



ALIA Board climate change statement

13 October 2021

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Board accepts that climate change is a dangerous reality and that its effects pose an increasing threat to libraries and the communities they serve.

Living in a country that is particularly vulnerable to environmental extremes, it is critical that all Australians have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about climate change and how it affects their lives. Our global goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 can only be met by government, industry and civil society, if leaders have the grass roots support of individuals, families and community groups.

Libraries and library and information professionals are rising to the challenge, leading by example, promoting awareness, providing evidence-based information, supporting adaptation and helping to mitigate the impact on the most vulnerable in our society.

ALIA itself is responding to climate change through support and encouragement for its Members, measures to reduce our own environmental footprint and being an active participant in efforts to improve the outlook for our planet.

THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SECTOR

Leading by example

Australian libraries are being built and renovated to meet the highest levels of environmental sustainability,¹ providing flagship locations in towns and cities, within education campuses and as anchor buildings in new developments. They are modelling sustainable practices with waste and carbon reduction initiatives from recycling through to clean energy. And book borrowing is, of course, one of the most established forms of reuse.

Promoting awareness

Many libraries and information services have embraced the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a strategic planning tool and are helping to raise awareness of the SDGs in their communities, with their user groups and parent organisations.² While the SDG are far broader, they incorporate a strong emphasis on environmental matters.

Evidence-based content for students, researchers and policy makers

Library and information services staff support their users by drawing on historic collections, acquiring sound and informative literature including scientific journals, searching open access data and disseminating the latest information from authentic, verified sources.

Quality information and resources for all

Australian libraries and information services, working within their mandates, should seek opportunities to provide high quality information resources on climate change and sustainability

¹ ALIA Library Design Award entries 2017, 2019, 2021

² <https://read.alia.org.au/australian-libraries-support-sustainable-development-goals/>
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/2020libraryreport/>

practices, and encourage their communities to share environmental best practice through, for example, collection development, displays, talks, programs and kits.

Supporting adaptation

Libraries and information services are adapting their collections, spaces, technology, programs and services to meet changing needs. For example, we know that our collections will be at greater risk of damage and destruction from catastrophic weather and natural disasters, which will increase in frequency and severity due to climate change. As a result, we are investing more in digital access to collections, to preserve the content if not the artefact.

Mitigating the impact on the most vulnerable in our society

Climate change will have the greatest impact on the homeless and those least able to afford household devices and technologies to counter its effects. As a consequence, we know that libraries and information services will increasingly become places of refuge for people escaping extreme heat and cold so we are providing spaces and services to meet the needs of those who can't read or study in comfort at home.

AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION

Support and encouragement for ALIA Members

In July 2021, ALIA initiated the Greening Libraries project, in the first instance commissioning research into how libraries internationally and in Australia are responding to environmental issues. This will lead to the development of a best practice report in 2022 against which libraries can assess their own performance and set goals for improvement, with further project outputs to follow.

Reducing ALIA's environmental footprint

In September 2021, the ALIA Board set a target of 'Carbon neutral by 2030' for the Association and endorsed the ALIA Environmental Sustainability Policy, with strategies for minimising our impact on the environment and maximising our use of sustainable resources.

Being an active participant

ALIA was a founder member of Blue Shield Australia in 2005, part of the international movement to protect cultural heritage at risk from conflict and disaster. In 2021, we have joined the Climate Heritage Network,³ a voluntary international body comprising arts, culture and heritage organisations committed to helping tackle climate change and achieve the ambitions of the Paris Agreement, and Greening Australia,⁴ to stay informed about national environmental priorities. We are working towards Climate Active certification.⁵

The ALIA Board is committed to working towards a sustainable future and recognises that unfettered climate change is one of the greatest threats to our survival.

³ <https://climateheritage.org/>

⁴ <https://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/>

⁵ <https://www.climateactive.org.au/be-climate-active/certification>