Characteristics of **Australia** and its Public Library System

In 2011 Australia’s population was 22.6 million. The current estimate is 23.2 million (Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics](https://www.abs.gov.au)). 85% of Australia’s population lives around the coastline and 77% of the population lives in the three eastern seaboard states of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Australia has three tiers of Government - Federal (1), State (6) & Territory (2), and Local (560). Local Government is both the principal deliverer and funder (84%) of Australia’s public library services. Total funding of Australia’s public libraries increased by 24% to $1.01 billion in the five-year period 2008-12. Funding per head of population increased by 17% to $44.55 in the same period. In 2012, 44% of Australians were public library members (Source: [NSLA Public Library Statistics 2011-12](https://www.nsla.com.au)). The organisations supporting Australia’s public libraries include ALIA, PLA, NSLA, FOLA, ALGA, LGMA and the National Library of Australia.

The **Northern Territory** (NT) has a population of 0.24m. Darwin is the capital of the NT. NT councils provide public library services under the Local Government Act 2008. The libraries are supported by the Northern Territory Library including the NT Library’s Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres Program. In 2007 the Northern Territory Library won the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Access to Learning Award for this program. In 2012, NT’s public libraries were funded 55% by Local Government and 45% by the Northern Territory Government.

The **Western Australia** (WA) has a population of 2.5m. Perth is the capital of WA. WA public libraries operate under the Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951 and the WA Local Government Act 1995. In 2012, the WA public libraries were funded 88% by Local Government and 14% by the WA State Government. The libraries are supported by the State Library of WA. The Public Library Association is PLWA.

The **South Australia** (SA) has a population of 1.7m. Adelaide is the capital of SA. SA’s public libraries operate under the SA Libraries Act 1982 and the SA Local Government Act 1999. In 2012, SA’s public libraries were funded 80% by Local Government and 20% by the SA State Government. The libraries are supported by the State Library of South Australia and work collaboratively within the SA Public Library Network.

**Victoria** has a population of 5.7m. Melbourne is the capital of Victoria. Victoria’s public libraries operate under the Victorian Libraries Act 1988 and the Victorian Local Government Act 1989. In 2012, Victoria’s public libraries were funded 83% by Local Government and 17% by the Victorian State Government. The libraries are supported by the State Library of Victoria. The SWIFT Library Consortium is a library partnership business model. PLVN is the Victorian public libraries’ advocacy and partnership organisation.

**Tasmania**, the island state, has a population of 0.51m. Hobart is the capital of Tasmania. LINC Tasmania is a statewide network that gives Tasmanians access to library services, research and information, adult literacy support, community learning, online access, and archive and heritage services. In 2012, LINC Tasmania was 100% funded by the Tasmanian State Government. LINC Tasmania operates under the Tasmanian Libraries Act (1984) and the Tasmanian Archives Act (1983).

Queensland has a population of 4.6m. Brisbane is the capital of Queensland. Brisbane City Council is Australia’s largest council. Queensland’s public libraries operate under the Queensland Libraries Act 1988 and the Queensland Local Government Act 2009. In 2012, the Queensland public libraries were funded 89% by Local Government and 11% by the Queensland State Government. The libraries are supported by the State Library of Queensland. The Public Library Association is QPLA.

New South Wales (NSW) has a population of 7.3m. Sydney is the capital of NSW. NSW public libraries operate under the NSW Libraries Act 1939 and the NSW Local Government Act 1993. In 2012, NSW public libraries were funded 92% by Local Government and 8% by the NSW State Government. The libraries are supported by the State Library of NSW. The SWIFT Library Consortium and Shorelink are library partnership business models. The Public Library Associations are MPLA and PLNSW.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has a population of 0.38m. Canberra is Australia’s capital city. Libraries ACT provides public library services to the ACT community. It is a business unit within the Territory Services Division of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services in the ACT Government. The ACT Heritage Library is a unique arm of Libraries ACT. In 2012, Libraries ACT was 100% funded by the ACT Government.