



Submission in response to the Senate Inquiry into *Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia*

2 July 2020

1. About us

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

2. Libraries and diaspora communities in Australia

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee has been charged with exploring the issues facing diaspora communities, including strengthening the resilience of vulnerable groups, removing barriers to full participation, strengthen communication and partnerships between government and communities.

We would like to draw the Committee's attention to the success of public libraries, as government entities on the frontline of service delivery for these communities. While public libraries are very much involved in this field, they are rarely recognised for this work.

In June 2019, ALIA and its Australian Public Library Alliance group published a [report](#)¹ detailing how libraries across Australia are working to support new arrivals to Australia. It describes how public libraries collaborate with their local communities to develop culturally appropriate programs; to provide books, magazines, newspapers and other resources in languages other than English; to celebrate diversity; to facilitate a greater sense of connection and build mutual understanding; to make physical spaces into culturally safe places; to support skills development for example with digital literacy and English as a second language.

The report contains examples of festivals, conversation classes, health information provision, assistance with citizenship tests, obtaining drivers' licences, enrolling for study, and other ways that libraries help people settle into their new home.

¹ <https://read.alia.org.au/services-migrants-and-refugees>

3. Recommendations

- That the Committee acknowledge the role of public libraries in addressing many of the issues facing diaspora communities.
- That the Committee encourage federal government agencies to explore opportunities for closer collaboration with public libraries.

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide input into the Senate Inquiry and look forward to hearing the outcome.

ALIA contact:

Sue McKerracher, CEO, Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)

9-11 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600 † 02 6215 8215 m 0404 456 749

w www.alia.org.au e sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au