



Statement on public library services

ALIA objects addressed

To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interests of all Australians and a thriving culture and democracy.

To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies.

Principle

Freedom of access to Australian public library and information services is essential:

- to enable all community members to participate in and contribute to society, including the democratic process;
- to actively contribute to social inclusion; and
- to enable people to contribute to the economic wellbeing of their families and the nation.

Statement

Public libraries welcome everyone. Core services are free at the point of delivery, and the aim of library teams is to reduce any barriers to engagement for people from diverse backgrounds and to promote equity of access to information, activities and resources.

Public libraries are agile and embrace a variety of roles. They support literacy and reading for pleasure; lifelong learning; arts, culture and local heritage; cybersafety and digital inclusion. They promote the work of Australian writers and creators; provide safe spaces for meetings, study, work and relaxation; ensure that people have freedom of access to the information they need for personal development, health, wellbeing and active participation in our democratic society, and help people connect with government.

While funded by local, state and territory governments, Australian public libraries are part of an informal national and international network. Through the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance, public libraries collaborate to produce national standards, guidelines and impact measures. They jointly advocate for the role of libraries in delivering local, state and national government priorities.



Through the Public Libraries Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Australian public libraries connect with their counterparts overseas, sharing insights and best practice, to the betterment of libraries and communities worldwide.

Australian public libraries are staffed by qualified library and information and other professionals and can benefit from the employment of people from related disciplines, such as IT, marketing, teaching and community engagement in support roles.

While reading and book borrowing (in all formats) remain at the heart of public libraries, new technologies play an increasingly important part in the service, both behind the scenes, with developments in library management and support systems, ebook and electronic resource platforms, and front of house, with PCs, tablets and other devices available for library users.

More space is being made available for individuals, families and groups. Study pods, technology-enabled meeting rooms, sound studios and other makerspaces support creative, digitally inclusive, learning communities. Library users are no longer passive consumers of content. They want to participate in programs and activities and create new works, whether literary, artistic, musical or functional.

Programs, exhibitions and other activities encourage library users to build on their existing skills and experiment with new ideas. Public libraries use the latest communication techniques and social media channels to promote the many opportunities they create for local people, contributing to recreational enjoyment, education outcomes, creativity, economic participation and prosperity.

The success of Australia's public libraries relies on commitment from all three levels of government. At the same time, libraries must ensure they have policies, guidelines, and procedures in place to respond to and meet relevant legislative requirements.

Adopted 2004. Amended 2009 and 2018

