it has proved to be an incredibly useful tool for use with local councillors and at a state and national level.

#### 4.7 Facilitate communication

Successful advocacy and lobbying rely on effective and extensive communication. We have more than 80 e-lists<sup>19</sup>, well-used by the library

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>17</sup> For more information about the ALIA Public Libraries Summit, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/committees/public.libraries/summit09/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>18</sup> For more information about the *Little Book of Public Libraries*, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/publiclibraries> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>19</sup> For more information about ALIA e-lists, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/alianet/e-lists/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

community, in addition to our monthly colour magazine and regular e-newsletters<sup>20</sup> for special interest groups.

We hold meetings, run teleconferences, and use the wider media – not only traditional newspapers, radio and TV, but also social networking sites, blogs and wikis. Facebook has proved particularly useful for gathering people to a cause; Twitter is also used extensively by Australian library professionals.

#### 4.8 Enable all our members to participate

For many people who work in libraries, lobbying and advocacy is a natural extension of their work promoting the library. For others, it can be challenging, which is why ALIA has organised 16 advocacy workshops in 8 locations around Australia during 2010, as part of our Every Member an Advocate<sup>21</sup> campaign.

### 5. Every Member an Advocate campaign<sup>22</sup>

The Every Member an Advocate campaign provides training, support and tools for library managers and staff.

There is a special section on our website from which the *ALIA Guide to Lobbying and Advocacy*<sup>23</sup> and a presentation for library managers to use with staff can be downloaded. There are links to other campaigns and we also provide a helpline for members to request assistance from our advocacy project officer.

By the end of 2010, we estimate that more than 300 ALIA members will have had the opportunity to attend Every Member an Advocate workshops and that many more will benefit indirectly by those delegates sharing the information with their own teams.

## 6. Case studies

### 6.1 The Safer Internet Group<sup>24</sup>

When ISP-level internet filtering was proposed in December 2009 by the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), ALIA took the lead in protesting against the move on behalf of libraries and the general public in Australia.

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<sup>20</sup> For more information about ALIA publications, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/publishing> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>23</sup> For more information about the *ALIA Guide to Lobbying and Advocacy*, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 6

The Australian Government proposes to block Refused Classification (RC) materials, which include child sex abuse content, bestiality, sexual violence and the detailed instruction of crime or drug use. ALIA's concern was that even if the Government could guarantee that only RC-rated content would be filtered, its blacklist would only cover URLs. ISP level URL blocking would not deal with peer-to-peer networking, instant messaging, emails and chat rooms where much of the child pornography activity occurs. It would potentially give parents a false sense of security that their children were surfing a "safe" web.

Filtering the internet is so closely related to censorship that it goes against the fundamental tenets of librarianship – freedom of information. We communicated widely within the sector and the overwhelming response was that this possible action by Government must be stopped.

On this basis, we joined with Google and Yahoo! to become one of the founder members of the Safer Internet Group. Together, we worked on common points on which we were all agreed. Instead of ISP-level internet filtering, we called for:

- The introduction of a national, comprehensive cyber-safety education program
- A significant increase in policing
- Technical measures focusing on those sites with child sexual abuse material.

*Untangling the Net*<sup>25</sup> was one of the main reports referred to in our library campaign. This research was carried out by the University of New South Wales, Edith Cowan University and ARC Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation at the Queensland University of Technology. The 46-page document details the findings of senior academics within these institutions to the idea of mandatory ISP-level filtering. In summary:

On the basis of our survey of international research, we argue that Australia should not apply a system of media content classification that already treats different media inconsistently to the online environment without any consideration of the existing flaws in regulation and the complex particularities of the online world. *The internet is not a medium*: it is a whole new media environment which requires us to rethink how we regulate content, protect vulnerable groups and define the relationship between media consumers and media producers.

One of the clear risks of focusing disproportionate public policy attention and public resources on content regulation is that many parents and teachers may gain a false sense of security when it comes to the material their children encounter online. This risk is particularly high in a regulatory system that relies on a blacklist which, by its very nature, will only capture and represent a small sample of the online material of concern.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For more information about *Untangling the Net*, see URL: [http://www.ecu.edu.au/pr/downloads/Untangling\\_The\\_Net.pdf](http://www.ecu.edu.au/pr/downloads/Untangling_The_Net.pdf) (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p ii.

ALIA and other members of the Safer Internet Group, now expanded to include other organisations such as the Systems Administrators Guild of Australia and the Internet Society, made submissions to Government in February 2010. ALIA's submission<sup>27</sup> was signed by 13 library associations, representing university, school, government, state, national, law and public libraries, as well as Friends of Libraries Australia. A further submission<sup>28</sup> was made by ALIA to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety in June 2010.

Using the services of a professional lobbying firm, meetings were set up with Government ministers and their advisors, the Opposition and the Greens. Having major international household names on board, gave the campaign an added zest and raised the profile of the debate beyond government circles, into the national and international media in both traditional and online news forums.

## **6.2 School libraries and the role of teacher-librarians**

The genesis of this case study dates back over years, as the investment in Australian school libraries and the role of teacher librarians has been gradually eroded, in attempts by education departments to make budget cuts in some areas and fund development in others.

In a 2007 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Australia had slipped from second to sixth place in reading literacy, out-performed by Finland, South Korea, Hong Kong, Canada and New Zealand.

In May 2009, two studies were published as part of the Australian School Libraries Research Project (ASLRP)<sup>29</sup>, showing that Australian school libraries were desperately under-funded, while professional staff were under pressure to spend more and more time outside the school library.

Funded by ALIA and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA)<sup>30</sup>, Edith Cowan University undertook the ASLRP project which revealed that around 50% of Australian school libraries were trying to run the library on an annual materials budget of less than AU\$10,000 per annum.

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<sup>27</sup> To view ALIA's submission about Mandatory ISP filtering, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/mandatory.filtering.html> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>28</sup> To view ALIA's submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/cyber.safety.html> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>29</sup> For more information about the Australian School Libraries Research Project, see URL: <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>30</sup> For more information about the Australian School Library Association, see URL: <http://www.asla.org.au> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

The overall picture was one of very dedicated staff playing a critical role in teaching children the information literacy skills that will last them a lifetime, but facing enormous pressures.

ALIA and ASLA formed an alliance to communicate these findings throughout the library world and to deliver key messages to government. There was extensive coverage of the issue and from this a pressure group was formed, called The Hub<sup>31</sup>, promoting the Campaign for Quality School Libraries in Australia.

ASLA and The Hub lobbied the Department of Education, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and this combination was successful in prompting a Government Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools<sup>32</sup>, announced early in 2010.

This campaign occurred at a time when the Federal Government was engaged in the Building the Education Revolution<sup>33</sup> – an economic stimulus package designed to protect Australia from the Global Financial Crisis by investing extensively in education infrastructure with thousands of building projects being approved for Australian schools focussing on new and refurbished libraries, halls and classrooms.

Our key message to Government was that it was one thing to build new school libraries, but without equipment, materials and qualified staff, they were in danger of becoming empty shells. These comments are clearly stated in the video<sup>34</sup> that was produced to promote the Inquiry by the Parliament House news channel.

ALIA and ASLA held regular teleconferences throughout the period of the Government Inquiry with public hearings in every capital city to keep key volunteers and Association staff updated on Inquiry developments. ALIA and ASLA presented to the committee on two occasions.

Many Australian library associations and individual members made separate submissions, but the key messages and recommendations were the same, including:

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<sup>31</sup> For more information about The Hub, see URL: <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>32</sup> For more information about the Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools, see URL: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>33</sup> For more information about Building the Education Revolution, see URL: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/buildingtheeducationrevolution/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)

<sup>34</sup> To view the video, see URL: [http://www.aph.gov.au/house/house\\_news/](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/house_news/) (Accessed May 31, 2010)

- Funding for research in school libraries to cover statistics, standards for resourcing and staffing, best practice, and resources for the school library community
- The development of a new funding model to ensure that there is a teacher librarian in every school
- Support for professional development opportunities for teacher librarians and other school library staff

ALIA provided members with the opportunity to participate in the lobbying activity, with a template letter available on our website for people to sign and send to their local Federal politician and others with influence. We also asked for signatures for a letter of support and received more than 700 responses. Our efforts continue and we report on them on a dedicated 'school libraries' webpage<sup>35</sup> that ALIA has created.

### **6.3 Western Australia's public library funding**

In Western Australia, the State Government provided public libraries with increased funding in 2008-2009, only to reduce this funding in 2009-2010, despite a rapidly growing population and a well-used library network. The removal of this additional funding represented a cut of 40% to the State Government contribution – more than AU\$4.3 million. This funding could not be made up by local government.

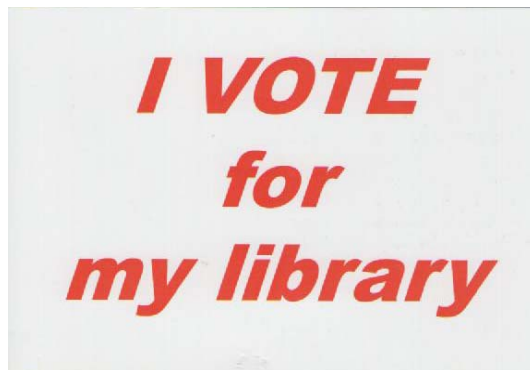
The Western Australian Local Government Association represented public libraries in the negotiation with the State Government, presenting a formal business case for increasing its contribution from AU\$6.5 million to AU\$11 million in the 2010 May budget.

The Opposition Culture Minister took up the call for the State Government to invest in public libraries but in the first instance, Culture Minister John Day refused to confirm that any increase in funding would be contained in the budget. Action was clearly needed. Whatever its beliefs, because of the political nature of the campaign, the State Library was unable to take a lead, nor indeed comment about the issue.

This was a grassroots campaign, led by the local public library association Public Libraries WA, driven by WA public librarians, and supported by ALIA. Postcards and bumper stickers were produced locally and where public libraries were allowed to display the postcards, they were made available to library users to sign and send to politicians and other influencers.

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<sup>35</sup> To view ALIA's school libraries webpage, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/schoollibraries/> (Accessed May 31, 2010)



Public libraries are an essential community service, used by Western Australians from every age group, every ethnicity and every socio-economic background.

In 2009/2010 the government reduced funding for the purchase of library resources by 40% from the previous year.

For **MY** library to provide the services that I need, it **MUST** have adequate resources. Please do whatever you can to restore proper funding for public library materials. Thank you.

The media took up the story. Public libraries were front page news and made the headlines on local radio stations. ALIA alerted the State's two library ambassadors, so they could assist behind the scenes, and we used our communications network to spread the news of the WA situation and update members about the latest position. Our letter to the editor of the main Western Australian newspaper was published. On our website<sup>36</sup> we provided a template letter for members to send to the Premier and Culture Ministers in Western Australia.

In April 2010, the Culture Minister came back with confirmation that there would be increased funding for public libraries – not the AU\$11 million asked for, but more than AU\$9 million. This was clearly a victory for public libraries in the current economic climate, especially as the sum was index-linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the next three years.

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<sup>36</sup> For more information about ALIA's campaign for WA public library funding, see URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/publiclibraries> (Accessed May 31, 2010)



## Conclusion

ALIA's role in the lobbying and advocacy process and how this works in practice is demonstrated below:

<b>STAGE 1</b> FOCUS	<b>Identify the need</b> – monitor and research the sector	<b>Gather the evidence</b> – collate available research	<b>Bring the sector together</b> – physical meetings, teleconferences
<b>STAGE 2</b> COLLABORATE	<b>Agree a core set of messages</b>	<b>Facilitate communication</b> – e-lists, blog posts	<b>Provide access to research</b> – ALIA website as information hub
<b>STAGE 3</b> DEVELOP	<b>Recruit partners</b> – identify best fit to extend the reach and profile of the cause	<b>Create events and collateral</b>	<b>Enable members to participate</b> – template letters, access to collateral on ALIA website
<b>STAGE 4</b> ACTION	<b>Present the case</b> – submissions, face-to-face meetings, influencer network	<b>Publicise the case</b> – via online and traditional media	<b>Feedback to the sector</b> – updates on the ALIA website and via e-lists

We believe there is a new level of understanding about the importance of lobbying and advocacy and a greater confidence developing amongst our members. ALIA's Every Member an Advocate campaign has generated enthusiasm in the Australian library sector about the potential for libraries to have an active voice in policy making, where previously they have too often played a passive role.

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May 2010