



National Cultural Policy submission

24 May 2026

The Australian Coalition for School Libraries (ACSLS) is a sector committee of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and provides a united professional voice to advocate for Australian school libraries and school library staff. The Coalition comprises representatives from the state-based school library associations and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA).

School libraries are where lifelong engagement with culture begins. They foster reading for pleasure, support educational achievement, and connect students with stories, ideas, media and cultural experiences through programs, events and partnerships. For Australia's children and young people, this connection cannot be achieved whilst school libraries continue to diminish through lack of appropriate staffing and financial resourcing.

ACSLS asserts that **school libraries are essential cultural and educational infrastructure** that enable not only the delivery, but the futureproofing of all five pillars of the new National Cultural Policy.

First Nations First

School libraries enable First Nations students to see themselves reflected through curated collections and programs and are places where all students can access and experience First Nations stories, histories, and languages. School libraries provide opportunities for cultural understanding for the entire student community. Qualified school library staff support teachers to 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 provide equitable access to diverse literature and information, ensuring all students can see themselves reflected and encounter the experiences of others. They are inclusive spaces that remove barriers to participation, particularly for students in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities. For some students, a school library will be their only access to books.

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. School libraries are also places where media and digital literacy skills are taught, enabling students to create stories through emerging

means of expression.

Centrality of the Artist

School libraries connect students with Australian authors, illustrators and creators, fostering engagement with contemporary Australian storytelling. They are a springboard for introducing students to Australia's vast cultural perspectives. By nurturing a love of reading and creativity, they help sustain future generations of artists and audiences for Australian work.

School libraries are also the place where students learn firsthand about creative rights and the safe and ethical sharing of creative content in the digital environment.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

A commitment to equitably resourcing school libraries is the most impactful and far-reaching investment the Australian Government can make to ensure the long-term sustainability of Australia's cultural infrastructure. A well-resourced library, staffed by qualified teacher librarians and library professionals delivers significant improvements in student literacy, digital capability and critical thinking outcomes. These are all essential capabilities for resilient, adaptable communities who can participate fully in cultural life.

Funding for school libraries across the country is currently inconsistent and inequitable and no official data is available on the number of school libraries in each state or territory. An easy first step towards improving national visibility and standards around school libraries would be to collect this data to effectively support funding where most needed.

Engaging the Audience

Well-resourced school libraries with qualified staff are integral to an education system that creates inclusion and connection. Curated school library collections put national stories across numerous formats and mediums into the hands of young Australian readers. School libraries are welcoming places where children and young people are inspired to contribute their own cultural narratives and where individuals feel recognised and celebrated.

Recommendation

The Australian Coalition for School Libraries (ACSL) calls for **a clear national commitment for every Australian student to have access to a well-resourced school library, staffed by qualified library professionals.**

