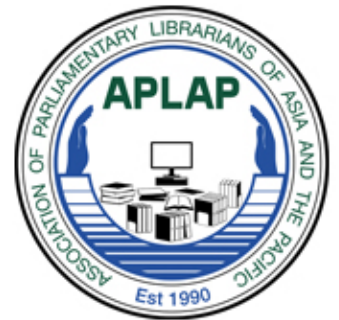


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*Delivering a curated media alerting service for the clients
of the Parliamentary Library*

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Delivering a curated media alerting service for the clients of the Parliamentary Library

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Abstract

The Queensland Parliamentary Library delivers an authoritative, impartial and timely library service to our clients, including members of parliament, ministerial and opposition staff, parliamentary staff, electorate officers and committee staff. We collect and catalogue a variety of news, journal articles, reports and other information that will assist our clients in fulfilling their responsibilities. We use a curated media alerting service to notify our clients of new information relevant to them and their interests. We have found that this alerting service is successful in pushing information to clients who may be too time-poor to find and retrieve the same material. The information is more authoritative than that found in a search engine as it is specially curated using expert staff. Furthermore, these alerts familiarise and connect clients with the library and our services, improving our visibility within the Parliamentary service. During recent COVID-19 lockdowns, we found that usage of this service has grown as it can be delivered and received remotely and provides clients with the most up-to-date information during times of crisis. Going forward, we will continue to grow this service, making it even more beneficial for our client's needs.

Introduction

Queensland Parliament is made up of members representing 93 electorates throughout Queensland. These electorates are wide and diverse covering both city and remote areas including outback regions and the Torres Strait Islands. The Parliament is unicameral so there is no upper house. Rather, there are 10 committees responsible for examining bills, conducting inquiries, overseeing statutory authorities and carrying out other Parliamentary functions. Once a committee reports on a bill, it is then voted on by members of Parliament.

The Parliamentary Library assists a range of clients in carrying out the functions and responsibilities of Parliament and the State. Our clients include Members, Committees (which are made up of members and parliamentary staff), electorate officers located throughout the state, ministerial and opposition staff and on-site parliamentary staff. The Library strives to deliver an authoritative, impartial and timely service to these clients.

The Parliamentary Library is made up of two teams; Information Management and Research Services. While Research Services provide dedicated research to our clients, the Information Management Service supports client needs by collecting news, audiovisual material, journal articles, reports and other material relevant to members and current affairs in Queensland. We are able to select this under current copyright law, which enables us to copy items for Members of Parliament to assist them in fulfilling their duties. Once selected, we index this material using subject terms from our thesaurus, authorities and regions. It is this information and subsequent cataloguing, on which our alerting service is based. During COVID-19 lockdowns in our state, the majority of library service were able to be delivered remotely and this alerting service acted as a primary means of communication with clients.

Why an alerting service?

Our clients are increasingly time-poor and so an alerting service pushes the information to them rather than requiring them to search for it themselves. We find even the act of visiting the library website and

browsing through information can be too time-consuming for some clients, so an email with a summary of news and other media relevant to them, with direct links to articles, is a more effective way of delivering relevant and pertinent information to clients.

While clients can receive similar alerting services via search engines or databases, our service delivers curated content selected and indexed by Librarians with specialist knowledge and understanding of client and state interests. As a result, the information our clients receive is often far more relevant and authoritative than that received by other services. As a result, many of our clients receive our alerts in addition to, or instead of, other services. This specially curated, authoritative content has been particularly helpful during the recent pandemic when there has been a range of misinformation disseminated. It allowed our clients to read the most up-to-date, reliable information.

Furthermore, this alerting service familiarises and connects clients with the parliamentary library. When a client clicks on a link in the alert for example, it takes them back to the article as it appears in our catalogue and may encourage further searching or browsing of our collection. We also regularly contact clients to ask them for feedback on the alerting service and set up any new alerts that they require. This has been a good way to connect with our clients, and we often find they provide feedback on other library services that we provide. It also gives a human face to the library and clients are more aware of who they can contact for future assistance.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns in Queensland, we found the usage of our alerts increased. The alerting service acted as a good way to provide clients locked down in sometimes remote areas with authoritative information about COVID-19 and its impact on the state. The alerting service acted as a gateway for our clients to continue accessing information and research services no matter where they were located, thus assisting them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Types of Alerting Services

We currently have 737 alerts being delivered to over 530 clients.

Our most common alerting service is our daily alert. This is a generic, automatically-generated alert delivered twice a day at 9:30 am and 3:00 pm. It presents all news and audiovisual material that we have added on that day. It is time-stamped so the material that appears in the morning alert does not run in the afternoon alert. The alert is delivered as one email broken down by newspaper title. It is arranged so the most popular Queensland newspapers appear at the top of the page. The alert includes the title of the story and a link that clients can follow to read the whole story in the library catalogue. The reason it is sent twice daily is to capture and deliver news first thing in the morning, and deliver any new or updating stories as they occur throughout the day. New borrowers are automatically subscribed to this alert but do have the option to unsubscribe. We've found the vast majority of our clients do not unsubscribe.

As part of the daily alerts we also send out a special 'Parliament' alert. This alert captures stories about issues relating to the functions of Parliament including procedures, staff, security and buildings. It includes stories from Queensland, Australia and the world. This alert appears in the same email as the other daily alerts and is situated at the very top of the email, as we find these stories are of the most interest to our clients. Like the daily alerts, new borrowers are automatically subscribed to this alert and can choose to unsubscribe. Also like the daily alerts, very few of our borrowers choose to unsubscribe.



Library Alert

A collection of news stories and articles tailored to your interests from the Parliamentary Library and Research Service.

To set up a personalised alert, or for independent searching, visit Library Online.

27/05/2021

Karen Beath

The following new resources have arrived matching your interests:

[Click here to view these results](#)

Parliament in the News & AV

Title: [Former Premier Rob Borbidge talks to 4BC about the passing of Sir Lew Edwards and his legacy in Queensland. \(4BC\)](#)

Link: [View](#)

Date: 26/05/2021

Queensland Country Life

Title: [Ag minister Furner to support Lime growers at upcoming National Agriculture Ministers meeting.](#)

Link: [View](#)

Date: 26/05/2021

Title: [Are live exports being regulated into a world of pain?](#)

Link: [View](#)


Date: 24/05/2021

Figure 1: Sample Daily Alert

We deliver more customised, specially curated alerts on weekends. Unlike the daily alerts, these are delivered to individual clients and cover topics that are of specific interest to them. They are created on request by clients rather than being generic. We currently work on a regular schedule of contacting electorate offices and committees to ask if they are happy with their alerts and if they would like to add new alerts. At the moment, all of our committees and most of our electorate offices receive these alerts as well as some of the other ministerial, opposition and parliamentary staff.

The alerts are created using canned-queries. We might prompt the system to search for documents with a particular term in it or a subject, group of subjects or regions. Using the software provided by our Library Management System (Softlink) we can create both simple and complex queries. These alerts are set to run weekly and pick up on any material added in the past week relating to our client's areas of

interest. They usually run on a Sunday, when most staff are not working. This is to avoid delays in system functionality that may be caused by such a large quantity of alerts being sent at the same time.



30/05/2021

Karen Beath

The following new resources have arrived matching your interests:

[Click here to view these results](#)

Ambulance Services

Title: [Gleeso Confidential : Ambos outrage.](#)
Link: [View](#)
Date: 24/05/2021

Title: [The LNP has brought a patient to Parliament House today who said he was left in limbo for 10 hours after suffering a medical emergency. \(Nine News\)](#)
Link: [Watch](#)
Date: 27/05/2021

ARTC Inland Rail

Title: [Be a state of readiness.](#)
Link: [View](#)
Date: 28/05/2021

Title: [Clear red tape and let us go : business wants to get to work.](#)
Link: [View](#)
Date: 25/05/2021

Figure 2: Sample Customised Alert

There is one generic alert sent on the weekend. It is our 'What's New' alert. This alert highlights some of the items that may be of particular interest that we have added in the past week. This may include books, journal articles or reports. This alert is delivered to most of our clients.

If an alert cannot be created using a canned-query then we use a more manual process to deliver it. This involves ‘tagging’ a record with a particular term in a field we call ‘tech-type’. For example, if we are creating an alert for mentions of a particular committee, it is difficult to create a search based on the committee name as they are often referred to as “the committee” in news articles. We instead search for the term “committee” in our catalogue, identify any articles referring to the committee we are looking for and select the name of that committee in our ‘tech type’ field. Our query is then set up to identify this term in that field and send any articles out in our alert.

We also offer a service to our committees whereby we set up temporary alerts covering any bills or inquiries they are examining at a given time. These alerts are removed after the reporting date has passed. The goal of these alerts is to assist committees in performing their functions by providing information relevant to their needs at any given time, without them having to request it from us.

Future Updates

We have recently migrated to a new Library Management System which should provide us with more functionality when it comes to delivering our alerting service. We are still adapting our processes to the new system however we have some ideas as to how we can enhance this alert service in future.

We would like to offer more daily alert services. In the past, running our customised alerts has been a very long process and has caused our system to slow down dramatically, hence why we ran them on weekends when there are very few people working in our system. Our new system, however, is more robust and doesn’t appear to create a lag when a large process is occurring. It is therefore our aim to start offering more customised alert services on a daily basis, possibly overnight. There would still be some limitations on this. It would only apply to alerts that can run off the full text of a document rather than alerts based on indexing terms, for example, subjects. This is because we are not always able to complete indexing of all items in a day. However, our current system can read PDFs and identify relevant terms so these “full-text” alerts could be run. Our idea would involve offering a service to all electorate offices, whereby they could get a daily alert with all the day’s news specific to their member or electorate. It is felt this would provide more timely information on issues pertinent to their electorates. It would be particularly helpful during times of crisis, such as the pandemic, when updated information is required on a more regular basis. We would monitor the uptake and any time constraints before expanding this daily alert offer.

Another enhancement that we’d like to make is in offering alerts on “hot topics” that our clients can subscribe to. We have discovered our new system has functionality that would allow us to create alerts that clients can subscribe to by logging into their borrower record, and selecting the topics from a list. These alerts would be created based on any major current affairs in Queensland e.g. COVID-19 vaccine, voluntary assisted dying. This would make clients aware of the range of customised alerts that are available and also give the clients ‘self-serve’ access to subscribe and unsubscribe to alerts as they wish. We also have the functionality for alerts that will notify a client when a particular journal has new issues. This would enhance the client experience of our library service.

Conclusion

Our curated media alerting service has greatly enhanced our ability to deliver library services to our time-poor clients. It has ensured that authoritative information has reached them in a timely manner. This was particularly highlighted during COVID-19 lockdowns when mobility was impaired and a huge amount of information, some authoritative and some misleading, was being circulated. Our alerts enabled our clients, no matter where they were located in the state, to access up-to-date information from reliable sources. It has also enabled us to connect with our clients state-wide and receive valuable feedback on the library and its services. With plans to further enhance this service, we envision it having a great impact on our delivery of future library services.

