

1300 DEVICES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST PRINT DISABLED

The Library Initiative aims to improve access for people with print disability to print material in a digital format through public libraries around the country. The devices will allow people with print disability to access audio books, newspapers, journals and other publications to which they may otherwise be unable to access. Providing the devices and services through the public library network allows people with disability to participate more fully in the community, for example through participation in reading groups and book clubs.

ALIA Executive Director Sue Hutley said the initiative provides a significant boost to the range of services Public Libraries already provide to the disabled community. Over 60 metropolitan, regional, rural and remote library services will participate across Australia, with around 1300 devices being made available.

The Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) has provided funding of \$1 million for the initiative. The implementation is being managed by The ALIA.

In April, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator Jan McLucas, visited the Fremantle City Library to confirm her support for the library's role in the project and Margaret Allen ALIA Vice President and CEO of the State Library of Western Australia attended the event on ALIA's behalf.

"ALIA is proud to be working with FaHCSIA on realising this Initiative," Sue Hutley said, adding that many of the current services for disabled patrons are delivered with the assistance of volunteers.

Devices have been shipped to all participating libraries and ALIA is now in the second phase of shipments. While the initial goal for FaHCSIA and ALIA was to be able to provide 800 devices for use by eligible public library clients, it now seems that the project will be able to provide over 1300 devices.

"Participating libraries have been very busy during May taking delivery, undergoing training and commencing their programs", Sue said.

"We are looking forward to receiving lots of positive stories and photographs as programs roll out."

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Senator Jan McLucas with Dr Brad Pettit, Mayor of Fremantle and Fremantle City library member Les Read, who is keen to get started with the new print navigation devices.

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