



CASE STUDY

Western Australia's public library funding

The role of ALIA

- Assist the sector to create a core set of agreed messages
- Create events and collateral
- Facilitate communication
- Enable all our members to participate

In Western Australia, the State Government provided public libraries with increased funding in 2008-2009, only to take it away again 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 sum 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.

<p><i>I VOTE for my library</i></p>	<p>Public libraries are an essential community service, used by Western Australians from every age group, every ethnicity and every socio-economic background.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>.....</p>
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The media took up the story. Public libraries were front page news and made the headlines on 720ABC radio as well as the other local 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.

On our website we provided a template letter for members to send to the Premier and Culture Minister in WA.

Towards the end of April, 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 for CPI for the next three years.

In addition, in the State Budget in May, the Culture Minister announced new funding for the Better Beginnings early literacy program.