



Government special libraries in South Australia: will they survive and thrive?

1.0 Introduction

The ALIA SA Specials Committee initiated a [survey of special library closures](#) which opened on the 21 June and closed on the 8 July 2018. The survey was endorsed and supported by ALIA House.

2.0 Results of the survey

A total of 4 people contributed to the survey. Of the 4 responses only 3 were valid. The low level of responses does not indicate that the specials community is disinterested in library closures. Instead it indicates that the community have become fragmented by ongoing closures and mergers with librarians often having to move outside of the specials sector to gain employment. This has made it difficult for the Committee to reach out to all those who knew about library closures.

3.0 Trends noted in library closures

It was noted that the Library and Information Service of the Department of Education, Training and Employment was closed by the executive of that department with no prior consultation of staff or customers.

In the case of the Recreation & Sport Library the library was under review and this review was conducted by an administration officer of the agency. A personal rider attached to the review outlined to staff the benefits of the library closing rather than their own programs.

Anecdotally other librarians have indicated to the Convenor that library closures can be swift with little warning. Machinery of government library closures tend to be more protracted and involve dialogue between all the library managers involved.

Finally, there is now a trend to have special libraries without librarians where management make the decision to retain the library but not to fund a librarian.

4.0 Recommendations

In the light of the survey and the list of libraries closed in Appendix 1 it is imperative that the following recommendations be adopted:

1. ALIA House execute a media campaign on the value of special libraries before the South Australian state budget is brought down on 4 September 2018. This media campaign should include approaches to the Ministers of each government agency with a special library.
2. ALIA House update the return on investment formula of special libraries. The ROI formula was last calculated in 2013 and the \$5.43 for every \$1 invested is out of date now.
3. ALIA Groups create a webpage on the ALIA SA Specials website with all the current documentation relating to special libraries so that the specials community have all the information relevant to their sector should they need to respond to a threat of closure by management.
4. ALIA Groups use the unallocated funds from the ALIA SA Specials budget to purchase an e book [Special libraries: a survival guide](#) which can then be hosted on the ALIA SA Specials website.
5. ALIA Groups create and maintain a list of institutional special library membership of ALIA in South Australia on the ALIA SA Special website so that special librarians can easily access collegiate support.
6. Special librarians retiring or voluntarily leaving their positions write a succession plan that is lodged with their management and the CEO of ALIA for follow up if a librarian is not appointed after their resignation.
7. ALIA House support and encourage special librarians to report incidences of maladministration and corruption to the [Office for Public Integrity](#) for investigation.
8. ALIA SA Specials promote an [online training program](#) delivered by the Office for Public Integrity.
9. ALIA House consider sharing information contained within this report with the President of the [Public Service Association of SA](#).
10. ALIA House allow this report to be made available to the specials community on the [ALIA SA Specials website](#).

5.0 Conclusion

The change of government as per the state election on 17 March 2018 has brought a change of ideology and focus in South Australia. It is known that government departments are drawing up contingency plans to make savings in preparation for reduced allocations from the [Department of Treasury and Finance](#) in financial year 2018/2019. There is an urgent and

pressing necessity, for ALIA House and the Board to support the specials community in South Australia by:

- allocating resources and funds to a media campaign demonstrating the value of special libraries
- enhancing the ALIA SA Specials website with current and up to date advocacy content.

6.0 Acknowledgement

The Convenor would like to acknowledge the conversations, emails and guidance given by the special libraries community. This report would not have been possible without your support and encouragement.

Endorsed by

Linda O'Neill, ALIA SA Specials Convenor

8 July 2018 and Appendix updated 4 December 2018

Appendix 1

Government special libraries and those supported by government funds closed in South Australia, corporate knowledge gathered from special librarians in 2018, dates given when known.

ABC Sound and Reference, closed 2018

Communities and Social Inclusion Central Library (incorporating Families SA and Housing SA Library collections) closed 2013

Communities and Social Inclusion Disability Library, officially 'reconfigured' 2013 - collection disbanded and service outsourced

Corrections Department, closed July 2009

Department of Trade and Industry, closed 1981

Department of Urban and Regional Affairs

Disability Information & Resource Centre

Drug and Alcohol Council

Education, Training and Employment Department, closed 2001

Environmental Protection Agency

Equal Opportunity Commission

ForestrySA, closed 2005

Housing Trust of South Australia

Marine & Harbors, closed 1994

Monarto Development Commission Library, closed 1980?

Multicultural SA

Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, closed 2007

Office of the Chief Information Officer

Recreation and Sport, closed 2011

South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service

South Australian Research and Development Institute

Wattle Park Teachers Centre Library, closed 1980s

Women's Studies Resource Centre

Government special libraries closed by machinery of government changes and collections merged in to other libraries.

Child & Youth Health closed and then merged with Women's & Children's Hospital Library, June 2007.

Department of Technical and Further Education Library, merged in to Education Department Library and this Education Library closed in 2001.

Director General of Transport closed in 1997 and then merged with Department for Planning Transport and Infrastructure Library.

Housing, Environment and Planning closed in 2002, planning portion of the collection moved to Department for Planning, Transport and Infrastructure. Environment portion moved to State Library of South Australia.

Repatriation General Hospital Library closed in 2018, and collection moved to Flinders Medical Centre.

South Australian Health Commission Library, closed in 2007, service transferred to Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Supreme Court Library and Sir Samuel Way Library amalgamated to form the Courts Administration Authority Library Service, in 2005.

Government or Statutory Authorities special libraries currently open but without a librarian

History Trust of South Australia

Industrial Commission (now SA Employment Tribunal)

SACE Board