



ALIA Schools Special Interest Group

National Cultural Policy submission

21 May 2026

The ALIA Schools Special Interest Group (SIG) represents school library professionals working across every state and territory in Australia. ALIA Schools SIG advocates for equitable access to high-quality school library services that support literacy, learning and cultural engagement for all students.

ALIA Schools SIG supports the National Cultural Policy; however, we call for a commitment to bolster and champion school libraries which house creative works through literature and art. These works connect students to innovation, community and equip them to be part of the national cultural narrative. This cannot be achieved for our young people whilst school libraries continue to diminish through lack of appropriate staffing and financial resourcing.

Across Australia, many schools do not have a library, and if they do, there is an increasing trend for them not to be run by qualified staff. This inequity limits students' access to books, information and cultural experiences, undermining national efforts to address declining literacy and build a strong reading culture.

School libraries directly support all five of the core pillars that the National Cultural Policy will be structured around:

- **First Nations First:** School libraries are equipped to integrate First Nations voices enabling First Nations students to see themselves reflected through curated collections and programs. These resources support truth-telling and provide an opportunity for cultural understanding for the entire student community. Qualified school library staff also promote the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, and contemporary contributions into curriculum across all learning areas.
- **A Place for Every Story:** School libraries are places where students can explore diverse texts in a safe and welcoming environment which champions diversity and inclusivity. Qualified school library staff know how to find “just the right book at just the right time” to ensure that students not only have their own identity affirmed but are able to step into the shoes of others, building empathy and cultural literacy.



- **Centrality of the Artist:** School libraries are the gateway to creative authors and illustrators. The school library is a springboard for introducing students to artists and writers to vast cultural perspectives. Schools who are afforded the opportunity to host visiting authors and illustrators experience connection to even greater effect.
- **Strong Cultural Infrastructure:** School library professionals are masters at “making do with what we have”, however minimal staff and minimal resources make it a challenge to sustain adequate exposure to arts, culture and heritage. Investing in school libraries will embolden resilience to sustainably support our arts, culture and heritage well into the foreseeable future.
- **Engaging the Audience:** School libraries are responsive to change, and through curated collections put national stories across numerous formats and mediums into the hands of young Australian readers. School libraries are places where children and young people are inspired to contribute their own cultural narratives and where individuals feel recognised and celebrated.

To address these challenges, ALIA Schools SIG recommends that the National Cultural Policy 2026:

- Recognise school libraries as essential cultural infrastructure.
- Commit to equitable provision across all Australian schools.
- Support qualified staffing through national guidelines or standards.

ALIA Schools SIG calls for a clear national commitment for every Australian student to have access to a well-resourced school library, staffed by qualified library professionals.