



## **ALIA Sustainable Development Goals Roundtable 2021 Report and outcomes**

### **About the Roundtable**

30 Australian library leaders and representatives from school, public, university, law, health, government, National, State and Territories libraries, gathered online on 1 November 2021 to progress the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda.

The event was hosted by ALIA President Vicki Edmunds and chaired by Vicki McDonald, ALIA past President and Chair of the ALIA International Relations Advisory Committee.

The format comprised two keynote presentations, the first from Natalie Cohen, Assistant Secretary for Development Strategy in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the second from Stephen Wyber, Manager, Policy and Advocacy, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). These were followed by presentations by sector representatives:

- National, State and Territory Libraries, *Marie-Louise Ayres, Director-General National Library of Australia and Chair NSLA*
- School libraries, *Stefanie Gaspari, Director Library Services Trinity Grammar School Sydney, ALIA Director*
- Special libraries, *Laurie Atkinson, Director Law Library of Victoria and Supreme Court Librarian*
- Public libraries, *Viv Barton, Service Lead, City of Stirling Libraries*
- University libraries, *Roxanne Missingham, University Librarian, Australian National University*

There was a break-out period for group workshops, the results of which were brought back to the plenary session which rounded off the three-hour meeting.

### **Keynote 1 – Natalie Cohen, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Natalie Cohen complimented the library sector on the strength of our mapping of the SDG across many areas of our work, including literacy, diversity and partnerships.

She explained that Prime Minister and Cabinet coordinates domestic policy and together with DFAT has accountability, measurement and reporting responsibilities for Australia's response to the SDGs.

She talked about the intersection between local and global activities regarding the SDGs, exemplified by the Climate Change meeting of heads of nations in Glasgow and the response to COVID-19 recognising that no country is isolated from this pandemic.

On behalf of the Australian Government, DFAT aims to influence global and regional policymaking relating to the SDGs at the UN General Assembly and through on the ground program delivery agencies such as UNICEF. The task is to make sure the SDGs are reflected in global norms and standards, for example through the Human Rights Council.

The Australian Government participates each July in New York in the UN High Level Political Forum to review global progress against the SDGs. DFAT's underlying goals are that no-one is left behind and the most vulnerable are protected. There is a focus on economic growth for countries in our region to provide services to their populations. The SDGs are widely used as a strategy framework for developing countries in our region.

DFAT's SDG work connects with the Australian Government Foreign Aid Program and the Partnerships for Recovery initiative resulting from COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on the development gains that had been made are particularly noticeable in addressing poverty. For over 25 years the number of people living in extreme poverty had declined. Now, there are 100 million more people living in extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic. COVID-19 has also driven school closures which are reflected in much lower enrolment figures – a particular concern for the education of women and girls.

DFAT has three particular areas of concern for the region: health security (vaccines), economic recovery, especially for countries relying on tourism, and stability. Education is also a major focus, with \$600m invested in education in developing countries for children, young people but also lifelong learning.

Natalie ended by saying that libraries play a vital role in providing access to information, support for literacy, health and wellbeing, education and in underpinning the other SDGs. The SDGs are not for governments alone, but for all parts of society to contribute to and libraries are especially valuable in making the global to local connection across many of the Goals.

## **Keynote 2 – Stephen Wyber, IFLA**

Stephen Wyber gave a background to IFLA's involvement with the SDGs and explained how they offer libraries a thought tool, a shared language to use with partners, and a source of opportunities to build networks and recognition.

He talked about the original plan for a decade of action, but how COVID-19 risks sending us in the wrong direction. On the other hand, the disruption of the pandemic gives us the opportunity to do things better. For this, we need 'development accelerators' a term coined by the UN – an action that unlocks progress across a variety of SDGs. Libraries can do this across education, employment and so on.

IFLA is focusing on Voluntary National Reviews, where Australia has been a leader, with several references in the 2018 Australian Government Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Three years later, in 2021, 40% of countries submitting Voluntary National Reviews were referencing the work of libraries in contributing to the delivery of the SDGs.

Another opportunity is within Voluntary Local Reviews where local governments are producing these. One example is the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Helsinki 2019, with a photograph of a flagship library on the cover.

Another focus for IFLA is the [Culture 2030 Goal](#) campaign and another opportunity for libraries is the [SDG Book Club](#), a partnership between the UN, publishers and libraries, targeting six to 12-year-olds.

## **Status report – Vicki McDonald, meeting Chair**

Vicki provided a picture of what has happened since the last Summit at ALIA House in 2019 and what will follow this one.

- Publication of the [10 SDG stretch targets](#) in October 2021.
- Commitment to work in partnership to deliver these stretch targets from ALIA, NSLA, CAUL, ALACC, Blue Shield, AGLIN.
- Annual reports will be produced by ALIA, led by the International Relations Advisory Committee.
- Major reports will be published in 2025 and 2030, for which we will be seeking case studies and other data.
- There will also be the potential to feed into Australia's next Voluntary National Review.

## **Sector presentations**

National State and Territory Libraries Australasia, *Marie-Louise Ayres, Director General National Library of Australia*

These libraries benefit from a shared approach through National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), as well as individually responding to the SDGs.

Excellent progress has been made in the area of culture and heritage and with regards to First Nations people. Almost 2,000 people in NSLA libraries have completed AIATSIS core cultural training. NSLA has engaged with the ATSILIRN Protocols and all libraries have committed to acquiring, describing and managing collections by First Nations people in a respectful way. An annual NSLA audit from 2021 to 2025 will monitor progress.

Good progress has been made in the area of literacy. Direct involvement with adult and early literacy programs varies across NSLA libraries but all work together on advocacy. Along with ALIA, NSLA was a foundation member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance in 2020 and is actively promoting media literacy through its joint activities.

Further progress needs to be made in the area of diversity and gender equality. While the NSLA workforce is broadly in line with the population in terms of First Nations people, it is behind in multicultural diversity and in gender balance (as a heavily female dominated sector). The cultural and linguistic diversity of collections and collecting practices is being scrutinised. Further progress is also possible in health and wellbeing and lifelong learning.

*School libraries, Stefanie Gaspari, Director Library Services Trinity Grammar School Sydney, ALIA Director*

School libraries' response to the SDGs varies depending on the school and the staff. The SDGs have 'applications across curriculum, with relevance to subjects such as science, mathematics, geography, technological and applied studies, and visual arts, and the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability. They also have direct links to the general capabilities from the Australian Curriculum, including critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, and information and communication technology capability.'

Library staff are learning about the SDGs and gaining ideas about introducing them to their schools through informal networks, through the work of ALIA and other associations, through industry suppliers and through online events.

*Special libraries, Laurie Atkinson, Director Law Library of Victoria and Supreme Court Librarian*

Awareness of the SDGs in special libraries and the organisations they serve is not significant but the work of special libraries to support health, justice, sustainable cities and communities and reduced inequalities is substantial and can be mapped against at least six of the goals.

There are pockets of activity, for example the [Australian Legal Sector Alliance](#) is an alliance of law firms promoting and being accountable for sustainable practice across the legal sector. There is potential for special libraries to connect with their clients' SDG engagement.

There is also potential to connect in with industry suppliers' commitments to the SDGs, for example Thomson Reuters and LexisNexis align their products with the SDGs.

*Public libraries, Viv Barton, Service Lead, City of Stirling Libraries*

Many more library strategies now incorporate the SDGs, examples are Riverina Regional Library, City of Newcastle library, Belmont WA and Libraries ACT, where there is a staff working group called The Planeteeers.

In Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria and the State Library of Victoria have established the PLV Sustainability Special Interest Group. The ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance incorporates the SDGs in its strategy; the Standards and Guidelines refer to the SDGs and there may be even more opportunity to use the SDGs as a planning framework in the next iteration.

*University libraries, Roxanne Missingham, University Librarian, Australian National University*

The SDGs provide a way of interpreting and reporting what libraries are doing within the education sector, rather than being policy drivers from governments or institutions.

Examples include digital content, open text books, alumni programs, industry linkage, environmental sustainability, research outputs through repositories.

SDG focus has also been noticeable in workforce development. Cultural awareness training has been almost 100% in universities and university libraries and CAUL is focused on supporting emerging talent and growing the next generation of university library leaders.

## **Workshop outputs**

From the 2019 ALIA SDG Summit, we have [10 SDG stretch targets](#):

1. Embedding libraries in national literacy agendas
2. Adoption of open access
3. Copyright reform
4. Equitable access to public libraries
5. Cultural competency in relation to Indigenous peoples
6. Environmental sustainability
7. Libraries as centres for health and wellbeing focus
8. Diversity in the LIS workforce
9. Lifelong learning for LIS workers and the general population
10. Active engagement with the LIS colleagues internationally

Participants broke into four groups to address the question 'How can we increase awareness and engagement with these 10 targets in our sector?' Actions were identified across five broad themes.

### **Generating and sharing content**

Find the libraries and library and information professionals who are championing the SDGs in the sector and showcase their work through case studies to inspire others. Public libraries are leading the way and can already provide rich content.

#### Actions

- Find and include case studies in ALIA SDG annual reports.
- Encourage cross-sector SDG special interest groups to be formed.
- Investigate the potential for NSLA statistical reporting to include SDG case studies.
- Create an adaptable, flexible storytelling toolkit similar to IFLA's.
- Make library SDG information and resources easily findable on the new ALIA website.

### **Making the SDG part of our reporting**

We can harness the power of collective reporting as a sector and if we build regular reporting into our organisational and industry operations, we will see SDG related activity, be more aware of how our work contributes to the SDG and encourage greater team engagement. It could be as simple as making the SDGs a standing item on meeting agendas.

### Actions

- Encourage ALIA Advisory Committees and Groups to include the SDGs as an agenda item for every meeting.
- Produce new and refresh earlier reporting templates.

### **Developing partnerships and alliances**

We can work on our engagement with agencies in government, our own parent organisations, citizens and communities. We need clearly defined messages for each audience.

### Actions

- Create our elevator pitch for why partnering with libraries is a good idea.
- Investigate partnerships with the corporate world, for example the Business Council for Sustainable Development, Westpac.

### **Use the SDG brand more extensively and effectively**

The 17 SDGs benefit from very recognisable icons and we should take advantage of every opportunity to make use of them. While our focus is on 10 stretch targets, which are measurable and achievable for libraries, they cross more than one SDG because of the intersectional nature of the Goals. We can apply the icons to show how activities align with the various SDGs.

### Actions

- Use icons as badges and put SDG tags on marketing materials for programs, nominating which SDG goal programs are aligned with.
- Put SDG badges on the program for the ALIA National Conference.

### **Raise the profile of libraries and the SDGs within and outside the sector**

We can explore the potential for significant activities or events, for example a high profile awards program.

### Actions

- Investigate a potential link with the ALIA Australian Library Design Awards.
- ALIA's Australian Public Library Alliance to consider sponsoring a category in the Local Government Managers' Association Awards.

### **Thank you**

ALIA would like to thank our President Vicki Edmunds, SDG champion Vicki McDonald, our keynote and sector speakers and everyone who participated in the Roundtable and helped to build in the next steps for libraries and the SDG.