



National Campaign Headquarters

Australian Library and Information Association

Libraries are an important element of Australian society. The Rudd Labor Government values the contribution that librarians and information professionals make to society. Below are responses to each of the specific questions raised by your organisation.

1. Will you pursue reform of the Copyright Act as a priority for the first term of the new government?

In June 2012, the Federal Labor Government asked Professor Jill McKeough, Dean of Law at the University of Technology Sydney, to head an Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into copyright and the digital economy.

The ALRC released an issues paper on 20 August 2012 and a discussion paper on 5 June 2013. Submissions in response to the discussion paper closed on 31 July 2013. Federal Labor welcomed the release of the discussion paper and noted the considered contributions and submissions made by stakeholder groups and individuals. It was encouraging to see the high level of interest in important issues relating to copyright and the digital economy.

The ALRC is due to issue its report on 30 November 2013 and, if re-elected, a Rudd Labor Government will closely consider its recommendations, including any recommendations for reforms to the Copyright Act.

2. Will you consider introducing legislation in favour of open access for government-funded research?

The Rudd Labor Government believes that science and research are the key to a richer, fairer and greener world for all, and have boosted investment in science, research and innovation to record levels. The National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council are both currently further developing policies around access to public funded research. The Rudd Labor Government strongly supports the progression of these initiatives and also continues to closely monitor overseas developments in this area.

3. Will you include responsibility for managing the Commonwealth Government's relationship with public libraries in a Minister's portfolio?

The National Library of Australia, one of the Arts Minister's agencies, is charged with the Commonwealth's dealings in libraries and library matters. This can be seen through a number of initiatives where they provide national leadership in library matters and resources such as the development of Trove, the award-winning program of digitising newspapers that has expanded to an ever-increasing addition of local and regional newspapers.

You may also be interested to know, that since 2007 the Federal Labor Government has invested more than \$300 million in infrastructure funding for nearly 500 arts and cultural projects, including libraries, heritage sites, museums and art spaces to enhance the economic development, cultural wealth and liveability of regional communities.

4. Will you renew government engagement in book industry discussion and, if negotiations with international publishers falter, will you consider government intervention to assist libraries to lend ebooks?

The Federal Labor Government has been consulting closely with industry, peak bodies, publishers, authors and the general public to look at the modernisation of the Public Lending Rights and Education Lending Rights schemes. A number of recommendations have arisen from this consultation that Federal Labor has been working through. Federal Labor believes all formats of Australian books – including ebooks and audiobooks – be made eligible for the schemes as soon as is practically feasible but that it is important that any changes to the schemes strike the right balance for authors, publishers, the general public and libraries.

5. Will you develop a national policy for the digitisation of priority Australian content?

The National Library of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive already have active programs for the digitisation of priority Australian content. The Federal Labor Government through the release of Creative Australia, the national cultural policy, made a commitment to extend the current print-based legal deposit arrangements in the Copyright Act 1968 to include digitally published material. This will see e-books, web content and new creative content preserved and accessible to future generations.

6. Will you endorse the aspirational goal of a qualified library professional in every school?

The Rudd Labor Government recognises the important role library professionals and teacher librarians play in supporting students and teachers, especially as schools learn to integrate digital resources and technology into their learning programs.

The Rudd Labor's Better Schools Plan will deliver an extra \$15 billion in public funds over the next six years. This would mean, on average, around \$1.6 million extra for every school over that period. While employing additional staff such as library professionals and teacher librarians is a matter for individual schools and state and territory governments, the significant extra funding through the Better Schools Plan could be used for additional library resources and staff.

7. Will you introduce a national early literacy initiative?

The Federal Labor Government understands the importance of early literacy in setting up children to be successful learners. Federal Labor has for the first time put in place a nationwide early learning framework with a focus on early literacy. In 2010, the Federal Labor Government launched the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to ensure that children in all early childhood education and care

settings experience quality teaching and learning. It has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of communication and language (literacy and numeracy).

The Federal Labor Government is also investing \$55.7 million to expand the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) to up to 100 sites across Australia. HIPPY is an early childhood enrichment program that supports parents in their role as their child's first teacher.

One of the goals of HIPPY is creating a learning environment in the home that encourages the development of literacy skills. The most recent evaluation of the program showed children's early numeracy and early literacy skills at the beginning of the program, compared with the Australian norm, had closed by the end of the program.

For school aged children, the Rudd Labor Government is providing additional assistance through the *Better Schools Plan*. Lifting student performance is at the heart of the *Better Schools Plan* – including our goal for Australian schools to be among the world's top five in reading, numeracy and science by 2025. The *Better Schools Plan* recognises there is no one size fits all and different schools will have different needs. The extra funding under the *Better Schools Plan* could be used for whole-of-school literacy programs to boost performance or to engage literacy specialists to work one-on-one with students who need extra help.

8. Will your Ministers insist on well-resourced library and information services run by qualified library professional for the departments?

Federal Labor recognises the value of qualified professionals providing information to government, including government departments. Ministers make extensive use of the research skills of their departments and all Parliamentarians are able to seek information from the dedicated Parliamentary Library. The independence of the Australian Public Service ensures that departmental Secretaries make decisions about the structure, organisation and staffing of their departments.

9. Will you endorse library and information service as a valued profession, akin to accountancy, engineering, health and other professions requiring practitioner registration?

The Federal Labor Government has always stood for fairer, more accessible and higher quality education, and we acknowledge the contribution that libraries and librarians make to education from the earliest days pre-school, through to the provision of resources and assistance for senior Australians. However, Professional Standards regulation is the subject of state and territory legislation.

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