



NT Public Libraries – Connected Communities

Review of Activities 2019-2020



Elliott Community Library Barkly Regional Council



Contents

Northern Territory Public Libraries	2
NT Libraries and COVID-19	4
Stronger Sector	8
Literacy and Lifelong Learning	12
Informed and Connected Citizens	14
Digital Inclusion	16
Personal Development and Wellbeing	18
Stronger and More Creative Communities	20
Economic and Workforce Development	22
Northern Territory Public Libraries Key Statistics 2019-20	24

IMAGE:

*Left: Ramingining Community Library East
Arnhem Regional Council*

In 2016, the Northern Territory Government undertook a community consultation process to find out what Territorians wanted from their public libraries.

The *Connected Communities, Future Libraries* is based on outcomes developed by the Australian Public Library Alliance and the Australian Library and Information Association which identifies six areas in which libraries make a difference to their communities:

- Literacy and lifelong learning
- Informed and connected citizens
- Digital inclusion
- Personal development and wellbeing
- Stronger and more creative communities
- Economic and workforce development

Northern Territory Public Libraries

This report provides an overview of some of the work of the Northern Territory public library sector in 2019-20.



Through this framework, we've reported on some of the significant achievements of the Northern Territory public library sector this year.

PRINCIPLES

-  ACCESS FOR ALL
-  RESPONSIVE TO LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS
-  INCLUSIVE SERVICES
-  RESPECT FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURE
-  CUSTOMER FOCUSED
-  INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS
-  EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SERVICES
-  SUSTAINABLE SERVICES
-  EFFECTIVE NETWORK



IMAGES:

Left: City of Palmerston Library Storytime with the Amazing Drumming Monkeys
 Right above: City of Darwin Libraries Family Challenge
 Right: Ti Tree Community Library Central Desert Regional Council

On the 26th March 2020, in response to advice from the NT Chief Health Officer, public libraries across the Northern Territory closed for 7 weeks, re-opening in a staged manner from the 15th May 2020.

Despite these challenges, Northern Territory public libraries worked quickly and effectively to support their communities. This is a summary of work undertaken during the period March - June 2020.

NT Libraries and COVID-19

In 2020, COVID-19 took centre stage for all Territorians and is continuing to change how Territorians, work, live and play.

Open 24/7

While libraries have had reduced opening hours and been completely closed for periods of time, members have been able to access services online 24/7 throughout the pandemic.

Libraries worked quickly to ensure community members were able to join as library members remotely, providing access to eResources such as eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines.



KEY STATS

271 
 STREAMED STORYTIMES AND
 ONLINE ACTIVITY CLUBS

86,141 
 VIEWS OF STREAMED
 STORYTIMES AND ONLINE
 ACTIVITY CLUBS

1,521 
 CLICK & COLLECT VISITS

219 
 HOME DELIVERIES

333 
 PRINTING VISITS

403 
 ACTIVITY PACKS
 DISTRIBUTED

In the closure period between March-May over 600 Territorians became members of libraries across the Territory. With support from local businesses, Coomalie Community Council set up street libraries in Adelaide River and Batchelor. These street libraries have become so popular with the community that they may become a permanent fixture.

Helping the most vulnerable

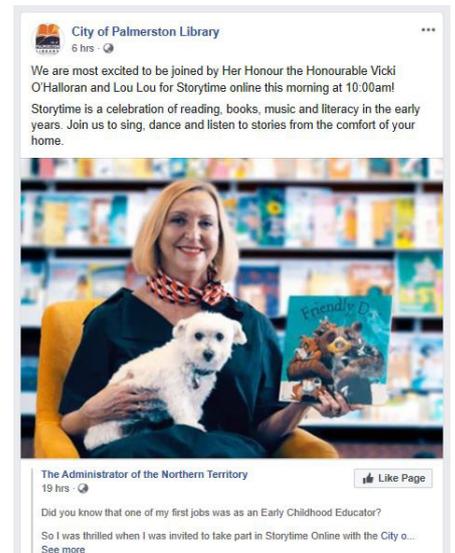
Libraries identified vulnerable library users and expanded services to meet these users. City of Darwin Libraries partnered with Tennis NT to expand home library services and maintain a supply of books for the housebound and elderly.

Coomalie Libraries received urgent requests from patrons to assist them in using Zoom, accessing online Government services and applying for work remotely. Library staff were able to assist via remote interactions highlighting the critical work conducted by regional libraries.

Moving events online

Almost overnight, library staff upskilled to become adept at digital recording and editing as they livestreamed and published recordings of virtual storytimes for families at home with young children. City of Palmerston Library hosted numerous highly popular sessions with local presenters including Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory.

Libraries organised author talks, workshops, Lego clubs, tech sessions and other online programs to help our community members keep connected, occupied and to develop their knowledge and interests. Nhulunbuy Community Library in East Arnhem created a range of online activities include a four week Lego challenge and online origami tutorials.



IMAGES:

Left: Coomalie Libraries Street Libraries
 Right: Social media posts from Alice Springs Library, Nhulunbuy Community Library, City of Palmerston Library and Jabiru Library.

Books and much more

Library & Archives NT and other libraries increased the range of eBooks, eAudiobooks and other electronic resources by investing more funds into online products and introducing new platforms. In 2019-20 online loans increased by 33%.

City of Palmerston Library & Taminmin Community Library introduced Story Box Library and Freegal, a music download platform.

Libraries adopted click and collect models for book borrowers who prefer print to digital. Alice Springs Public Library offered mystery book boxes and parcels of books to suit individual tastes with kerbside pick-up. In many instances, libraries partnered with community organisations to arrange home delivery such as Tennis NT with City of Darwin Libraries.

Craft, activity and robot kits were created by numerous libraries including City of Palmerston Library, Jabiru Library,

Katherine Public Library and Coomalie Libraries to support families during the school holidays. City of Palmerston developed Boredom Blaster Packs which included a range of activities including robots, books, graphic novels and craft activities. Jabiru Library ensured kids on outstations had deliveries of activity and craft packs.

Libraries offered a send and collect service for those members of the community needing printing and photocopies. There were over 333 printing visits during this closure period, highlighting the importance of access to printers for all members of the community.

Behind the scenes

Using the lockdown as a period of opportunity, libraries across the Territory undertook a range of projects to improve library services such as stocktakes, collection management, building renovations and staff development.



What people told us

We have had excellent feedback from our community about how libraries supported Territorians. The Australian Library and Information Association and Australian Public Library Alliance ran a nationwide survey of library users to ascertain how libraries supported the community during the COVID-19 lockdown of public libraries. The following feedback is attributed to Northern Territory library patrons.

IMAGES:

Above: Boredom Blaster Packs, City of Palmerston Library

Below: TennisNT with City of Darwin Libraries



“

[I]have read
so many
books in
the last
couple of
months

”

“

**I had
forgotten
how much
the library
means to
me...**

”

“

[Our libraries]
are comforting,
books galore,
spaces to relax,
free aircon and
good staff

”

“

I love that there
are so many
resources available
without cost.
If my home
computer is not
working, I can rely
on the computers
and internet at
the library
to complete
whatever
I need to do.

”

“

**I love the
sense of
community
and feeling
welcome
every time
I visit**

”

“

At the moment I
very much value
audiobooks
because I cannot
read [due] to an
accident that
damaged my eyes.
Audiobooks are
a godsend

”

Library & Archives NT supports the library sector by providing:

- Operational grant funding through the Public Library Funding Agreement 2017-2023
- Funding for collections and eResources through the Library Resource Allocation
- A Territory-wide library management system, LibrariesNT
- Free public Wi-Fi as a baseline public library service in 46 remote Aboriginal communities
- Learning and development opportunities and strategic advisory services

Stronger Sector

Library & Archives NT supports some of the most remote libraries in the world. There are 31 public library services across the Northern Territory, serving a culturally and linguistically diverse, mobile and often remote population of 240,000 people.





KEY STATS

19,823



ITEMS ADDED TO NT LIBRARY COLLECTIONS THROUGH THE LIBRARY RESOURCE ALLOCATION

21



SITE VISITS ACROSS THE TERRITORY

11



FACILITATED WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

In 2019-20, Library & Archives NT continued work in embedding new governance and reporting frameworks and providing ongoing opportunities for collaboration.

Several sectoral working groups continued to meet and collaborate throughout 2019-20, facilitated and organised by Library & Archives NT.

IMAGES:

Left: Professional Development East Arnhem Regional Council Libraries

Above: Milingimbi Library East Arnhem Regional Council

These include;

- Public Libraries Strategic Development Committee
- LibrariesNT Collection Development Working Group
- LibrariesNT Early Language and Literacy Working Group
- LibrariesNT Library Management System User Group
- LibrariesNT Youth Engagement Working Group

These working groups have been tasked with progressing opportunities identified in *Connected Communities, Vision for Northern Territory Public Libraries 2017-2023*. These opportunities for collaboration are already yielding results with the Public Libraries Strategic Development Committee endorsing a Public Libraries Sectoral Strategic Workforce Development Plan to guide the focus of Library & Archives NT in the development of the sector for the duration of the Public Library Funding Agreement 2017-2023.

In 2019-20, Library & Archives NT provided a range of support to the public library sector in respect to learning and development including the provision of an online Core Cultural Learning program via National and State Libraries Australia and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Regional library and council staff from East Arnhem Regional Council and Central Desert Regional Council attended training and orientations in Darwin led by Library & Archives NT officers.

In line with our focus on the principles of inclusive services, the LibrariesNT Collection Development Working Group collaborated on a Territory wide audit and review of the diversity of their respective children’s collections. This important project has been critical in driving evidence based acquisition processes and ensuring children’s collections in the Territory accurately reflect the richness and diversity of our communities. It is also believed to be the first State or Territory in Australia to work together on such a project.



COVID-19

2020 saw many challenges for the Northern Territory public library sector with libraries closing from the 26 March 2020, with staged re-openings from 15 May 2020. During this period Library & Archives NT pivoted quickly to support the sector.

Increased communication and knowledge sharing became vital with Library & Archives NT staff creating an information sharing portal for library staff and increasing communications and updates through sectoral email lists. In the March-April period, Library & Archives NT staff logged over 250





phone calls and emails to the library sector providing support and advice.

Technical staff at Library & Archives NT provided ongoing technical support to allow libraries to make ongoing configuration changes to the Library Management System.

Statistics also became vital in ensuring libraries would be able to demonstrate how they supported Territorians during COVID-19. Library & Archives NT staff created new statistics measures and sought to evaluate service delivery in an ongoing manner capturing the remarkable work undertaken by libraries during this period.

Library & Archives NT increased the range of eBooks and eAudiobooks by investing additional funds into BorrowBox, an eResource delivering eBooks and eAudiobooks. In 2019-20 BorrowBox loans increased by 33% in comparison to 2018-19 which equates to an additional 23,487 loans.



IMAGES:

Above left: Nhulunbuy Community Library - eResources Display

Left: City of Palmerston Library Re-opening after closure

Above: National Simultaneous Storytime 2020 Nhulunbuy Community Library

Left: MacConnect Training in Docker River MacDonnell Regional Council

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Literacy has a profound effect on a wide range of life outcomes in Australia, including levels of employment, education, health and interaction with the justice system.



KEY STATS

973 

EARLY LITERACY FACE TO FACE SESSIONS HELD

15,004 

CHILDREN ATTENDED AN EARLY LITERACY SESSION

173 

STREAMED STORYTIMES

69,137 

VIEWS OF STREAMED STORYTIMES

669,950
TOTAL LOANS

536,389 

PHYSICAL LOANS

133,561 

DIGITAL LOANS

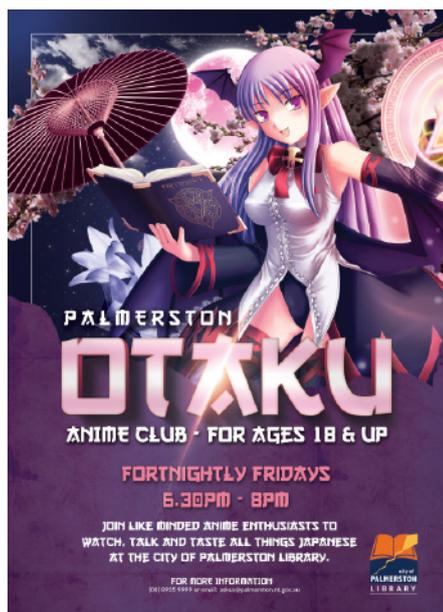
80% 
PHYSICAL LOANS
20%
DIGITAL LOANS

IMAGES:

Left: Cheeky Dogs Library Card Launch with Dion Beasley - City of Darwin Libraries

Above, left to right: Otaku Anime Club City of Palmerston Library

Tales to Tails City of Palmerston Library



The role of public libraries

Public libraries play an essential role in literacy development in the Northern Territory. They foster a culture of reading in early childhood by providing a wide range of family reading materials in safe, supported and accessible public spaces, and through the delivery of early childhood literacy programs such as Storytime designed to support the development of a culture of family reading.

As we have seen this year against the backdrop of COVID-19, reading and access to library collections remains a core service for Territorians. In 2019-20 Territorians borrowed over 669,900 items. Of that over 133,000 were digital loans representing an increase in 33% from 2018-19.

Public libraries across the Northern Territory further supported and fostered literacy and learning through a range of programs including Rhyme Time for children up to 12 months of age and Storytime for parents and children aged 1-5 years. Over 15,000 children physically attended an early literacy session in the Territory in 2019-20. During COVID-19, libraries moved quickly to stream storytimes ensuring an ongoing connection and support for families during closures.



Territory libraries streamed 173 storytimes in 2020 with 69,137 views.

Libraries also provide targeted programs to support adult learning and can act as spaces for the delivery of learning programs by other organisations. Money Matters, a financial counselling initiative in East Arnhem, meets with clients at Umbakumba Library with the aim of improving financial literacy.

In Focus

Cheeky Dogs Library Cards – City of Darwin Libraries

City of Darwin Libraries were proud to host local Territory artist Dion Beasley for the launch of the 'Too Many Cheeky Dogs' Library Card. Dion Beasley is an accomplished visual artist who has authored a number of books with his artwork appearing in paintings and buildings around the Territory. City of Darwin Library members can now sign up for their very own Cheeky Dog library card.

Tales to Tails – City of Palmerston Library

Now a regular program at City of Palmerston Library, Tales to Tails is a six week literacy program for young readers to build their confidence in reading and foster a love of literacy in a safe environment. This program is delivered in partnership with Good Dog, Animal Assisted Intervention Therapy Dog Services.

Book & Movie Clubs – Alice Springs Library, City of Darwin Libraries, City of Palmerston Library

2020 has seen a resurgence in interest in book clubs both physically and online as many members of our community have re-engaged with the pleasure of stories and reading. City of Darwin Libraries host a number of book clubs and one movie club, the Monsoon Cinema Club, whilst Alice Springs Library hosts monthly reading groups and creative writing workshops. City of Palmerston Library has been running a popular adult anime club and an online book community for library members to share book reviews and recommendations.

Informed and Connected Citizens

Libraries are community information hubs that support the development of informed citizens who are able to effectively participate in community discussions, access government services and participate in local, Territory and national political processes.



The role of public libraries

People are increasingly turning to libraries for support in navigating e-Government services, and government agencies are using library spaces to provide information services.

In Focus

Centrelink hub - Pine Creek Community Library

Centrelink has partnered with Victoria Daly Regional Council to provide Centrelink services at the Pine Creek Community Library. This service has proved essential during COVID-19 whereby community members have been able to conduct vital communications and actions to ensure continued payments and access to JobSeeker benefits, all within the safe and supported environment of the Pine Creek Community Library.

Election Hubs - East Arnhem Regional Council

East Arnhem Regional Council partnered with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission during the 2020 Northern Territory elections. Community libraries in Ramingining and Umbakumba acted as voting centres ensuring residents could participate in Northern Territory political processes by casting their vote in their local community.





Seniors Morning Tea and Volunteering Program - Taminmin Community Library

For many years, Taminmin Community Library in partnership with Friends of Taminmin Library have been delivering regular Seniors morning teas and that was no exception in 2019-20. Social isolation can be a reality of life for many rural Senior Territorians. These morning teas and the volunteering program at Taminmin Community Library are aimed squarely at improving social and community connectedness. During 2020, the Department of Health used these morning teas as a means of talking directly to Territory seniors about COVID-19.

Feedback from volunteers indicate the success of these programs.

“ I meet so many lovely community members and I still call these people my friends. I still like coming to [the] library and have met so many people there to make it well worth my while. And I just love the books and meeting likewise people.. ”

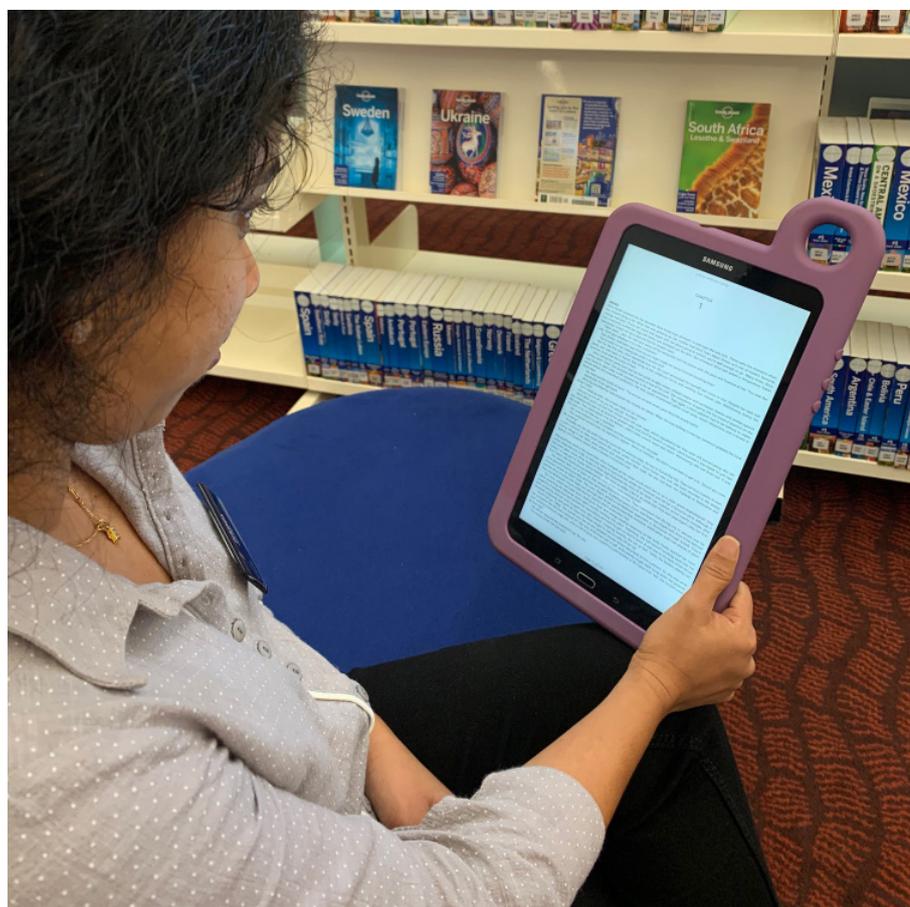
IMAGES:

Left: Centrelink hub Pine Creek Community Library

Above: Seniors Morning Tea at Taminmin Community Library

Digital Inclusion

The role of public libraries in supporting digital inclusion is more critical in the Northern Territory than elsewhere in Australia given the remoteness of many communities.



The role of public libraries

Barriers to digital inclusion exist at several levels:

- Infrastructure (e.g. the availability of internet services in a particular location)
- Affordability (internet services are often most expensive in remote locations)
- Skills (individuals need to be able to operate technology and understand the online environment)
- Relevance (people need a reason to engage with online services)

Library services aim to address affordability and skills gaps in particular. As we have seen in 2020, digital literacy has become a necessity in being able to access government services, engage in job seeking activities, banking and education. Digital illiteracy can mean significant obstacles for members of our communities.

In 2019-20 libraries held over 750 digital literacy sessions with over 1,200 people attending a digital literacy session. City of Darwin and City of Palmerston Libraries allow you to 'book a librarian' for one on one targeted digital literacy assistance and training.

Libraries provide free access to the internet through public PC, Wi-Fi hotspots and portable devices such as laptops and hublets.

KEY STATS

 **DIGITAL LITERACY**

767 SESSIONS **1,214** ATTENDEES

364,777 INTERNET SESSIONS
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY WI-FI

Personal Development and Wellbeing

Libraries contribute to the wellness of their communities. International studies have found a significant association between regular library use and reported wellbeing, as well as correlations between literacy and both physical and mental health.



The role of public libraries

Libraries contribute to the preventive health agenda. They provide collections of books, magazines, DVDs and audio visual materials that support self-development and reading for pleasure. They also provide collections of reputable healthcare information.

This year we have seen the crucial role libraries play in assisting vulnerable members of the community to stay connected and linked to their community in a time of crisis, through the provision of either online activity clubs or through home library services. Home library services exist to provide services to library members unable to access the library in person for reasons of disability, illness or mobility.

Home library services, already an integral part of library services, were increased across the Northern Territory in 2020. In 2020 the number of home service library patrons increased to 94 borrowers and they received 6,793 items.

In Focus

Elliott Community Library Garden Program – Barkly Regional Council

2019-20 marked the second year that Elliott Community Library has operated junior gardening sessions.

KEY STATS

2,760
PROGRAMS
NT PUBLIC LIBRARIES



73,103 ATTENDEES
FOR LIBRARY PROGRAMS

403 ACTIVITY PACKS
DISTRIBUTED

In this remote community, children are supported to plant seeds including sunflowers and a variety of herbs in the library's delightful garden. This unique approach to library service delivery is aligned with community interest and provides a fun way of engaging children in learning about gardening and growing nutritious food.

STEAM Clubs – Alice Springs Library, Alyangula Community Library, City of Darwin Libraries, City of Palmerston Library, Coomalie Libraries, Taminmin Community Library

STEAM clubs have exploded over the Territory library scene with many libraries offering a wide and diverse range of STEAM based activities. Short for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths – these workshops provide exciting opportunities for people of all ages to engage in hands on learning and discoveries. In 2019-20 more remote libraries came on board with Alyangula Community Library successful in developing a new STEAM club and the Junior Engineers Club running every Saturday at Adelaide River Community Library.

Activity Packs during COVID-19 – City of Palmerston Library, Coomalie Libraries, Jabiru Library, Katherine Public Library

During the COVID-19 period, libraries across the Territory moved quickly to ensure their community members had access to activities other than books. Several libraries offered a variety of activity packs including City of Palmerston's Boredom Blaster Packs which included robots and craft activities.

Jabiru Library provided outstations with craft packs whilst Coomalie and Katherine Libraries provided packs of magazines, jigsaws and puzzle books.

These activity packs have all seen tremendous use and demand, and many will continue as an ongoing service.



IMAGES:

Left: City of Darwin Libraries STEAM Club
 Top: Elliott Community Library
 Centre: Paint and Create Workshops Taminmin Community Library
 Left: Lego Club Adelaide River Library
 Above: STEAM club launch Alyangula Community Library

Stronger and More Creative Communities

Libraries build communities and have a long and proud track record of breaking down barriers to access to information and community support.



The role of public libraries

Social inclusion is at the heart of the public library: a free, welcoming public space which is shared by all members of the community, where people can meet and talk, and which are open for a range of community groups and users.

Libraries also celebrate culture, identity and community pride. They collect information that documents the history of communities such as books, photographs and newspapers.

Libraries host events, tell local stories and highlight the work of local artists, musicians and community groups.

In Focus

Local History Collections – Alice Springs Library, Borroloola Community Library, Jabiru Library, Katherine Library, Nhulunbuy Community Library, Pine Creek Library, Pirlangimpi Community Library, Taminmin Community Library, Tennant Creek Library.

Local history collections aim to preserve and promote the history and culture of a district. Local history collections are often a very special and treasured aspect of a local library. Items are frequently rare, unique and are kept for the enjoyment of people today and for future generations. Local communities can have a strong sense of identity which can be preserved and highlighted through a local history collection. Several libraries across the Territory hold and champion their local history collection particularly in regional and remote areas.

Drag Queen Storytimes – City of Palmerston Library and City of Darwin Libraries

Following on from the successful pilot of Drag Queen Storytimes in 2018 at City of Palmerston Library, Drag Territory have partnered with City of Palmerston and City of Darwin to provide opportunities for all people to participate in activities that celebrate themselves and their families.



This year's highlights include the 'Christmas Edition' Drag Queen Storytime at Palmerston, and City of Darwin Libraries for National Simultaneous Storytime.

Refurbished Library Services – Tiwi Islands Regional Council

In early 2020, Tiwi Islands Regional Council invested in a significant upgrade and refresh of Milikapiti and Pirlangimpi Libraries. In consultation with Library & Archives NT, library staff focussed on rethinking and refreshing the library spaces, collections and services with a strong community focus. Tiwi Islands Regional Council purchased new furniture and shelving and completed building upgrades to enable a revitalised and contemporary library service for Tiwi residents.

IMAGES:

Left: Milikapiti Library Tiwi Islands Regional Council

Above: Drag Queen Christmas Storytime City of Palmerston

Right: Tennant Creek Library Local History Fossicking Collection



The role of public libraries

Libraries support individual businesses through providing workspaces and internet connectivity, particularly valuable for mobile workers.

They are spaces that frequently support tourists, providing local information, internet connectivity and comfortable relaxation areas.

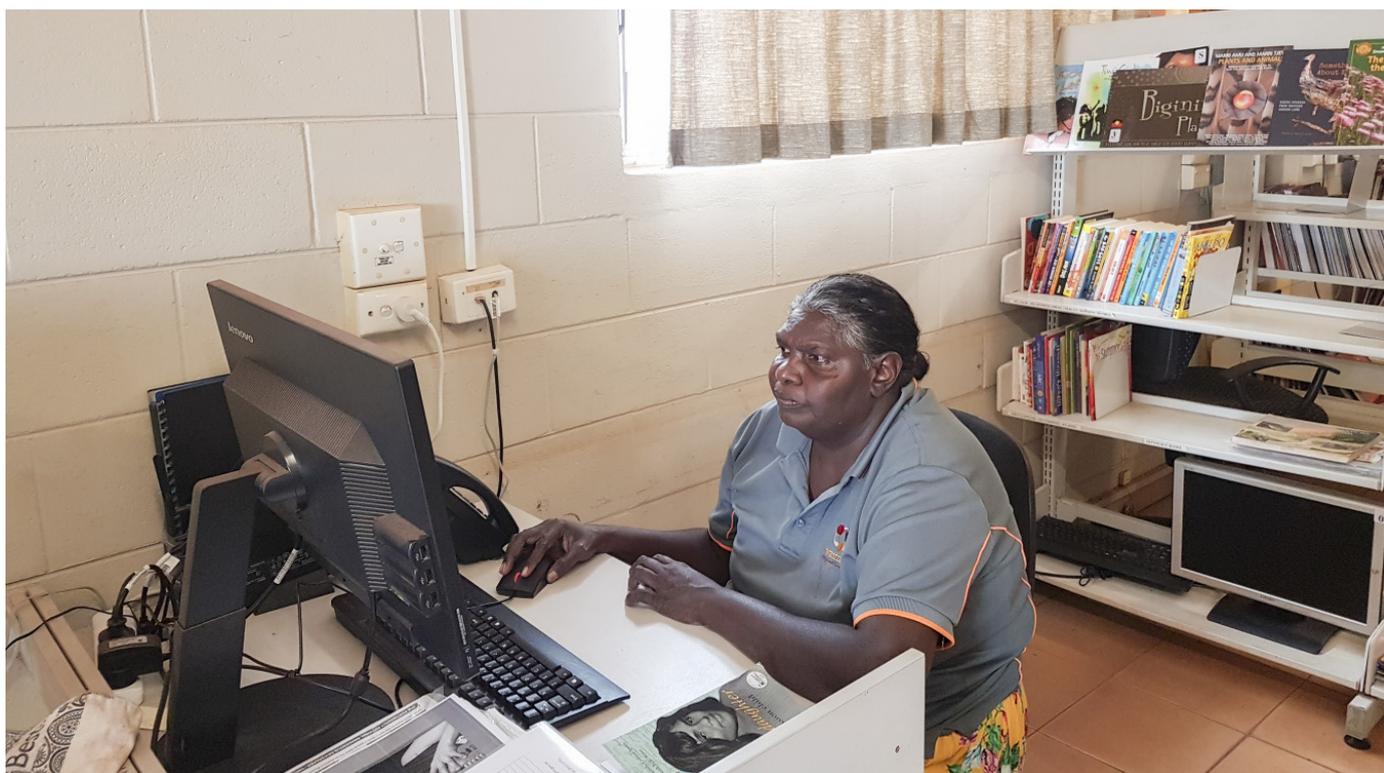
Much of the economic benefit delivered by libraries is long term, and flows from the development of more literate and educated communities, which have been shown to lead to higher economic performance as well as reduced costs to services such as healthcare and justice systems.

In 2019-20, Northern Territory library bookable spaces such as community and meetings rooms were booked for over 3,800 hours by community groups or small businesses.

Economic and Workforce Development

Libraries play a significant economic role within their communities. They improve employment opportunities through developing literacy and digital skills, supporting people undertaking formal study with space and resources, and providing programs such as resume writing skills for job seekers.





In Focus

Get that Job – City of Darwin Libraries

City of Darwin Libraries hosts a series of workshops for young people who live, work or study in Darwin in partnership with Launch Darwin and Site Skills training. An employment pathway and job skills initiative, the workshops held throughout the year cover a range of topics including public speaking, barista skills, first aid and white card training and accreditation.

Get Job Ready – City of Palmerston Library

Get Job Ready are City of Palmerston's drop-in sessions where community members can use in-house laptops to create or update resumes, cover letters and apply for jobs in a supported and safe environment.



IMAGES:

Left: Tennant Creek Library

Above: Wadeye Community Library

Northern Territory Public Libraries Key Statistics 2019-20





720,439
LIBRARY VISITS



77,851
LIBRARY MEMBERS
IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY¹



2,760
PROGRAMS
NT PUBLIC LIBRARIES



31%*
NT POPULATION
ARE LIBRARY MEMBERS

73,103 ATTENDEES
LIBRARY PROGRAMS

TOTAL LOANS 669,950



973
EARLY LITERACY
SESSIONS



536,389
PHYSICAL LOANS

15,004 CHILDREN ATTENDED
AN EARLY LITERACY SESSION



133,561
eLOANS
(eBOOKS, eAUDIOBOOKS, eMAGAZINES)



DIGITAL
LITERACY



80% PHYSICAL LOANS
20% DIGITAL LOANS

767 **1,214**
SESSIONS **ATTENDEES**

364,777 **INTERNET SESSIONS**
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY WI-FI

¹Library membership numbers cannot be ascertained in some remote libraries where library usage is primarily onsite. Overall NT public library membership is higher than stated.



Community Puzzle City of Palmerston Library