

# What the politicians have to say

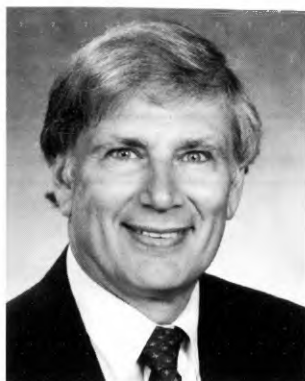
In the lead up to the next federal election, here are what some of our politicians have to say about the role of libraries



## John Howard

### Prime Minister

The institution of the library has always played an integral role in the lives of Australians of all ages. Libraries continue to be a vital educational tool for students as well as a highly valuable source of information and recreational reading material for the community. Advances in communications technology are providing libraries with the opportunity to offer a wide range of new services. The local library is often the most convenient and appropriate location for providing access to the vast array of public information that is readily available on-line but not always in a paper form. The coalition envisages that libraries will have a central role in enhancing on-line access to cultural and public sector information and has indicated that we will facilitate this role while in government.



## Richard Alston

### Minister for Communications and the Arts

Australian libraries are changing. On-line information services, multimedia — these and other innovations are becoming increasingly

significant aspects of our daily lives, in education, in business, in recreation and in our artistic and cultural endeavours.

Libraries have responded to this changing environment by embracing developments in communications and information technology which enable them to offer a wider range of services not limited to the extent of their physical collections.

We used to visit libraries to browse through their shelves of books and periodicals. We can still do that, but now libraries are no longer simply repositories of information and resources, they are becoming gateways to information from all over the world.

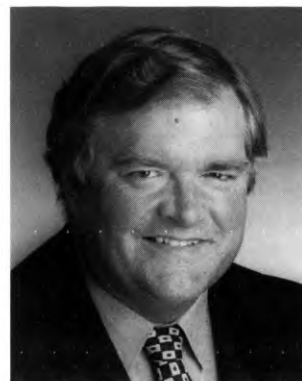
It is the responsibility of each level of government to do its best to support libraries in developing their role in this new environment.



## David Kemp

### Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Libraries are a key resource in the realisation of lifelong learning. As we enter the 21st century, it is becoming more and more necessary for individuals to acquire and analyse information from a variety of sources as they seek to update their skills and enlarge their horizons. Libraries are a valuable instrument of democratisation, bringing within reach of Australians from all backgrounds not only the vast resources of the printed word but also newly available electronic channels of information. Today more than ever libraries play an indispensable role in making Australia a 'learning society'.



## Kim Beazley

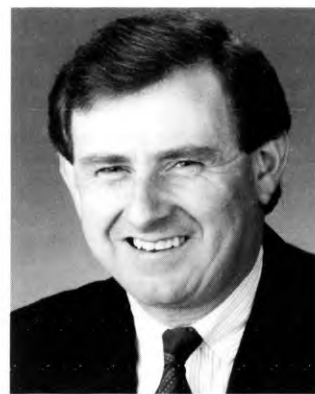
### Leader of the opposition

Libraries are a vital source of information in any society. Not only are they an essential tool for students, but a wealth of information for the community as a whole. In a society that has increasingly become divided, libraries are a highly valued part of the information industry that serves to bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

To ensure they continue to fulfil their vital role in the education of our nation, libraries today need to embrace rapid technological advances to ensure they survive new challenges.

The Australian Library and Information Association's Lobby for Libraries is an integral force in ensuring our nation's libraries continue to serve their significant role within the community.

The initiative deserves full support and I am proud to join the Australian Library and Information Association to Lobby for Libraries.



## Simon Crean

### Shadow Minister for Industry and Regional Development

It is essential for Australia's development as a prosperous and vibrant nation that its peoples'

curiosity and eagerness for knowledge are well-catered for. Information is fast becoming the most vital resource in a country blessed with many natural resources. But accessing information requires a very different infrastructure from that required for other less ethereal resources. Libraries are at the coal face of the information infrastructure. They play a crucial role in ensuring that all Australians, not just those who can afford it, have the opportunity to educate themselves further. With the rise of new telecommunications technology, the role of libraries is becoming still more important. Interactive communication networks make education more immediate and accessible for every Australian. The challenges of making these new technologies available to people in regional and remote areas of Australia cannot be overestimated. To ensure that all Australians are well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the development of the 'information superhighway', libraries everywhere need themselves to have access to the telecommunications infrastructure being rolled out across Australia.



### Mark Latham

#### Shadow Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Libraries have always been essential to our success as a civilised society. They foster all the best features of learning, enlightenment and public progress. For many decades in Australia free public libraries have provided an access point for those unable to afford the cost

of private libraries. Personal betterment and access to learning should never be a function of one's income and background.

Now, during a period of scarce public resources and rapidly-changing information technology, libraries and librarians face their most important challenge. They will need to alert policy-makers to the prospects and problems of a society divided into the information-rich and the information-poor. They will need to press the case for libraries as public access points to new forms of electronic information, just as they have always provided access to printed information. In the allocation of public resources, the information superhighway is becoming more important than physical highways. The advocates for libraries know the facts. That, of course, is their work and their passion. In public life, however, facts alone do not always win the debate. Facts require propagation before they can persuade. This is what makes the Lobby for libraries campaign so important. I urge each of the supporters of libraries to always put their case and never hesitate to argue their position.

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