



Budget highlights for library and information professionals

- New School Resourcing Standards will include school libraries
- \$180m allocated to university research infrastructure
- Continued emphasis on the NBN, including Digital Hubs and cybersecurity
- Copyright reform remains on the agenda
- Open access policy a priority for the Australian Research Council

Introduction

The context of this year's Federal Budget is unusual, to say the least. There's an election looming and, for once, we know exactly when it's coming (four months exactly from Budget day) yet this is a Budget very light on in pre-election sweeteners. And the Government is squaring up to a set of conditions not seen in 50 years, according to Treasurer Wayne Swan, including the consistently strong Australian dollar.

In this environment, the Treasurer has been talking 'responsible fiscal management' for weeks. Pre-announcement leaks have primarily been about deep cuts to already stretched budgets and official announcements have dwelt on strategic investment to position the country to take advantage of the global shift of economic activity to the Asian region.

Pre-Budget speculation saw the deficit spiral with the Opposition estimating the figure would be well in the double digit billions. Despite a \$17b write-down in revenue, the real figure has been reined in by \$43b in savings to an official estimate of \$18b by the end of the next financial year, a number is set to be highly scrutinised in the lead-up to the election, along with the forecast of a return to surplus by 2016-17.

In his speech on Tuesday 14 May, the Treasurer promised "big investments" and a budget designed to create a "stronger, fairer and smarter country". The focus is jobs and growth and the Government's dearest wish would appear to be to focus voters on the future rather than the past.

To that end, this Budget forecasts for the next decade, reaching far beyond the standard four-year forward estimates to demonstrate full funding for two key platforms for the Government as it heads into the election: the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Gonski education reforms.

"You can't invest in education on a four year forward estimate cycle," the Treasurer said during his pre-Budget press conference on Tuesday morning. "You've got to put these investments in place for the long term."

Much of the focus beyond the funding for the disability scheme and education reforms has been on the removal or delay of tax relief. Adjustments to welfare payments have been coupled with tax increases for higher income earners, and the big investments tend to be infrastructure-based, including road, rail and freight facilities.

This Budget will be heavily scrutinised, not just because there's an election around the corner but because so many of last year's key forecasts failed to materialise, starting with a surplus and ending with the so-far unsuccessful mining tax. Whatever the reasons for unexpected results, the combination of unrealised predictions and forecasts extending significantly beyond the normal period will put each and every part of the 2013-14 Budget under the magnifying glass as the days

tick down to September, challenging both sides of Parliament to provide substantial evidence for their fiscal cases.

Education a signature platform

The "signature" platform of the Gonski education reforms offers the only direct mention of libraries in this Budget, although no specific figure for school libraries or teacher librarians is allocated. The reforms aim to bring all students up to a national school resourcing standard over the next six years. The total spend is \$14.5b, of which the Federal Government will be contributing \$9.4b (65%).

"In total, the new funding arrangements are expected to take Commonwealth funding to schools to \$104.3 billion over six years (2014 to 2019).

The new needs-based funding model is based on a new Schooling Resource Standard, comprising a base amount for every primary school student (\$9,271 in 2014) and secondary school student (\$12,193 in 2014), and extra funding through a series of loadings for schools and students requiring extra support, including regional and remote schools, small schools, low socioeconomic status students, Indigenous students, students with low English proficiency and students with disabilities" – http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-09.htm

If the states choose to sign up, this new school funding will centre on a record investment in early childhood education including the introduction of new School Resourcing Standards covering school libraries, early career support and better professional development for teachers, and literacy assessments in a child's early years. The Budget documents also lay out ambitious goals to place Australia in the top five countries internationally for reading, mathematics and science by 2025.

\$412m has been redirected over the next three years from the Empowering Local Schools (ELS) National Partnership to this new needs-based funding model. The ELS initiative is designed to give principals greater autonomy and responsibility for their budget, staffing and resourcing decisions and the first phase of this program is scheduled to wind up by the middle of 2014. The previously planned second phase will now not be delivered through a national partnership but improved autonomy to administer funding at the school level is included in the Better Schools – National Plan for School Improvements program.

Funding has also been allocated within the Better Schools program to improve Asian literacy, including priority for the development of an Asian language curriculum.

\$567.1m over three years has been redirected from the previous literacy and numeracy funding, including the National Partnership for Improving Literacy and Numeracy and Schools Assistance Act, to the new needs-based funding model. The current National Partnership Agreement will end on 31 December this year, to be replaced by the new model which includes a pledge to provide ongoing support to students requiring additional assistance in these areas. Evaluation of literacy and numeracy outcomes will continue to be monitored by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, with a budget allocation of \$500 000 p.a.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan, launched in 2011, will continue towards literacy and numeracy goals under this year's Budget. The Government has pledged support to 102 focus schools in this year's Budget.

In the tertiary sector, \$2.3b of the Gonski funding has been achieved by cuts to university funding but the Treasurer says funding for this sector is still growing in real terms and forecasts \$51b to be

spent on the sector over the next five years. The Budget includes \$97m in funding for additional Commonwealth supported places for sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses over the next four years and \$180m for university research infrastructure.

No mention of teacher librarians in reforms funding

There is no specific mention of teacher librarians in the \$175m allocation for the National Partnership on Smarter Schools or in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Budget papers. The National Partnership is designed to attract, train and retain quality teachers with the goal of raising student performance, including literacy and numeracy outcomes, while the work of the AITSL is focused on teacher standards, improvement, development and recognition. Literacy and numeracy outcomes – but not necessarily teacher librarians – are also targeted with the Quality Teaching Component funding for the Northern Territory which provides for professional development and programs for teachers to deliver these outcomes.

The NBN and the digital economy

The National Broadband Network retains its position as “the largest nation building infrastructure project in Australia’s history” in this Budget. \$12.9m has been added to the NBN rollout to increase regional connections through the delivery of 21 Digital Enterprise Services, including to remote Australians via a virtual service and further group and one-on-one training support for Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Not-For-Profits (NFPs). An additional \$4.9m is included to continue and expand the existing public education campaign about the NBN in metropolitan areas, including \$0.3m in capital funding.

\$5.7m has been allocated over the next two years for the improvement of online service delivery by local government, offering around 15 more councils access to up to \$375,000 each to help them maximise the benefits of the NBN and \$9.9m over four years through the Broadband for Seniors program to continue assistance to senior Australians to support their participation online. \$5m has been allocated to community organisations for the delivery of education and training on cybersecurity issues and multimedia tailored for seniors.

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) Budget also includes provision of improved public internet access and computer and internet training for remote indigenous communities in collaboration with state and territory governments and indigenous communities, along with ongoing funding for further Digital Hubs. The Hubs provide local residents with free digital literacy training, with 40 such Hubs planned by 2014-15, supported by \$13.6m in grant funding for the four period beginning in 2011-12.

The Budget provides an additional \$7.2m over the next three years designated to support the capacity of small businesses and not-for-profit organisations to fully engage in the digital economy. The Government’s digital business hub, digitalbusiness.cog.au, will be maintained and will continue to offer business and community groups assistance and resources to realise the benefits of the digital economy and the introduction of a My Aged Care website is planned to provide a main entry point into reliable information for older Australians and their families about aged care.

The Asian Century

Along with the Better Schools model providing funding to improve Asian literacy, the Budget also includes other funding designed to help realise the potential of Australia’s position within the fast-growing dominance of the Asian economy. This includes offering up to 12 000 Asian Century Awards over five years to Australians to study in the region and to students from regional countries to participate in professional development or study programs in Australia. An Australia Awards Office will be established within AusAID to develop links with alumni of the program. The scholarships are to be recognised as official development assistance by the Government and

costing for this initiative will be met from existing resourcing within AusAID and the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

Copyright reform

The 2013-14 Budget includes funding to the Australian Law Reform Commission to complete the inquiry into copyright and the digital economy. Deliverables for the Attorney-General's Department in this Budget period include ensuring copyright law and regulation support commercial activity while enhancing privacy and protection of individuals in the digital age. Improved access to government-held information is also identified as a key deliverable.

Cybersafety and cybersecurity support continues

The Government's Cybersafety program will continue to be funded at similar levels to the previous year, with use of the Cybersafety Help Button and Easy Guide to Socialising Online resources continuing to be monitored as key performance indicators.

Initiatives are also budgeted this year to provide information and education about the management of financial and identify fraud risks to young Australians, small business and consumers. The Youth Advisory Group on Cybersafety, Teachers and Parents Advisory Group and Consultative Working Group on Cybersafety will be involved in ongoing development of new and improved cybersafety initiatives.

Open access a priority

Although not a high profile Budget item this year, the Australian Research Council (ARC) has set a priority for 2013-14 of implementing the Open Access Policy under the National Competitive Grants Program. Preparing for the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) 2015 evaluation is also a priority, including consultation with government and participating institutions to identify additional research impact indicators.

In addition to these priorities, \$14.2m over four years from this year has been allocated to upgrade the Council's information and communications systems, being achieved from redirecting existing expenses. This project will put in place automated systems and an electronic documents record management system as well as integrating separate computer systems across the agency, delivering a system that supports the full process of grant applications, management and reporting.

In brief

Financial literacy wins further funding

\$5.4m has been allocated over four years for the Department of the Treasury to pay out to states and territories under the National Partnership for MoneySmart Teaching, building on previous initiatives to improve financial literacy amongst school children and providing for face-to-face professional learning for teachers in primary and secondary schools and the trialling of teacher support materials.

The Conversation continues

Independent not-for-profit company, The Conversation, will be funded over the next two years with \$2m to continue to deliver free news, analysis and commentary sourced from the university and research sector. The Conversation has also now been granted status as a specifically listed deductible gift recipient, offering potential tax benefit to donors of money or property.

National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

\$185.9m has been allocated over two years to continue this strategy, funding operation and maintenance of key national research infrastructure. Long term future funding in research infrastructure is to be evaluated in line with the National Research Investment Plan. This Budget also provides \$135m for 150 four-year Future Fellowships aimed at attracting mid-career researchers from Australia and overseas.

Creative Australia funding includes annual snapshot and support for indigenous languages

The Australia Council will receive \$75.3m and \$40m has been allocated to the Regional Development Australia Fund to assist delivery of the Creative Australia initiative to "create jobs and encourage a new generation of artists and creative businesses", including strengthened support for elite performing arts training institutions. The Australia Council for the Arts funding includes \$1m p.a. to "develop a detailed and systematic program of data collection to produce an annual publication on the arts sector".

\$14m in funding over four years to expand the existing Indigenous Languages Support Program is also included in the Creative Australia program, as was recommended in the *Our Land, Our Languages* report of 2012. This program targets schools, cultural institutions and libraries to help with the delivery of learning across a range of media to preserve and share indigenous languages.

New census model funding for ABS

\$0.2m capital funding is included in the \$5.2m allocated over two years to the Australian Bureau of Statistics for continued production of the annual input-output data tables and a further \$1.4m is allocated to begin preparation for the conducting of a four-yearly (down from six-yearly) Household Expenditure Survey. The Budget also brings forward \$68m from the 2015-16 plans to the 2013-14 year to help the ABS move to a new census model ahead of the 2016 Population Census. This funding is intended to assist with increased reliance on e-census collection and postal distribution of materials. It includes \$33.6m earmarked for systems development to support the new model.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal information systems to be improved

The Budget allocation deliverables for 2013-14 for the Administrative Appeals Tribunal includes improvement of information and records management.

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner builds on privacy reforms

The OAIC will be continuing to focus on preparation for reforms to the Privacy Act to be enacted in March 2014. Reforms include new harmonised privacy principles for the public and private sectors.

TEQSA continues monitoring, lifts profile

The Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, integral to the recent significant reforms to library and information sector education, will continue to monitor standards and undertake activity to improve levels of quality assurance among educators with no significant change to funding over the Budget forecast period.

AIATSIS releases Statement of Strategic Intent

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies will continue with a strategic focus that includes providing a foundation for research excellence in Australian Indigenous studies and ensuring collections are secure and growing – however funding for digitisation of collections is due to run out in this fiscal year. AIATSIS has released a [Statement of Strategic Intent](#) (p160) to cover the period 2013-2016 and identify a path forward for the organisation's statutory responsibilities in light of reduced resources, signalling dwindling funding from appropriation and increased costs as key pressures. AIATSIS responsibilities include publication of results, conducting research, maintaining access to cultural resource collections.

Innovative industry

In the mix along with the administrative move to absorb the climate change portfolio into the renamed Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, is an allocation to support industry development and investment which specifies support for accelerated uptake of new technology and knowledge by business to promote access to ideas, the provision of advisory and information services to assist development and "development of pathways for industry to access knowledge, ideas and expertise in universities and research agencies".

Cap on self-education

Self-education costs are increasingly a part of professional lives but the Budget will cap self-education deductions from 1 July 2014 to \$2000 p.a. to make a saving of \$514.3m over the forward estimates.

For more information:

This Budget précis has been collated from the Budget Overview, Budget Paper 2(Budget Measures) and Portfolio Budget Statements. Budget documents are available in full and searchable in PDF format at <http://budget.australia.gov.au/2013-14/index.htm>.

Additional resources:

- Budget At A Glance: http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/at_a_glance/html/at_a_glance.htm
- Portfolio Budget Statements: <http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/pbs/html/index.htm>
- Budget Paper 2: Budget Measures: <http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp2/html/index.htm>
- Local Government Association analysis: <http://www.alga.asn.au>
- Pro bono/ not-for-profit sector analysis: <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au> (enter 2013-14 as search term)
- Business sector analysis: <http://www.kpmg.com/au/en/topics/federal-budget/pages/default.aspx>