



## ALIA supplementary statement about casual work in the library and information sector in Australia

### Introduction

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has been conscious of the growing casualisation of the library and information workforce in recent years and in 2018, we updated our [Statement on non-standard employment](#) to reflect our concerns.

While suiting some people's personal circumstances and providing the opportunity to try out different roles, for others, this trend has resulted in unwelcome job insecurity and financial uncertainty. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020 illustrate the fact that casual staff become the most vulnerable of workers when library organisations are faced with shrinking budgets. Furthermore, those currently employed in library work face the brunt of increased workloads as casual staff are stood down.

In response to recent Member queries and comments on social media, the ALIA Board has made this supplementary statement in support of people who are employed on a casual basis during the pandemic, as a further element of the Association's [response to COVID-19](#).

### Definition

According to [Fair Work](#), a casual employee is someone who has no guaranteed hours of work, usually works irregular hours and has no sick or annual leave entitlement. As recompense, they are entitled to a higher pay rate.

### ALIA position

Casual library staff provide crucial support to their patrons and the community and they should be compensated accordingly, with secure working conditions. A commitment to keeping casual staff employed, and reclassifying casual staff as part-time where appropriate, also serves to build a stronger professional community. Not only do part-time staff have more secure work conditions, such as annual and sick leave, but they also have greater access to professional development opportunities, providing more scope to engage with the library and information sector and build professional skills and knowledge with the support of their employer.

Casual staff should only be hired for genuine casual work as described above, and with a pay loading in lieu of normal leave benefits. ALIA Members may be engaged in work that is short-term, or for limited but regular hours per week, and these positions should likely be categorised as part-time rather than casual. In all cases, the relevant federal, state or territory legislation must be followed.



## Conclusion

ALIA is not a union, with the legal right to engage in collective bargaining and the mandate to represent individual members in their engagement with employers, but we are concerned with employment issues for the library and information sector at the macro level. Our work in this area includes annual *Education, Skills and Employment Trend Reports*, the Future of LIS Education project (2020-2021) and the release of the ALIA LIS pay and employment snapshot in August 2020.

Secure work conditions for our members are an important factor in sustaining a strong, engaged and committed workforce for the Australian library and information sector.

ALIA strongly encourages those in positions of power – library management, university heads, school principals, organisation leaders and local councils – to commit to supporting their casual workers.

IMPORTANT NOTE: For those Members who are experiencing financial hardship, ALIA has set up the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

September 2020