

## ALIA overview of the 2014 – 2015 Federal Budget

**Wednesday 14 May 2014, Canberra:** For the library and information sector, the stand out items in yesterday's Federal Budget were changes to higher education, investment in research, the creation of a new community heritage program and new Industry Skills Fund, and incentives to employers hiring mature-aged job seekers.

Proposals to combine the back office functions of some of our national collecting institutions, including the National Library, came as no surprise, following Monday's media coverage, but there was no detail about how this might be implemented.

Our underlying concern was for government libraries, caught in the crossfire of Department spending cuts and efficiency dividends. Also, a user-pays environment in higher education could see a serious shake out in our universities, with LIS students paying more for courses. The government's decision to rely on private funding for the NBN after mid-2018 is also a concern.

There was a commitment from the Government to the VET sector, including a new Industry Skills Fund, and the Australian Skills Quality Authority retained its regulatory oversight. With library and information often a second or third career choice, incentives for employers to hire the over-50s were welcome.

There was some positive news on the research front, including 100 four-year Australian Research Council Future Fellowships for mid-career researchers each year. From 1 January 2015, the Government will establish a Medical Research Future Fund that will grow to \$20 billion, which could provide opportunities for health library and information professionals.

A new community heritage program dealt in very small sums, but these will help boost local history collections, often supported by libraries.

### **Of particular interest to the library and information sector:**

#### **Attorney-General's Department**

##### *Defunding of the Get Reading program*

The Government will achieve savings of \$6.4 million over four years by ceasing the Get Reading! Programme which duplicates activity in the media and publishing sector. The programme will cease from 1 July 2014.

##### *Consolidation of back office functions of collection agencies*

'The Government will achieve savings of \$2.4 million over four years from 2014-2015 by consolidating the back office functions of the following Canberra-based collection agencies: National Portrait Gallery, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, Old Parliament House, National Film and Sound Archive, National Museum of Australia and the National Archives of Australia.'

#### **Department of Communications**

##### *Enhancing online safety for children*

'The Government will provide \$10 million over four years to improve the protection of children online. Funding will be provided in three parts: \$7.5 million to provide online safety programmes for schools; \$0.1 million to support Australian-based research and information campaigns on

online safety; and \$2.4 million to establish and operate the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner.'

## **Department of Education**

### *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership*

'The Government will provide \$4.9 million over two years from 2013-2014 to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) for the continuation of the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme.'

'The Government will achieve savings of \$19.9 million over five years from 2013-2014 through efficiencies in the operations of AITSL.'

### *University fees*

'Universities will be able to set their own tuition fees for the courses they offer.'

'Balance the Commonwealth's contribution towards course fees for new students, with a reduction of 20 per cent on average, with effect from 1 January 2016.'

## **Department of the Environment**

### *Community heritage program*

'The Government will provide \$1.4 million over three years from 2014-2015 to support historical and cultural groups across Australia in the conservation, development and interpretation of local cultural heritage. The programme will provide grants of up to \$10,000 to local historical and heritage groups (\$1 million in total), \$150,000 over three years to the Australian Heritage Council and \$240,000 over three years to the Federation of Australian Historical Societies.'

## **Department of Health**

### *Medical Research Future Fund*

'The Government will provide \$276.2 million over three years from 1 July 2015 in net earnings from the Medical Research Future Fund to fund critical medical research in the medium to long term.'

## **Department of Industry**

### *Industry Skills Fund*

'The Australian Government is working to create a more efficient and effective skills and training system, which is industry led and outcome-driven. A range of reforms will be undertaken to improve the responsiveness of the system including programmes to support skills for industry. A key element of this commitment is the new Industry Skills Fund, an investment of over \$460 million to support industries to diversify successfully and improve their competitiveness in a global market.'

## **Department of Social Services**

## *Restart programme to encourage the employment of older Australians*

'A subsidy of up to \$10,000 will be paid to employers who hire an eligible mature age job seeker on a full-time basis.'

**For more information [www.budget.gov.au](http://www.budget.gov.au).**

**ENDS**

## **Media roundup**

'Merging 'back-office functions' is bad news for the museum sector' | *The Conversation* | 13 May 2014

'Federal budget reveals new public service' | *SMH* | 13 May 2014

'Radical shake-up to university funding in budget will see some fees soar' | *SMH* | 13 May 2014

'NBN rollout privately funded after mid-2018' | *ZDNet* | 13 May 2014

## **About the Australian Library and Information Association**

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. With 5,500 members across Australia, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. [www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

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