



Submission to the Review of the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation

November 2025

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Digital Industry Group Inc's (DIGI) 2025 Review of the voluntary Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (ACPDM).

ALIA is the national body for libraries and information services (LIS) in Australia. Libraries work in diverse settings across the country, and ALIA's members include public, school, VET, university, government, health, law, special and national, territory and state libraries. Wherever situated, our libraries are committed to the provision of information to their communities, working to ensure an informed, literate, and inclusive democratic society.

ALIA is a founding member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA) and is also a partner in the Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project *Addressing Misinformation with Media Literacy through Cultural Institutions*. ALIA is also a long running member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and endorses its comments on mis/disinformation, and in particular its [input to the United Nations Special Rapporteur](#) on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and its [Trend Report 2024](#), which provides in depth discussion on how mis/disinformation impacts society and is being combatted by libraries.

We refer the Committee to ALIA's previous relevant publications available on the ALIA website, and in particular our submission to the [News Media Assistance Program Consultation](#).

Libraries and mis/disinformation

Libraries play a vital role in combating misinformation and disinformation, both nationally and globally, and bring a nuanced and informed perspective to the regulation of information online. We know that knowledge practices are changing and that trust in government, media and local news is being renegotiated. Libraries are able to provide new ways to engage with information and open and transparent information systems that encompass both media and information literacy in combination with building digital skills and capabilities.¹

Our sector has a historical opposition to censorship and an ongoing commitment to access to information and intellectual freedom. The [ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services Workforce](#) identifies access to information and collections as the fundamental mission of the library and information workforce, in order to support an informed and inclusive society. This mission unifies the sector and establishes the trust granted us by those who use our services. This commitment to the delivery of authentic information is further embedded in the [ALIA Skills, Knowledge and Ethics Framework](#).

¹ IFLA Trend Report: Facing the future of Information with Confidence (2024)
<https://repository.ifla.org/bitstreams/2b05a330-5700-4e8f-8df2-0fdd33fcc371/download>



It is also the case that libraries remain one of the most trusted public institutions globally,² and have a strong interest in ensuring the accuracy of the information available to their clients, whether through their collections or online. We pride ourselves in providing neutral, evidence-based guidance on contentious issues. The essential role of libraries in the democratic infrastructure in Australia was recently recognised by the Office for Social Cohesion in the Department of Home Affairs when they partnered with ALIA to fund 125 libraries across Australia to deliver [community cohesion programs](#).

Libraries therefore have a unique insight into the tension between combatting mis/disinformation and the importance of protecting freedom of information. As IFLA puts it in its report to the UN Rapporteur:

Disinformation, uniquely challenging in the increasingly dense and complex digital information environment, interferes with individuals' ability to make informed decisions and realise their essential human rights. However, [there are also] ... concerns about human rights impacts of measures which different stakeholders – from states to online platforms, human rights organisations and others – take to combat disinformation. These include, of course, the impacts of broadly- or vaguely-defined “fake news” laws on freedom of expression and opinion; or internet shutdowns that bear a heavy cost on people's access to information as a driver of development and rights.

We believe media literacy is essential to addressing this tension and can be a powerful weapon in combatting mis/disinformation. In this libraries play a key part. As trusted information professionals, public libraries are the ideal place for delivering media literacy training. Research funded by ALIA into the [Impact and Management of Mis/Disinformation in University Libraries in Australia](#) confirmed that library staff believe they have an important role in teaching skills such as critical thinking and evaluation, advocating in this space and maintaining credible, balanced and inclusive collections. Public demand for library-based education programs is only increasing. According to the recently released [Australian Public Library Statistical Report 2023-24](#), during 2023-24 libraries offered a record 409,000 programs attracting over 7 million attendees, a 15% increase from 2022-23, including 79,727 separate digital inclusion programs.

However, as demand rises, so too do the challenges for libraries providing such programs. As well as needing to stay on top of the latest information sources and platforms, library staff must also contend with emerging issues such as the rise of generative AI tools and their ability to turbocharge mis/disinformation campaigns to be able to support library users.

ALIA supports the sector in these endeavours and has seen success in programs where we have worked directly with researchers to examine needs, develop evidence-based approaches, apply these in a library setting and evaluate outcomes. One example is the [Stay Smart Online](#) pilot program in which ALIA partnered with researchers from the University of Canberra, which led to the development of a library-focused media literacy short course that focused on the skills that library staff needed to support and teach media literacy with library users. The course evaluations showed that 94% of participants developed new skills sets and would recommend the course to colleagues. The evaluation also identified future areas of need.³ But broader funding and a national strategy is needed to make sure these programs remain available to the whole community through our libraries. calls for a national media literacy strategy and urges the government to fund work to update and expand evidence-based media literacy programs across public libraries in Australia.

Most importantly, media literacy efforts run by organisations such as libraries, while valuable, cannot alone address the growing threat that mis/disinformation poses to unity, democracy and intellectual freedom. The media platforms which are used to disseminate this information, and who benefit from it financially,

² See, for example, Adle, M. (2025). A Literature Review on Trust in Public Libraries, Public Librarians, and the Information They Provide. *Public Library Quarterly*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2025.2494479>.

³ Park, S., Walsh, B. & Su, J. (2023). *Libraries and Media Literacy Education*. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre

must take their own role in combatting the harm it causes. As such, the continued and effective operation of the Code, and broader regulation of social media platforms in this space are essential.

Recommendations

With this in mind, ALIA wishes to endorse the recommendations set out in the joint submission of Professor Tanya Notley, Professor Sora Park, Professor Michael Dezuanni & Doctor T.J. Thomson to the review, academics with a long history of working closely with the LIS sector, and ALIA specifically, on media literacy initiatives.

In particular, we support their:

- opposition to a reduction in scope of the existing Code to cover only disinformation – we agree that attempting to draw an artificial line between the overlapping categories of mis- and dis-information and the harms they cause to individuals is both futile and likely to lead to missed opportunities and poor outcomes;
- call for Code signatories to increase measures to support media literacy in general, and in particular on their platforms – in this, we believe priority should be given to funding initiatives, development of a national media literacy strategy, and measures that improve platform transparency and help individuals understand what they are seeing in their feeds and why.

