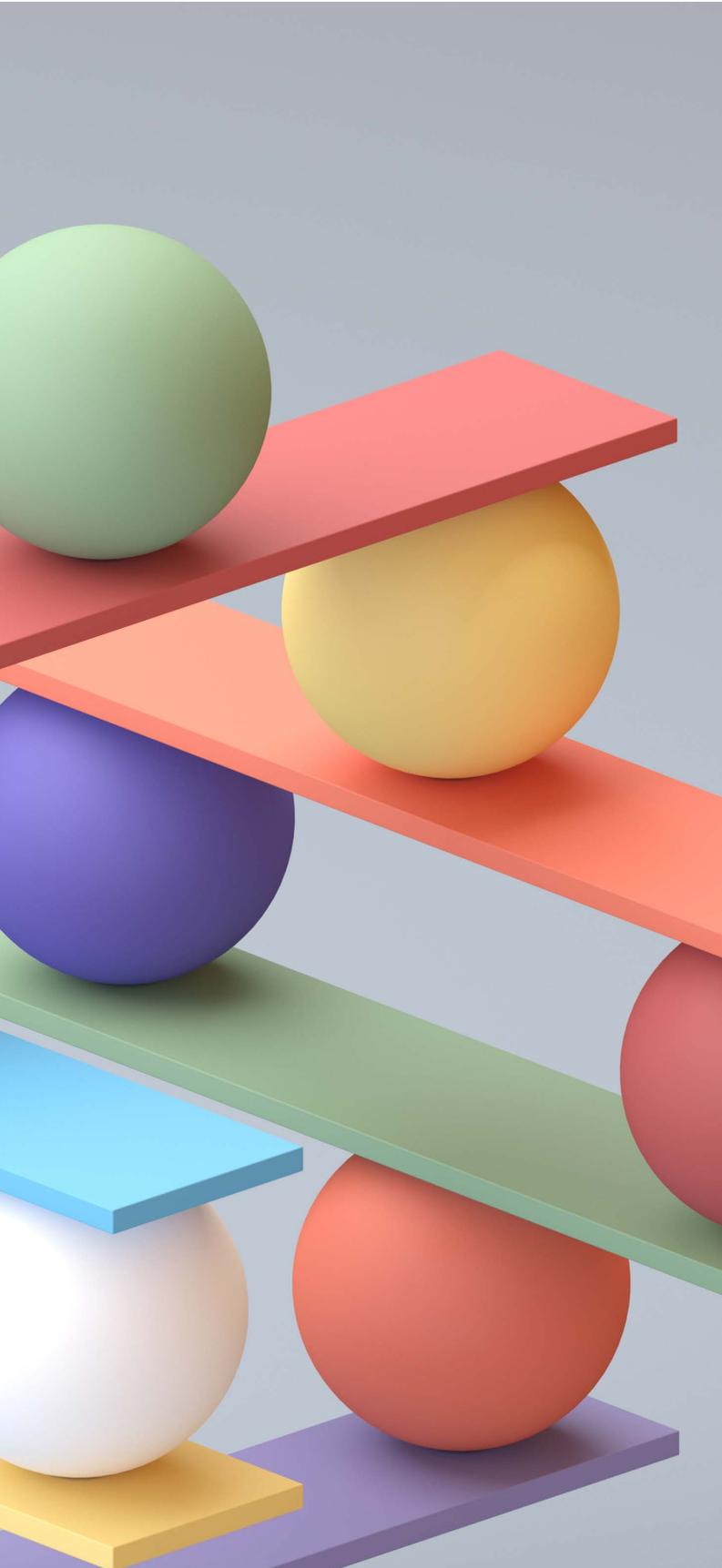




Australian Library and  
Information Association



REPORT

# ALIA's Leadership and Innovation Roundtables 2022

# 1. Purpose

In the second half of 2022 ALIA held a series of small functions across Australia with members and leaders in the library and information services industry. The purpose was to facilitate discussion about industry trends, challenges and opportunities from the perspective of those working across all sectors, from schools to universities and from public libraries to special libraries as well as LIS educators and researchers. ALIA also wanted to hear feedback on its performance and where members thought it should be focusing its efforts into the future.

## 2. Background

A total of eight Roundtables were held, one in the capital city of every State and Territory, with more than 100 people in attendance. Hosting each event, it was a great opportunity for ALIA's new CEO, Cathie Warburton, to meet members and to hear first hand about their experiences, hopes, challenges and ideas. A full list of dates, locations and attendees at each Roundtable can be found in the Annexure to this Report.

Prior to each event attendees were sent a series of questions to consider. The types of questions included:

- What are the top three challenges and opportunities for the LIS Sector?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the LIS sector? What can we do to address them?
- What are the LIS sector's strengths? What opportunities are there for collaboration within the sector and outside the sector
- What is ALIA's role?
- What feedback do you have for ALIA?
- What could ALIA be doing better and should ALIA partner with to make a greater impact?
- How well does ALIA represent the different parts of the LIS sector and collaborate with representatives of those sectors e.g. health, universities, public, legal, schools
- The needs of personal members and institutional members – can ALIA serve two masters?

Despite the trials of the COVID years, members brought much goodwill and energy to the meetings. They seemed genuinely pleased to have the opportunity to once again gather together to share stories, discuss issues and brainstorm future initiatives for ALIA and the industry. From these conversations across the country a number of common themes emerged. They often started with the identification of a particular challenge and quickly moved on to an analysis of the possible causes and then a range of strategies to address the issues. There was no shortage of 'leadership' and 'innovation' at the table.

## 3. Overview

This report cannot possibly do justice to the broad range of discussions and commentary about a huge range of issues by experienced and thoughtful LIS professionals. What it will attempt to do is to present the key themes – the challenges and opportunities and the possible strategies or solutions proffered for consideration.

At the end of each section is a statement about ALIA's proposed actions in response to the matters raised.

The themes are:

- Advocacy and marketing
- Workforce and education
- Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the industry and in collections
- Leadership
- ALIA's communication and events

# 4. Advocacy and marketing

## 4.1. The issue

The LIS industry is not well understood by employers, the community and potential recruits.

Comments from participants:

- Teachers and school leaders don't appreciate what the teacher librarian role can achieve.
- Libraries are a victim of their own success. Everyone thinks they know what a library does from their own experience but that experience may be from years ago or be very narrow.
- If people don't understand what we do they can't advocate for us.
- Libraries struggle to articulate their impact, value and role to organisational leaders.
- Common problem of reporting to people who don't know (or, sometimes don't want to know) what it is we do!

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“A strength but also a weakness for many librarians is that we really want to help people and see them succeed but we also struggle to promote the work that we do - to take credit for and talk up our successes. I think we need to be better storytellers.”

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The LIS industry needs a strong national voice.

Comments from participants:

- The voice from the LIS sector is fractured – there are strong voices in some states and in some sections of the industry but there needs to be a united national voice for the industry.
- Obstacle is state based thinking.

## 4.2. Ideas and strategies

### Be loud

- We need to be loud and purposeful. We need to bravely do things because it is the right thing to do.
- Need to focus on strong consistent messaging around sector values - access to information, equality, inclusion.
- Engage media more proactively to spread the message.
- Use data and talk about impact
- Step boldly and talk about impact so our voice is heard.
- Show impact of libraries, better use of data
- Flex the “I” in ALIA and get the information to support advocacy.
- The need for evidence-based communication and the use of statistics when engaging with decision-makers.
- Undertake research to provide data to demonstrate impact of libraries.
- We need to collaborate with other sectors and look at how sectors such as sports work to promote their achievements.
- Have others advocate for us.
- We need to speak more loudly and also need to have employers and people outside the sector speak on our behalf about the value of libraries and librarians.
- Foster others to also be our advocates e.g. parents, teachers, Government departments, local councils, students.
- Unite with other departments/ cross sector collaborations.
- More roundtables to foster collaboration and sharing across GLAMR sector.

## Work nationally

- Combine effort nationally and across sectors, professional associations need to work together
- Professional associations to work more closely together on the common goal of promoting the LIS sector e.g. ALIA, ASLA, CAUL, ALLA.
- ALIA needs to avoid becoming too siloed or tribal - ALIA needs to be for ALL sectors and ALL Libraries.
- advocacy should not be contradictory in different jurisdictions.
- Members contribute to advocacy.
- Capacity building of members and opportunities for members to contribute to advocacy.
- The need for all library and information professionals to have an 'elevator pitch'.
- The possible development of a change management tool kit for libraries.
- Training and professional development for members, i.e. workshops which build skills and provide tools, conducting market research (ROI, SROI, research studies), survey/engaging members, risk management.
- Explore new income sources and new audiences.
- The importance of effective marketing in advocacy activities and in securing philanthropic support, bequests, grants and other funding.
- The need for the sector to develop communications plans for approaching to different kinds of funders and the importance of locating the 'decision-makers'.
- Strategic partnerships and patrons, e.g. booksellers and publishers, public figures from sport and recreation, could be utilised for this area.
- Aiming high with our engagement strategies: Curtin's JCPL Annual Lecture is a huge success every year, and Julia Gillard is its patron; Melbourne Law School Rare Book Lecture with guest speaker from overseas.

## Other issues needing advocacy

- School libraries
- Cost shifting by Federal government using libraries as customer service for services migrated to online.
- Open access
- accessing Australian Standards
- Copyright reform
- Misinformation and the need for media literacy

## 4.3. ALIA's commitment

- Increased opportunities for Members to contribute to policy and advocacy.
- Increased number of face to face Member events in all regions with a new full time regional engagement manager working with regional group convenors.
- Building our vocal supporters - working with others so they can advocate for us, from GLAM Peak through to local government, principals and teacher associations.
- Fostering greater collaboration across the library and information sector, for example between state associations, sector association and related professional associations.
- Developing a national library campaign to promote the sector, starting with public libraries in the first instance but with key messages that could be adjusted for other sectors in the future.
- Using data to tell our story, starting with APLA taking a strategic role in the shaping and release of the public library statistics, including using the data to show impact.
- Supporting all members to be advocates, launching low-cost advocacy training for the sector.
- Increasing our media footprint through cultivation of relationships with key media outlets and proactively pitching library stories.
- Strong advocacy on the policies that matter for libraries. Planned advocacy campaigns to improve school library staffing, funding for library infrastructure at national level and challenges faced by the sector, including affordable access to resources.
- Raising the library voice, making sure that library workers are heard on the matters of expertise, such as early literacy, copyright reform, media literacy and research support.

# 5. Workforce and education

## 5.1. The issue

- With the declining number of universities offering LIS courses there is a perception that it is a profession in trouble.
- It is difficult to fill library positions with qualified staff.

## 5.2. Ideas and strategies

- Make the ALIA Jobs Board more affordable so that the whole spectrum of available jobs are shared and visible.
- Promote a career in libraries at careers forums and Uni Open days.
- Target people who are leaving other sectors – promote LIS as a second career.
- Look for LIS recruits from north of Australia – skilled migration. NT is the only state where LIS is treated as highly skilled for visa purposes.
- Develop short videos on different roles in the LIS sector for use by media.
- Build better linkages between universities and industry.
- Foster relationships with employers e.g. Local Government Associations, Education Departments, Ministers for Local Government and Ministers for Education.

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One of our biggest challenges now is actually recruiting librarians. We're not getting enough applicants and have had to readvertise a number of positions this year

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## 5.3. ALIA's commitment

- Continue to progress Professional Pathways project to support people in the sector to build and map their skills, knowledge and ethics using the framework.
- Working with educators to strengthen courses at university and VET levels, and working with employers to promote and support library workers.
- Support work integrated learning (WIL) in the ALIA-accredited courses, including through the development of Best Practice Placement Guidelines.
- Showcase diverse careers in libraries through the production of a suite of materials including short videos exploring the different roles in libraries.
- Support students with career and entry and transition, including practical support on understanding the sector, application process and networking.

# 6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

## 6.1. The issue

- Very low representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the LIS industry
- Legacy of colonialism in libraries – collections and history of exclusion
- Need for greater engagement with Indigenous Communities

## 6.2. Ideas and strategies

- Use the Referendum on the Voice to Parliament in 2023 and Queensland's Path to Treaty and the role of Indigenous Knowledge Centres to highlight the role libraries play in truth telling and accelerate the conversation.
- Rethink the 'old' ways of doing things, innovate to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems into library and information services in culturally safe ways.
- Offer more LIS scholarships for First Nations candidates.
- University libraries can actively partner and align with Indigenous centres on campus and consider initiatives like Elders in Residence at libraries, similar to the Edith Cowan University program [www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/cultural-leadership/elders-in-residence](http://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/cultural-leadership/elders-in-residence).

## 6.3. ALIA's commitment

- Fulfil commitments under the ALIA Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022-2024.
- Listen to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Advisory Group.
- Support the re-establishment of ATSIRILN.
- Provide sector-support, for example joint project with NSLA, CAUL, AIATIS and CAVAL to develop First Nations Description Guidelines.
- Promote the work being done in libraries with First Nations peoples around truth telling and cultural safety.

# 7. Leadership

## 7.1. The issue

- Where are the next leaders for the industry?
- tendency in workplaces to over-commit and say 'yes' to all requests, even if there isn't always capacity to do so.
- Need to focus not just on 'today's transaction' but also 'tomorrow's vision'.
- The frequency with which leaders – particularly women – report a feeling of “imposter syndrome” which can in turn lead to a reticence to promote themselves both as individuals and as representatives of the sector.
- lack of confidence in LIS personnel around leadership.
- LIS culture is collaborative rather than competitive and this may make people feel they can't be a leader.

## 7.2. Ideas and strategies

- Foster new leaders – an ALIA-led mentor program mentors from outside the sector as well as from within. A leadership mentoring program could assist current and emerging leaders with succession planning, skills development, industry knowledge, networking, particularly for those in leadership positions who have come from outside the sector.
- Share stories of career paths and leadership journeys.
- Sector would benefit from hearing from leaders in other fields about how they lead, innovate and effect positive change.
- LIS personnel need assistance in how to highlight the value and transferability of their skills.
- Promote opportunities for leadership. For example there are many opportunities in the Northern Territory for people who are prepared to relocate.
- Emerging leadership program.
- We must reinforce that everyone can be a leader – it isn't just a role. Recognition that leaders can be at different levels- middle and upper etc.
- A growth mindset is key – you don't need to be perfect just willing to learn and grow.
- Leaders share their leadership journey, make it real.
- Leadership upskilling program.
- Create a leadership “accelerator” program for those with leadership aspirations.

## 7.3. ALIA's commitment

- Promote leadership opportunities for members e.g. Advisory Committees, Groups, IFLA Committees.
- Celebrate leaders with awards.
- Highlight leaders and achievements in media, advocacy.
- Foster new leaders with a mentor program.
- Share stories with members of career paths and leadership journeys in InCite, webinars, podcasts.
- Work in partnership with others to support and extend existing leadership programs e.g. Aurora.

# 8. ALIA Communications and events

## 8.1. The issue

- Conference model is getting tired and key revenue stream for many associations is evaporating
- Members still want connection and networking opportunities
- Members want to be part of the conversation

## 8.2. Ideas and strategies

- Revamp InCite – make it more people focused
- Review conference model
- Hold more cross-sector events
- Communicate membership benefits

## 8.3. ALIA's commitment

- Refresh look and feel of ALIA communications including digital-only InCite, ALIA News and CPD Digest.
- Podcast series to highlight more Member stories.
- Map training and CPD offerings, use Professional Pathways structure to enhance offerings across sectors and utilise partnerships to deliver quality CPD content and pricing to enhance offerings.
- Connect members locally, with at least one member event in each state and territory organised by ALIA in collaboration with Regional Groups.

# Appendix

## Roundtable details

### **Perth – 23 November 2021 and 23 June 2022**

Margaret Allen, Helen Balfour, Viv Barton, Jill Benn, Michelle Brennand, Nicola Carson, Catherine Clark, Taylor Coventry, Sophie Farrar, Gaby Haddow, Cheryl Hamill, Nicole Johnston, Janelle Lee, Alison Oliver, Vanessa Paun, Ann Ritchie, Vanessa Rooney, Alissa Sputore, Cathie Warburton, Constance Wiebrands

### **Hobart – 11 August 2022**

Jill Abell, Nicole Barnes, Natalie Brown, Janette Burke, Rachael Garrett, Libby Levett, Mary Lijnzaad, Sue McKerracher, Jan Richards, Cathie Warburton

### **Adelaide – 8 September**

Sara Altmann, Catherine Barnes, Liz Bradtke, Hanlie Erasmus, Georgia Livissianos, Pepper Mickan, Geoff Stempel, Diana Velasquez, Liz Walkley-Hall, Emily Wilson, Cathie Warburton

### **Sydney – 27 September 2022**

Beatriz Arroz, Julie Barkman, Vanessa Blackmore, Vicki Edmunds, Trish Hepworth, Philip Kent, Maeva Masterson, Hollie McPherson, Cameron Morley, Paula Pfoeffler, Rolf Schafer, Andrew Spencer, Suzana Sukovic, Rob Thompson, Caitlin Wallace, Cathie Warburton

### **Brisbane – 10 October 2022**

Lisa Bateman, Louise Denoon, Gill Hallam, Nicole Hunt, Suzanne Livett, Vicki McDonald, Marion Morgan Bindon, Kay Oddone, Jane Orbell-Smith, Carmel O'Sullivan, Anna Raunik, Maureen Sullivan, Clare Thorpe, Cathie Warburton, Helen Weston

### **Darwin – 14 October 2022**

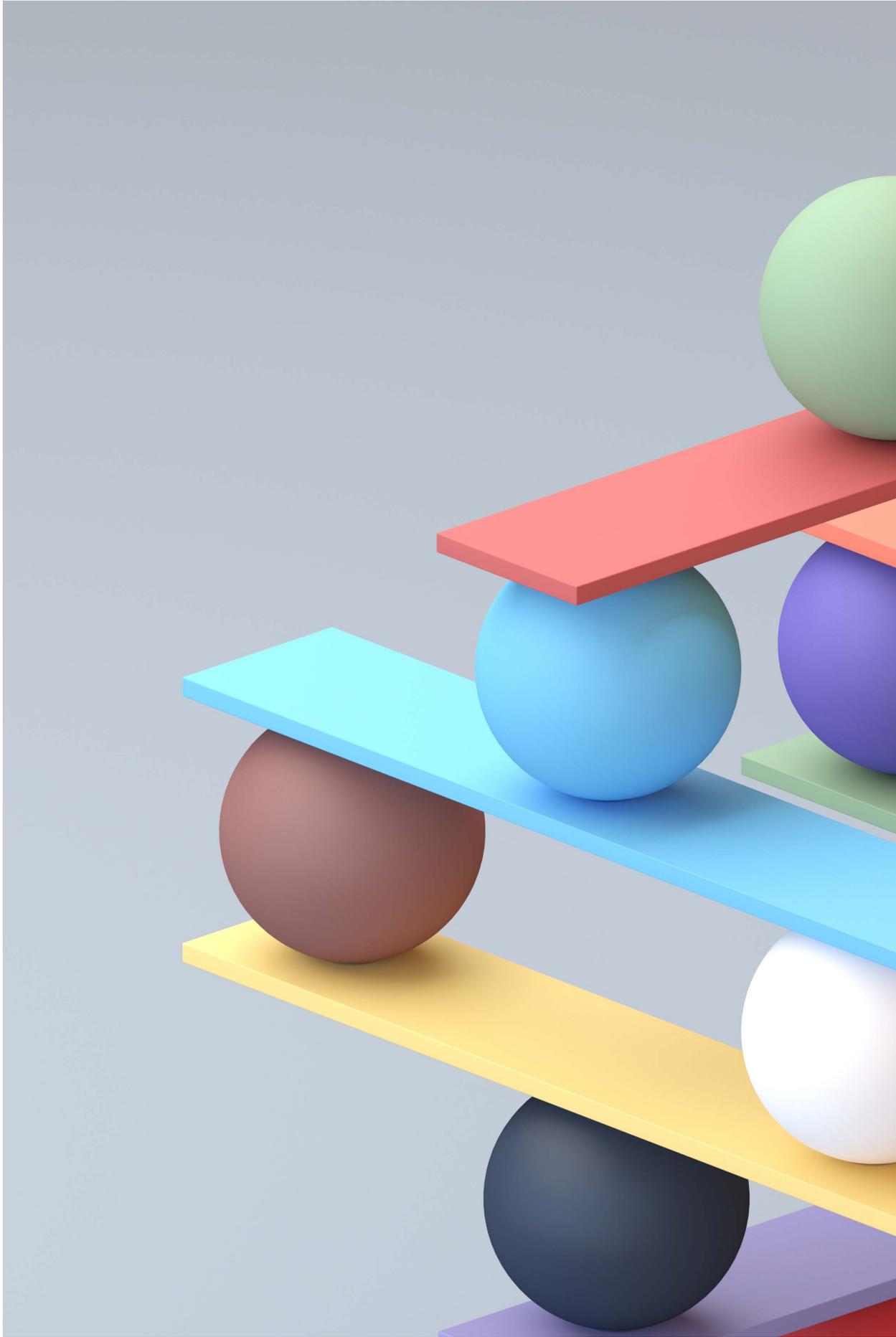
Barbara Cotton, Kate Elder, Wendy Garden, Suzie Gatley, Tara Gibson, Aimee Hay, Iffikhar Hayat, Lily Ho, Anna Ingram, Trudi Maly, Stacey Rosser, Ania Tait, Cathie Warburton

### **Canberra – 30 November 2022**

Marie Louise Ayres, Nicole Barnes, Rebecca Bateman, Liz Bradtke, Tammie Brown, Jennifer Carmody, Louise Curham, Jonathon Guppy, Trish Hepworth, Brad Hinton, Alison Jones, Barbara Lemon, Roxanne Missingham, Broderick Poeger, Cathie Warburton, Christian West

### **Melbourne – 6 December 2022**

Laurie Atkinson, Nicole Barnes, Mary Carroll, Sara Davidsson, Robyn Ellard, Robert Gerrity, Lisa Given, Trish Hepworth, Marguerita Meeking, Romany Menell, Deborah Rosenfeldt, Angela Savage, Cathie Warburton, Leanne Williams



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