

DUMB IDEA



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Queensland Government dumbs down policymaking

The Queensland Government is making moves to marginalise, shrink, and in the worst case, eradicate its government libraries. In doing so, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) says the government will be dumbing down policy and decision-making and fears that, once lost, unique collections of valuable historic and contemporary documents, referred to by scientists and researchers on a daily basis, will be lost forever.

“But it’s not just about print materials. Experts seeking information related to patient health, bio-security, food production, and many other critical areas rely on electronic databases of scientific research papers on a daily basis,” said Sue McKerracher, ALIA executive director.

“Government libraries are places run by highly qualified library and information professionals, who are able to find the answer to just about any question a Minister, politician or bureaucrat might ask when developing robust, evidence-based policy. These are the people who provide the links to knowledge that cannot be sourced elsewhere. Commercial search engines such as Google give results based on popularity. Do we want governments making important decisions based on popular culture or do we want them to make solid decisions, based on solid facts?

“As far as we can discover, there has been no consultation, but library staff are unable to speak to us for fear of their jobs being targeted. Most of our information is coming via people who have retired from the service.

“The Premier may think this is a cost-cutting measure but, from what we can gather, the savings will be less than the \$5m Brisbane City Council spend each year on weed control. In practice, any savings will be offset by the additional cost of highly paid government advisors having to do their own research or employ less qualified assistants to do it for them. Library and information professionals are faster, use authenticated resources, and provide better results, at less cost to the taxpayer.

“Cutting expenditure on government libraries is a dumb idea. We hope the Queensland government will see sense, call a halt to the cuts, and renew its investment in these essential library and information services.”

ENDS

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The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional association for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. ALIA represents the interest of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

<http://www.alia.org.au>

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