



## **Submission in response to the Australian Government Senate Inquiry into the future of Australia Post's service delivery**

**2 July 2020**

### **1. About us**

#### **Australian Library and Information Association**

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

#### **ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance**

The Australian Public Library Alliance is part of ALIA and represents the interests of the nation's 1500 public libraries. Offering books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, WiFi, PC internet access, learning programs, fun activities and expert staff help, these libraries are a much loved, highly regarded and trusted community resource.

- More than 9 million registered users in 2018 and more than 111 million visits to libraries, 51 million visits to library websites.
- More than 250,000 programs eg storytime, Be Connected, attracted over 7 million attendees.
- Per capita annual cost of \$48.99, funded by councils, state and territory governments.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last 20 years, public libraries have increased their role in the digital space, enhancing people's online experiences, helping people connect to this new virtual world, and providing a safety net for those who are in danger of being left behind, particularly in terms of the ability to access government information.

### **2. Public libraries and Australia Post**

Public libraries have a long relationship with Australia Post, both as a delivery service, facilitating the movement of books and other resources between locations, and, through Post Offices, as a like network of trusted community infrastructure. In small towns, the library

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nsla.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/nsla-aus-public-library-stats-2017-18.pdf>

and the Post Office are often the main points of reference and in some locations, they may occupy the same building.

In 2019:

- Australia Post won the contract to provide an essential courier service moving books around the South Australian library network and providing access to innovation that continues to support library development.
- The Australia Post Community Partnerships and Programs team attended meetings of the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance to explore ways in which we could work together more closely.
- Library representatives were part of Australia Post literacy focus groups in Perth and Sydney.
- Australia Post became a partner in ALIA's National Simultaneous Storytime<sup>2</sup>, which reaches more than a million children and caregivers.

### **3. Future sustainability**

It is important to libraries and to the communities we serve that Australia Post remains a viable business. We need Australia Post's postal service to fulfil our delivery needs, and we understand the value of Post Offices as critical local infrastructure in regional, rural and remote Australia.

We also value the opportunity to investigate new forms of co-operation, building on the transformation of library services as a result of COVID-19. Home library services for people with disability, home delivery for people who are unable to visit the library in person, the possibility of using Post Offices as pick up and drop off points for library services where the nearest library is some distance away. These are all initiatives which could further support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.alia.org.au/nss>