



Australian Library and
Information Association


STRATEGIC PLAN

Strong. Active. Influential.

Libraries at the heart
of our democracy.

2024

2026




This document is a true and accurate account of the activities The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) exists to promote and support a strong library and information services (LIS) sector for the benefit of all Australians. The LIS sector supports literacy, intellectual freedom, and access to information for all. Libraries sit at the centre of the community, they are trusted institutions and essential civic infrastructure for Australia's democracy.

For over 85 years ALIA have worked with and alongside our members and partners to advocate, educate, and connect. The next 85 will be no different, but the context we operate in, and the needs of our sector will evolve and with it, we will too.

The next three years will be focussed on actions that ensure we have strong foundations, supported through an evolved member model and secure funding; an active sector, enabled through deeper connection with each other, and a skilled workforce that is inclusive and empowered to take on leadership roles; and a sector that influences together, through a shared national agenda that builds on our profile and creates opportunities for collaboration that will maximise impact.

The focus of this three-year strategy is not just a specific end point but the continued investment in quality library and information services for the benefit of our democracy, our communities and individuals.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Library and Information Association acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters, cultures, and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and to Elders past and present.

ALIA acknowledges we exist, work, and live on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land. It always was. Always will be.



Our commitment to diversity and inclusion

Australian Library and Information Association is committed to providing an inclusive, safe, and respectful association and work environment, free from discrimination, harassment, and racism. We recognise the impacts of inequity and discrimination and strive to remove the barriers these create.

We celebrate diversity as a strength within our organisation and our members. Supporting diversity and providing an inclusive and respectful organisation and member network is central to our values and principles of providing safe, accessible, and welcoming library and information services.

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INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out how we will shape the next three years of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). It learns from 85+ years of history in supporting and advocating for the library and information services sector and positions us for the next three years in the context of a continually changing social and economic environment.

This strategy remains focussed on the practical in how we will support our members and the wider library and information services (LIS) sector. It never loses sight of our aspiration and role in helping libraries to be recognised as critical institutions and services at the heart of a thriving democracy. It will guide our decisions, inform our investments, and provide the framework for our annual plans and budgets.



ABOUT US

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the national member-based peak body and professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. We exist to advocate, support, and promote the library and information services sector through influence, connection, and capacity building.

For over 85 years ALIA has brought together the library and information services workforce, institutions, and wider sector partners to advocate for the value and importance of libraries and the core values and beliefs they represent. Over this time, there have been many challenges for the sector, as well as opportunities. There have been declines in core funding, reduction in the number of institutions offering qualifications and attacks against intellectual freedom, efforts to censor collections, and pushes to reduce access to materials. It has also been a period illustrating the resilience and evolution of libraries. Libraries have been early adopters of technology and programs that embrace new forms of learning, and have nurtured, promoted, and supported the many forms of literacy needed to access and be an active participant in society. Libraries have so often been the safest of places, always welcoming everyone, always existing to help people and communities learn, connect, and thrive.

ALIA is open to everyone connected to or passionate about libraries and we will continue to adapt, respond, and advocate for a strong, active, and influential sector.

Our purpose *The why we exist*

To promote a **strong library and information services sector for a thriving democracy.**

Our role *The work we do*

Our role is the action we take to bring our purpose to life. This is the work we do with, for and alongside the library and information services sector.

- To **influence** through our work as a national advocate for the library and information sector.
- To **empower** through enabling belonging, connection and elevating the voice of our members.
- To **strengthen** through building capabilities, supporting pathways across the workforce, and pushing for investment in the sector for long-term sustainability.

Our beliefs *Guiding our work*

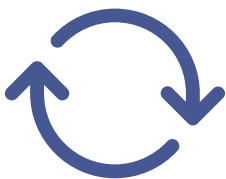
Our beliefs guide our work, and influence and shape how we will go about delivering our strategy over the next three years.

We believe...

- libraries are for all.
- the free flow of information and ideas supports a thriving culture, economy, environment, and democracy.
- essential literacies are fundamental for people to participate in society.
- with, for and alongside our members we have the authority to advocate and make an impact as the national voice for library and information services.
- in respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, culture, and Country.
- we have a responsibility to elevate the voices of First Nations peoples and of diverse and multicultural communities, all too often unheard.
- collecting, sharing, and preserving diverse voices is important for an inclusive society.

INFORMING OUR STRATEGY

The context we operate in matters and has been important in informing the strategy for the next three years. Libraries sit at the centre of many communities, and as the world we live, work, and learn in continues to evolve and change, we need to as well.



Adapting and responding to change

The social, economic, and environmental landscape is constantly changing. We are more connected than ever before, through new and continually emerging channels that shift the how and where. As a community we are facing challenges that are placing pressure on so many, whether it be cost of living or accessing support and services we have not previously needed. As a planet we are under unprecedented threat, whether it be through climate, war, or health crises.

For 85+ years we have identified and addressed shared challenges and created new opportunities in the process. Today, we are faced with long-term as well as new challenges and opportunities, including emerging technology, increasing misinformation and structural inequity.

Our response needs to build on existing action, such as working with and for First Nations peoples and communities to address the negative impacts of colonisation through changes to collection management practices and pushing for more and new opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in the library sector. Our response must also remain focussed on the big, structural challenges and opportunities for the sector, without losing our ability to be responsive to significant threats to specific parts of the sector.



Workforce pressure

The combination of post-pandemic and crisis recovery; changing work culture and behaviours; emerging technology; broad economic pressures within society; and high expectations from the community have led to a point where our sector needs to think differently about the workforce and how organisations across the sector engage, attract, retain, and develop their people.

Over the course of this three-year strategy, this will be a critical focus having a direct impact on project work addressing skills, knowledge and ethics, and educational accreditation; operationally in the need to evolve our member model to reach more across the workforce; and in our advocacy through a focus on policy and practice that will look to attract new and foster existing talent in the sector.



Competitive and political landscape

The dynamic and, at times, political nature of member-based peaks means it is also hard, if not impossible, to make everyone happy all of the time. It means making tough decisions at times and managing risk.

The next three years will likely see new challenges for members and the organisation emerge, driven by competition for funding and conflicting priorities. As a national library and information services peak body, we have to be focussed on strategic opportunities at the national level and work with, and alongside, partners, and members to be impactful and sustainable.



A global system and pursuit of better

We do not operate in a national vacuum; libraries and information services is a global sector. Around the world, the role of libraries, the challenges they face, and the opportunities emerging, are similar. There is a lot to be learned through sharing, and a lot to be learned through listening. They provide services that reach billions of people, supporting essential literacies, building digital inclusion, and providing access to information. These services illustrate how libraries are actively contributing towards the delivery of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As a national organisation representing the Australian library and information sector, this international context is important to our strategy. ALIA has a role to play in developing international partnerships with other national and international library organisations, facilitating sharing and learning globally, and promoting the value we offer beyond our borders.

STRATEGY

Over the next three years we will focus on continuing to deliver on our strengths, alongside responding to and delivering on opportunities that create a positive impact for the wider community, our sector, and our members.

1. **Our impact** *The outcomes we are focussed on*

Our aspiration is to make a positive impact across the Australian community, the whole library and information services sector and our membership.

In every community...

... libraries and information services are at the **heart of communities, collecting, preserving and ensuring access to knowledge and culture, and the literacy skills needed for democratic participation in society.**

Across the sector...

... libraries and information services are **sustainable leaders, vibrant promoters of essential literacies and trusted institutions maintaining and preserving collections for the use of their community.**

Within our membership...

... we are a **unified and empowered library and information services sector, equipped and ready to serve the community today and in the future.**

2. **Our strategic journey** *Our focus for the next three years*

This sets out our strategic focus over the next three years. These strategies do not exist in isolation, they are connected and complementary. They combine the need to invest in the foundations for the organisation; to build scale and connection in our membership; and to evolve how we work with and alongside others to strengthen our advocacy, workforce, and profile.

2.1 Strong foundations

These strategies are about our fundamentals. It is a focus on demonstrating value to every member. A focus on being viable and resilient as an organisation. A focus on reaching more people, institutions, and influencers through our membership.

Priorities over the next three years includes...

- **Evolving our membership** We will work with our members and cross-sector partners to ensure our membership proposition continues to be valuable and relevant. A membership proposition that reflects the impact we are endeavouring to make and connects to those things that are valued by different parts of our sector and the wider community.

- **Securing our funding** We will continue to show returns for those who traditionally invest in us by delivering on our purpose, alongside exploring extended or diversified revenue opportunities that support our purpose.
- **Scaling our member-base** We are pursuing a bigger, stronger member-based network. We will evolve our membership model to reach a more diverse range of members from across the workforce in terms of role, level, sector and location, and will collaborate with aligned organisations and explore cross representation from partner associations.

Progress and success in these strategies is ...

- That every member is better connected to and understands what we are trying to achieve together and is committed to the values of the LIS sector through their active engagement in their membership.
- ALIA has a healthy financial position through diverse income streams. We have long term partnerships where investment is made for long term outcomes and ongoing activities.
- ALIA has more members from across the workforce, the sector and the different metro, regional and remote geographies of Australia.

2.2 Active sector

These strategies are about building power within our sector. Through deeper connection to each other in the sector, for shared experience, knowledge, and interest. Through building capability in people to progress in the profession, and to support organisations across the sector to attract and retain people. Through leadership at every level, advocating for and modelling change and impact as a sector.

Priorities over the next three years includes...

- **Deepening connection and belonging.** We will invest in programs, events, and services that facilitate connections, communities of practice, and a sense of belonging across the workforce and institutions. We will embed our commitment to First Nations representation. We will provide opportunities for members to know and learn from each other, and to feel welcomed and supported by ALIA, no matter where they work in the sector, or where they live in Australia.
- **Equipping the future workforce.** Working alongside the sector, members, and institutions we will promote adoption of the framework of skills, knowledge, and ethics to advance a resilient workforce. We will reinforce the value of accreditation of LIS education and continuing professional development across the workforce.
- **Empowering local leadership.** We commit to supporting local and regional library and information networks to lead, deliver, and advocate for high quality, sustainable library and information services. We recognise the value in local knowledge, connections and trust held by library and information services in metro, regional and rural communities, and will work in partnership to provide resources, support and, where needed, guidance to empower our members.

Progress and success in these strategies is ...

- We are doing things differently than before. We have collaborations and practice in place that sees others support our work, our connection as a group and our sense of belonging as a membership network.
- There is a broad, sector wide commitment from employers to support career-long learning and professional development for library and information services staff, with a focus on delivering to the key skills, knowledge, and ethics for our workforce.
- First Nations colleagues from across the sector and within the communities we work have a greater voice and more positions within the leadership of libraries and have greater clarity of opportunities throughout the workforce.
- Regional and rural libraries are thriving and supported through sufficient funding and local backing of communities.

2.3 Influence together.

These strategies are about building collective action. It is about aligning our efforts behind a shared agenda to help us focus on where we can most effectively influence. It is about building profile that reflects our value, and that enhances our position to influence. It is about working with the wider workforce in our sector and others seeking shared aspirations.

Priorities over the next three years includes...

- **Setting a national library and information services agenda.** We will articulate a national library and information services agenda, informed by our members and stakeholders. We will advocate for issues as part of that agenda to best leverage the influence of ALIA for the benefit of the whole sector.
- **Building profile for position.** We will elevate ALIA's profile so that we are recognised as the national voice with the authority to speak for the library and information services sector. We will be an active and influential voice at the table for the discussions that intersect with our sector and ensure that decision makers see us as a trusted source of advice and a reliable partner to deliver outcomes.
- Purposeful collaboration. We will deepen existing and build new partnerships that have a clear and shared value for ALIA, its members, and the sector. We will look beyond what we do ourselves and directly invest in collaborations and/or connections that complement our work, maximise collective resources and limit duplication in effort.

Progress and success in these strategies is ...

- Our members feel that ALIA gives them a voice and advocates effectively for the sector and provide ALIA the authority to represent the sector in national conversations.
- We have 'runs on the board' with our advocacy action, demonstrating value in our shared agenda.
- Decision makers and external stakeholders with power know who we are and what we do and proactively seek us out to contribute to discussions.
- ALIA works collaboratively with other sector peaks, either directly as members or through formal partnerships, all of which recognise ALIA as the national voice for the sector.

3. Enablers *Supporting our strategy*

These are the supporting foundations for the strategy. They are the internal tools that will enable us to deliver on our strategy and make a positive impact in the community, for members and within the team.

3.1 Engaged members.

In addition to evolving and expanding our membership we are reviewing the member user experience at various stages of their career, at different times in their institutional history and at different points in the membership cycle.

- **Member experience.** Trust is key to our success. We want to build and retain this trust with every member. We will do this through continually improving our processes in how we engage, support, and represent our members.
- **Communicating effectively.** We know that as a member-based network we don't always get everyone to agree, but we do need to make sure every decision we make is well understood, is aligned to member voice, and is connected to shared outcomes. We will evolve and build on the channels that are working well, as well as test different ways to bring together members and share what's happening.
- **Leveraging member knowledge, passion, and networks.** Members are our key asset. Collectively there is thousands of years of experience, individually there is commitment and determination and institutionally there is authority. We commit to making sure we ask, support, and involve members in our work. At times this will be to support it or cheer from the sidelines, at other times it will be to lead it.

3.2 Skilled and diverse governance.

Our governance is shaped by our members. Our Board, made up of elected representatives, sets strategy, and holds the organisation to account. In delivering on the next three years, we are focussed on ensuring existing governance processes and representatives have the people, support and skills they need to succeed.

- **Evolving governance.** We will explore possible changes to the Constitution to enable the appointment of independent directors in addition to elected directors to address skills and diversity.
- **Right structures.** We will make sure that our governance structures, such as committees, reporting processes and monitoring and evaluation are delivering what the organisation needs throughout delivering on this strategy.

3.3 Effective and responsive team.

We are investing in ways of working, internal structures and staff supports that enhance our culture, and help the development of the whole team. This will contribute to continuous improvement in the quality of our work.

To support this enabler, we will focus on...

- **Investing in leadership.** We recognise the skills, capacity and supports that are needed to enable us to be leaders for the sector and in our own organisation. We will invest in our team to ensure we retain and develop a depth of talent.
- **Flexibility and wellbeing.** A healthy, happy team is a strong team. We know how hard we work and the passion we bring but we need to ensure it is balanced. This means we are prioritising the right things, with the required tools and with sufficient support.
- **Professional development and growth.** We know the skills we need will continually evolve and that as a team we share a passion for lifelong learning. To stay relevant as an employer and to attract and retain our talent we will look at different ways to support and foster professional development and growth in response to needs of the organisation and individual.

3.4 Fit-for-purpose data and digital

We are both investing in the data and digital infrastructure we need, as well as constantly ensuring we know how to use it to support our work. We have systems that help us to deliver on our strategies and commitments. We work with these tools to ensure we are using them to add value.

- **Getting digital right.** This is about prioritising and investing tactically in the technology that will strengthen our work, from the back-end finance, HR, and CRM systems to the way we communicate and engage with our members through our website, newsletters, journals, and social media.
- **Meaningful data.** Having in place clear indicators and collectable data sources that help inform our impact, manage our team, and support the Board to make good strategic decisions.

4. Tracking progress.

We will monitor this strategy through the identification and tracking of practical and meaningful measures of progress. We will regularly report to the ALIA Board on progress against these measures.