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FOLA

NEWS UPDATE

Better, **more accessible** *Libraries for all in Australia*



The new Albury Public Library, NSW

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Dr Alan Bundy AM
President FOLA

Public Library Funding: It's time to ask for *more*



In September 2007 I had the pleasure of giving a paper on public library funding futures at the annual conference of the Queensland Public Libraries Association conference in Ipswich. That paper *Sex, lies and politics: public library funding futures* is available on FOLA's website www.fola.org.au

In the paper I drew attention to the political spin used to conceal the funding realities of Australia's public libraries, despite the fact that they are by far the most multidimensional, heavily used and valued community services in the country.

This is most prevalent at the state/territory government level, as most try to excuse their retreat over the last 20 years or so from a genuine funding partnership with local government in developing better, more accessible, libraries for all in Australia. By far the worst has been NSW, where the state government funding of public libraries is now less than 7% - a disgrace for the so called 'premier state'.

Queensland, the so called 'smart state', is however not far behind, having steadily declined from 24% in 1998/9 to less than 14% in 2006/7. Victoria is not greatly better. These percentages are a very long way from the 50/50 partnership needed to enable public libraries to achieve anything like their full potential for their communities; encourage local government to continue to increase their investment in them; and to ensure that know nothing members of councils do not start suggesting that direct user pays by annual subscriptions would be a viable alternative to accepting very low state government funding which is conditional on councils providing free public libraries. The only effect of that would be less use of public libraries, when all the literacy, educational and community indicators for Australia

The level relative to local government at which a state or territory government funds its public libraries is important financially *and* in providing leadership for local government. A progressive lowering of that relative level says 'We do not really care about what quality and equity of access people of all ages in our State have to public libraries'. When challenged about the relative decline in their funding, the states and territories will point to the dollars not having decreased, and that the relative change is because local government has *chosen* to invest more in the libraries. This is sophistry, and a manifestation of the buck passing of responsibility and funding which bedevils what has been described as Australia's complex system of government. Public libraries and their 12 million users are, of course, not the only victims of this system. They are, however, among the worst affected because not only is state government support for them weak, the national government has studiously avoided any responsibility for their wellbeing despite now making major contributions to health, educational, child care, community and other state focused services.

Denmark, for example, funds its public libraries as part of its educational provision at nearly *three* times per capita more than Australia. If Denmark can, if Singapore can, if Finland can, why not a wealthy country like Australia?

The \$600 million pa required to double Australia's low investment in its public libraries is, in national financial terms, insignificant - less than half of one per cent of the national expenditure on school education. So if your local council is not contributing at least 6% of rate revenue to the operation of by far its most heavily used community provision; if your state/territory government is not increasing its funding of public libraries in

"Denmark, for example, funds its public libraries as part of its educational provision at nearly three times per capita more than Australia."

Public Library Funding: It's time to ask for *more* (continued)

real and relative terms; and if your national government continues to ignore them, it is time for all of them to be held to account.

FOLA has been raising these issues with both sides of politics as the federal election looms, and will continue doing so after the election. There is an important role for every Friends of Library group, large or small, to be doing the same as the library voice of their communities.

A starving Oliver Twist in Dicken's 1838 novel asked for more, and eventually received his reward, just as his tormentors received theirs. His was a happy ending.

Oliver Twist dared to ask for more. *So, now, must all of those who know what Great Good Places public libraries can be for all people, of all ages, and of all circumstances.*

Launceston Family Album Presentation

Friends of the Library Launceston

Friends of the Library Launceston celebrated its Launceston Family Album project on 27 September 2007 with a ceremony at the Launceston Town Hall, hosted by the Mayor and attended by the Governor of Tasmania, His Excellency Mr William Cox.

The project was based on a photograph album of 1100 named photos of people who had season tickets to the Tasmanian International Exhibition held in Launceston in 1891-92. (The Album was passed to the Library in the 1950s). Digital copies of the photos were made and incorporated into a website. Members of the public could send in information about the people in the photos and this was added to the website. The project was funded by a grant of \$16,000 from the Tasmanian Community Fund.

In addition, the Examiner newspaper ran a weekly article about individuals or families that were in the album. Some of these stories were sent in by members of the public, others were researched and written by members of Friends and by Library staff. These stories have been published in a leather bound volume, The Launceston Family Album, printed on archival paper. Only 40 copies were printed.



At the ceremony at the Town Hall, a copy of the Album was presented to the Governor, (who incidentally contributed information about his family) by President Mike McCausland. Copies were then presented by the Governor to the City of Launceston, the State Library of Tasmania, the Examiner newspaper and the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The photo shows President Mike McCausland, Mrs Frances Hay and His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania William Cox speaking with Mrs Frances Hay who contributed articles about her grandparents, based on early memories.

About 500 of the individuals in the original album have had information added to their photos on the website. The website will remain active for another two years and it is hoped many more people will be identified in that time.

The website address is:

www.launcestonfamilyalbum.org.au

to reflect on the support provided by the Dunedin Public Library Association and to embrace this direction of a deep and fulfilling partnership with their community.

"The project was based on a photograph album of 1100 named photos of people who had season tickets to the Tasmanian International Exhibition held in Launceston in 1891-92."

FOLA 2007 Annual Meeting held at the Coventry Memorial Library, Stirling, South Australia

At the AGM on 23 August, FOLA launched its **2007 Report to the Nation** – *Looking ever forward: Australia's public libraries serving children and young people*, which can be downloaded from the FOLA website www.fola.org.au



Attendees at the launch of the FOLA 2007 Report to the Nation

1: Dr Bundy with Mayor, Bill Cooksley

2: Ruth Giles, President Stirling FOL





New Library for Albury

Shirley Dobson, Friends of the Albury Libraries

Many of the Friends volunteered their time in the first month to act as guides to show people around the new building."

The Friends of the Albury Libraries are delighted that in July 2007 the long awaited Library/Museum building opened its doors to the community, with approximately 7000 people attending opening day celebrations. Community members were queuing to get in! 30,000 people came through the door in the first month and the membership and loans for the library have increased by 150%.

Many of the Friends volunteered their time in the first month to act as guides to show people around the new building, and also took on the role as exhibition guides, providing security and interpretation for the first temporary exhibition (Experimental vanishing point – an interactive media arts

exhibition) and the permanent exhibition – *The Crossing Place: a story of Albury.*

We have had a few pre-loved book sales – one very large one just before moving into the new building. The money raised from these sales have been used to purchase additional Australian film DVDs and sets of books for the nine book groups who now meet at the Library/Museum.

We again sponsored the Junior and Open prizes for the annual Albury Libraries Short Story competition in July and funded the publication of the anthology of prize winners some of which is recouped by selling the booklet for \$5.

NLA welcomes **Friends across Australia**

Terry Birtles, Chairman, Friends of the National Library of Australia

"The Committee and members of the Friends of the National Library of Australia look forward to enhancing the relationship between our organisations"

In recognition of the National Library of Australia's commitment to all library users across our nation, the friends of the national Library would very much like to offer their increased support for FOLA's activities.

The Committee has been authorised to welcome interstate members of FOLA groups to the use of our Members' Lounge when they are in Canberra. Your members are also most welcome to join in our programs, including trips away.

We will also ensure that copies of NLA News are sent to all FOLA member groups that do not already receive them.

The Committee and members of the Friends of the National Library of Australia look forward to enhancing the relationship between our organisations and working together to support our nation-wide network of library users. We welcome any further ideas and advice your members may propose and look forward to a mutually satisfying, friendly future.

Thankyou on behalf of FOLA.

Friends around Australia



News, Events & Ideas...

National Library (ACT)

Friends of the National Library of Australia AGM will be held 10 December at 5.30 pm. Friends Spring Day Tour "Villages of the Gunning-Queanbeyan Road" on 3 November. The focus of the tour is the nineteenth century heritage of the villages between Gunning and Queanbeyan. The Friends Book Club is held on the last Tuesday of the month.

Willunga & Aldinga (SA)

August meeting had guest speaker Raelene Draheim who gave a fascinating talk about quilt making and its history. Books for Africa – some of our members have been busy packing surplus books from the book sale and store rooms to send to Africa, in a shipment that the Willunga Primary School have been contributing to. They are also following up requests for books for Timor.

Salisbury (SA)

Friends Literary Lunch on 25 October with Nicolas Jose, South Australian author of *Original Face*. The giant book sale on 6/7 October raised over \$500 in the first hour! Left over books were given to the Rotary Club. Bill Hulme was made an Honorary Life Member of the Friends at the AGM.

Victor Harbor (SA)

The long awaited new library opened in May and the first four and a half months have seen a doubling of patrons. As a tribute, the Friends have placed a lovely and rather wistful photograph of the old library in the history section. The Friends have brought six books trolleys for patrons' use and these are much appreciated in the larger space. In addition, there are new puppets worth \$900 in the childrens section. Our wonderful Library Manager Sue Leonard retired after seeing the new library running smoothly and we welcome Ben Footner as her replacement and look forward to working with him.

Barossa (SA)

Friends of the Barossa Library strongly support the Barossa Council's proposal to move the Nuriootpa Library into the new Civic Centre. The empty front wing of the new Council building is at least three times the size of the present library. Geoff Stempel, Associate Director of Public Library Services in SA was guest speaker at the Friends recent AGM. The evening ended with satisfying refreshments and the excellent support from Langmeil Winery.

State Library (SA)

Friends now have a new room at the State Library, the Morgan Thomas room, upstairs at the front of the Institute Building. Celebrating the Friends 75th Anniversary, a series of notable speakers will talk during November: Dr John Bannon AO, Anthony Steel AM, Mem Fox AM and the AGM speaker will be Richard Heathcote, Director of Carrick Hill.

Jondaryan (Qld)

Friends of the Library, Jondaryan Shire shared an enjoyable time at the library in Oakey on September 7. Between socialising, "talking books", and exchanging ideas relating to the preservation of the local history collection, they actually managed to undertake worthwhile tasks to help organise some of the vast amount of paperwork involved.

Victor Harbour:

"The Friends have brought six books trolleys for patrons' use and these are much appreciated in the larger space.."



Friends around Australia



Thuringowa (Qld)

Recorded Recipes: The programme involves vision impaired members of Townsville/Thuringowa and the recipes – appropriate for cooking and eating by the sight impaired, have been devised by them and Year 10 students of Kirwan High School. The recipes will be on the purple navigators which the vision impaired can borrow from the Library. The end of the year celebration and Thank You to the Library Staff and Members will be held on 13 November.

Port Macquarie (NSW)

The Friends held their Annual General Meeting in September and celebrated their 18th birthday with a surprise party. The Friends were instrumental in lobbying for the building of a new library many years ago and in more recent years have introduced the Bookstart Project which encourages reading from a young age by providing an information pack and quality board book to all new mothers giving birth at Port Macquarie Base Hospital. Since the project commenced in February 2006 over 1200 Bookstart packs have been distributed. The Friends also provide an annual reading award to each of the twenty four local primary schools to encourage literacy skills. Funds for these initiatives are raised through several activities including Book Sales and the popular "Souper Stories" evenings.

Port Macquarie:

"The Friends also provide an annual reading award to each of the twenty four local primary schools."

Wagga Wagga (NSW)

There was a Spring Book Sale on 8th September which coincided with the Farmers Market morning, the Annual Jazz Festival, and the Antique Fair. The profit for the morning was just over \$1900, a great income boost!

In conjunction with the booksales, Claire Campbell, Manager of Library Services, is seeking quotes for some new shelving in the work area, so that boxes of donations can be sorted and stored safely. The Friends will help pay for the installation of this shelving, so the work can be handled with greater ease on the library staff.

Balmain (NSW)

Crime writer and journalist Jennifer Cooke spent years wanting to write romance. She spoke to Friends on Friday 24 August. This senior reporter with the *Sydney Morning Herald* has written books on popular science and true crime after covering court cases in Australia, Britain and Hong Kong over the past 28 year. She spoke about one of her latest books – *Done Like a Dinner*.

Waverley (NSW)

Friends are advertising the Westfield/Waverley Library Award for Literature to be held on 14 November. The winner will receive the \$15,000 prize for the book which has been assessed as best demonstrating excellence in research, published by an Australian author in the past 12 months. The function will be hosted by 702 ABC radio presenter Richard Glover. The winner will be interviewed by Andrea Stretton.



Richard Glover

Altona (Vic)

At the recent AGM the Friends decided to donate funds for more equipment for the Altona and Altona Meadows Libraries and sponsor an Illustration Competition for children from Prep to Grade 12. The Friends will be celebrating their 20th Anniversary on 4 December.

Friends of Libraries RESOURCE BOOK (2005)

**Daniel Ferguson, Friends of
Libraries Australia (FOLA)**

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FOLA COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2007

5 December – Melbourne
27 February – Melbourne

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