

Libraries Connecting Communities

Annual Highlights 2024-2025





City of Palmerston Library - School Holiday Program
Front cover image: Katherine Public Library - National Simultaneous Storytime

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Acknowledgement of Country

Library & Archives NT acknowledges the First Nations people of this country and recognises their continuing connections to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Introduction

The Northern Territory (NT) public library sector includes thirty libraries: twenty-nine with physical locations and one digital service delivered to thirteen remote MacDonnell Regional Council communities. Additionally, forty-eight Community Internet Sites provide free internet to remote First Nations communities. This report presents the achievements of Northern Territory Public Libraries during 2024/2025 and outlines their contributions to implementing the *Libraries Connecting Communities Strategic Vision 2023-2028*.



Alice Springs Public Library – VR Program



Litchfield Community Library – Library Buddies Program

Key Statistics 2024-2025

775,369 library visits

490,438 website and database visits

298,477 Wi-Fi sessions

303,671 hours of Wi-Fi usage

4,884 programs attended by **68,924** people

1,213 early literacy sessions attended by **30,066** people

1,196 personal development and wellbeing programs attended by **19,910** people

869 economic and workforce development sessions attended by **1,804** people

696,174 total loans

463,859 physical loans

153,670 eLoans – eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines

78,645 digital device loans

92,398 hours of public device usage

Strategic Vision 2023-2028

This report is the second for the *Libraries Connecting Communities Strategic Vision 2023-2028*.

The Strategic Vision outlines six national outcome reporting areas and six strategic goals for the NT public library sector, along with several guiding principles that align with the *ALIA Guidelines, Standards, and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries 2021*. Collectively, these outcomes, goals, and principles inform the provision of public library services in the Northern Territory, with the purpose of creating contemporary library services that foster literacy and learning and build stronger communities through empowerment, accessibility, and inclusion for all.



City of Darwin Libraries - International Day of Women and Girls in Science Expo

National Outcomes

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

Goals

- 1) Literacy and learning
- 2) Online services and digital inclusion
- 3) History, language, and culture
- 4) Welcoming places
- 5) Diversity and inclusion
- 6) Strengthening our sector

Principles

- 1) We serve our communities with a focus on equity and free universal access.
- 2) We design services for a great user experience.
- 3) We engage with communities to provide sustainable, place-based library services that reflect their needs and aspirations.
- 4) We include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in co-designing culturally safe services, programs, and collections with a focus on strengthening language and culture wherever possible.
- 5) We build diverse, accessible, and safe services and facilities for all, including our most vulnerable.
- 6) We collaborate and share across the community and library sectors.
- 7) We nurture partnerships with communities, agencies, and organisations to deliver mutual benefit and achieve key outcomes.



Nhulunbuy Community Library - Father's Day Craft Event

Sectoral Support

Library & Archives NT (LANT) provides support to the public library sector through:

- Operational grant funding to local councils and authorities for thirty public libraries via the *Public Library Funding Agreement 2023-2028*.
- Funding for hardcopy and electronic collections and eResources
- A Territory-wide library management system – LibrariesNT
- Free public Wi-Fi access to support digital inclusion and access in forty-eight remote First Nations communities through the Community Internet Service (CIS)
- Learning development opportunities and advisory support services
- Support for some of the most remote libraries in the world, serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations in diverse settings – from cities to remote communities.

During 2024/25, LANT staff visited urban, regional and remote council libraries throughout the Northern Territory in person, to provide on-the-ground support to public and community library staff. The visits are an essential element of developing connections and strengthening relationships with stakeholders across the sector.



Sectoral visits to Barunga Library (left), Ti Tree Library (centre), Tennant Creek Library (right)

Numerous sectoral working groups were convened by Library & Archives NT throughout 2024/25, to meet, collaborate and progress initiatives under the *Connected Communities Strategy*, including:

- Public Libraries Strategic Development Committee
- Library Management System User Group
- Collection Development Working Group.

Representation of the Northern Territory Library sector is a key role of Library & Archives NT. Through its partnerships with the Australian Public Libraries Alliance (APLA), Australian Library & Information Association (ALIA) and National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), Library & Archives NT has worked on several key committees for the benefit of Northern Territory Public Libraries.

In 2024/25, Library & Archives NT continued to provide a range of learning and development support opportunities to the library sector, including hosting free IFLA training on outcome and impact reporting in libraries.



IFLA Measurement Evaluation and Demonstrating Library Impact Workshop for the public library sector

Little Bang Discovery Club Workshops

In 2024, Library & Archives NT commenced a new partnership with Children’s Discovery and Questacon, to establish a pilot program involving library staff training and the distribution of Little Bang Discovery activity kits at select NT locations. The training was delivered in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, and Darwin, as well as online, and was highly successful with good participation and engagement with the program from the library sector.



Little Bang Workshop participants in Alice Springs (left) and Darwin/online (right)

ALIA GLAM Top End

A number of sectoral events were held through the re-establishment of the ALIA GLAM Top End Committee, including the introduction of the NT Library & Information Excellence Award. The award is an annual merit prize which celebrates and recognises the work of an individual working in any sector of the library and information profession in the Northern Territory. It celebrates achievements big and small and community impact on any scale.



2024 NT Library & Information Excellence Awards night at LANT Parliament House



ALIA GLAM Top End Committee event participants

Outcomes

During the 2024/25 financial year, Northern Territory public libraries collectively delivered diverse individual and community outcomes. The libraries reported on how they had provided library services to their communities, aligned with the *Libraries Connecting Communities Strategic Vision 2023-2028* and the *ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*.

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Public libraries, through their resources, programs, and spaces, provide numerous opportunities for everyone in the community to develop their reading and literacy skills, encouraging and enabling lifelong learning, both formal and informal. This is integral to developing the knowledge and skills of participants to support their ability to make informed choices about employment, health, and well-being.



Alice Springs Public Library Staff with community-designed library bags (left), and City of Darwin Libraries - Young Territory Author Awards winners (right)

In Focus

Katherine Public Library, Katherine Town Council

To promote lifelong learning and community engagement, the Katherine Public Library hosted a range of events that increased community participation and enthusiasm for literacy. Immersive science experiences for all ages attracted new visitors. National Simultaneous Storytime, in partnership with Anglicare NT, EducationNT, and HIPPIY Katherine, brought together over forty participants at Katherine Hot Springs Park, strengthening local networks and stimulating interest in reading. In collaboration with the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, the library also marked Indigenous Literacy Day under the theme 'Strength in Our Stories'. This event featured a live stream of the national celebration and resulted in a substantial increase in the library's Indigenous literature collection, enhancing community access to culturally significant works.

Ti Tree Community Library, Central Desert Regional Council

A key achievement for Ti Tree Community Library was participating in the Career Expo in June 2025, where the library promoted regional authors. This initiative showcased Northern Territory writers and introduced young people to opportunities in literacy, learning, and creative careers. The library also supported adults by offering resources for English language practice, self-study, and skill development. Community members used books and digital tools to enhance their language and literacy skills, increasing

their ability to engage in education, employment, and community life. These efforts supported the Central Desert Regional Council's goals to promote literacy, assist young learners, and provide lifelong education for all residents.



Ti Tree Community Library - Career Expo (left) and Katherine Public Library - Radical Roadshow (right)

MacConnect, MacDonnell Regional Council

MacConnect expanded its literacy and lifelong learning programs by deepening the integration of First Languages, innovative technologies, and community collaborations. The *Nintiringanyi* (Learn) program strengthened quiet, resource-rich spaces in Recreation Halls, now with an expanded collection of books and resources. Elder-led storytelling sessions grew in frequency, supporting intergenerational learning. The *Arrkene-Illeme* (Play) program introduced more VR activities to combine gaming with literacy and storytelling. Meanwhile, the *Arrpmarnama* (Make) initiative helped participants produce more digital storytelling resources using advanced tools. Feedback highlighted increased enthusiasm among youth and pride among elders, indicating stronger literacy engagement and sustainable growth in lifelong learning.



MacConnect participant in the Arrpmarnama (Make) program

Digital Inclusion

Public libraries have become essential community resources for digital inclusion and supporting those affected by the digital divide. Digital inclusion enables everyone to access technology safely and effectively, including computers, the internet, and portable digital devices such as smartphones. Public libraries also provide free access to online resources and services, promoting digital equity for people finding it increasingly difficult to get help with navigating the rapidly changing and growing online environment.



Galiwin'ku Library – Public access computers

In Focus

Coomalie Community Government Council Libraries

During 2024/25, Batchelor and Adelaide River Libraries focused on digital inclusion, ensuring all community members—especially those in rural and remote areas—could confidently use technology. ICT investment enabled new iPads, improved Wi-Fi, and more public computers, giving residents reliable access to online services such as internet banking, MyGov, and Centrelink. Usage data shows a 35% increase in public computer sessions compared to 2023/24, reflecting strong community demand.



Batchelor Community Library - VR Session (left) and City of Palmerston Library - Youth Week Sound Recording (right)

City of Palmerston Library

During Youth Week, the City of Palmerston Library hosted the Recording Studio Experience using funding received from the Northern Territory Government to deliver a program centred on the Gulwa Recording Studio. A professional sound technician was engaged to guide young participants in using recording equipment, enabling them to build technology skills, express their creativity, and produce professional-quality content.

Central Desert Regional Council Libraries

In 2024/25, Central Desert Regional Council libraries provided essential access to digital technologies, helping bridge the digital divide experienced in remote communities. With many residents lacking personal devices or reliable home internet, the libraries remained a lifeline for accessing online services and building confidence with technology.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

In addition to promoting the personal wellbeing benefits gained through reading for pleasure, public libraries support personal development in an inclusive, non-judgmental, and safe environment. Public libraries provide resources and services to their communities where individuals can go to seek information, support, human connection, and develop their life skills.

There was a marked increase in the delivery of programs aimed at personal development and wellbeing across the NT in 2024/25 with a 44% increase in number of programs offered, and an 84% increase in participant numbers, demonstrating the key role public libraries play in sustaining the health and wellbeing of NT communities.

In Focus

City of Darwin Libraries

City of Darwin Libraries' Community Wellbeing events support vulnerable community members, particularly those who are displaced or living with mental illness. Fortnightly one-on-one sessions at Casuarina Library provide tailored guidance, referrals, and emotional support in a safe, welcoming environment. These sessions strengthen relationships and reinforce the library's essential role in promoting wellbeing and connection.



City of Darwin Libraries - Community Wellbeing Event

Jabiru Public Library, West Arnhem Regional Council

The Jabiru Public Library is utilised by numerous allied health services and community members who require safe spaces to connect with others; notable examples include NDIS, Stars, Clontarf, and Aged Care services. The library now has a safe Sensory Zone with resources (on request) that are utilised by Service Providers and the public. Furthermore, the library was refurbished to promote access to the library space and services for all abilities.



Barunga Library - Art Club (left) and Jabiru Public Library - Sensory Space (right)

Roper Gulf Regional Council Libraries

Roper Gulf Regional Council oversees the operation of libraries in Mataranka, Barunga, Borroloola, and Ngukurr. Outreach services are provided to nearby communities, including Eva Valley, Beswick, and Urapunga and opening hours are tailored to local circumstances. Libraries continue to play a central role in community life, supporting literacy, lifelong learning, and social inclusion. Efforts to boost library engagement through collaboration with other social wellbeing programs, such as joint events and shared workshops, form a priority initiative in the Roper Gulf region, strengthening libraries as vibrant hubs that empower and connect communities.

Litchfield Community Library

The 'Library Buddies' Program is a partnership between the library and local pre-schools, and brings seniors and preschoolers together over weekly sessions featuring Storytime, crafts and reading. Themes such as nature play, superheroes, First Nations art and science exploration encourage meaningful interactions between generations. Senior participants in the program are measured on the Well-being Index (WHO-5) before and after the program, with one participant experiencing an increase of three levels.



Litchfield Community Library – participants in the 'Library Buddies' program

Stronger and More Creative Communities

Public libraries contribute to strengthening communities and building social capital by providing inclusive spaces that support creative and cultural expression and identity. Public libraries offer free place-based programs intended to promote local creativity, talent, stories, and inspiration. Public libraries also contribute to a sense of belonging and community identity by collecting, promoting, and celebrating local histories and the rich cultures of our diverse communities.

In Focus

City of Palmerston Library

During Refugee Week the City of Palmerston Library partnered with the STEPS Group to host a Storytime event celebrating inclusion, belonging, and cultural diversity. Families and children were treated to cultural performances by volunteers and enjoyed a shared morning tea.



City of Palmerston Library – Refugee Week Storytime with STEPS

Tennant Creek Public Library, Barkly Regional Council

Tennant Creek is primarily populated by First Nations people, and the library acknowledges this through participation in local events, programming, and collection representation. Tennant Creek Library took part in town-wide NAIDOC activities by hosting a stall at the end of the march and running a colouring-in competition with prizes for kids. To celebrate Indigenous Literacy Week, the library held workshops with local elders, collaborated with Literacy for Life, and featured a concert by local musicians from the Winanjikari Music Centre. During the Desert Harmony Festival, the library also hosted a well-attended Drag Show Storytime featuring Aboriginal Drag Queen Constantina Bush, further promoting diverse representation.



Tennant Creek Public Library - NAIDOC colouring competition (left) and a recording session at Galiwin'ku Community Library (right)

Galiwin'ku Community Library, East Arnhem Regional Council

Galiwin'ku Community Library has relocated to the Galiwin'ku Recreation Hall. The new location features new furniture and spaces, including a separate quiet room that also serves as a multimedia and recording space. East Arnhem Regional Council continues to improve its library spaces. These efforts enrich remote communities by offering new opportunities for cultural expression and recognition. Such initiatives help build and promote community pride.



Galiwin'ku Library - Mums and Bubs program

Litchfield Community Library

During a school holiday program, the library delivered a highly successful 'Book Tasting' event for young readers in the 'Funky Chicken' book club. The library was transformed into a café style setting, with 'entrée', 'main' and 'dessert' book selections delivered by staff on serving trolleys. Children were guided on how to assess a book in five minutes and recorded their impressions in a themed booklet. The session also included free choice reading, bookmark making and a bookmark design competition judged by the Mayor. Feedback from both children and parents was overwhelmingly positive.



Litchfield Community Library – 'Funky Chicken' Book Club 'Book Tasting' event.

City of Darwin Libraries

Designed by young people for young people, Geektacular connects youth with their libraries as fantastic free community resources. This youth-led celebration showcases creativity and culture, featuring a minimarket of local young creatives, a cosplay competition, board games arena, Dungeons and Dragons, the Stepping Stones art exhibition, and gaming competitions. Additionally, a 'Lo-Fi Lounge' provides a sensory-sensitive space with headphones offering fantasy soundtracks, nature sounds, and lo-fi beats for all attendees.



City of Darwin Libraries – Geektacular event

Economic and Workforce Development

Public libraries provide communities with services and programs that support improved employment outcomes and quality of life. By assisting people with job seeking and resume preparation and providing free access to computers and the internet, public libraries provide important bridges across digital and economic divides that may otherwise inhibit some people from finding employment. Public libraries also run programs in collaboration with local government economic development programs to promote small business development and provide those businesses with business and government information.

In Focus

Gapuwiyak Community Library, East Arnhem Regional Council

During 2024/25, East Arnhem Regional Council transferred governance of the Angurugu and Umbakumba communities, including their libraries, to the newly established Groote Archipelago Regional Council. In response, East Arnhem Regional Council opened a new library in Gapuwiyak. This new library provides another community with access to a space and services to enable study, training, personal development, and business tasks. Furthermore, this new library can facilitate activities that support young people in building skills such as self-regulation, distress tolerance, and self-care, which are important for the workforce and for personal wellbeing.



Gapuwiyak Library

Alice Springs Public Library, Alice Springs Town Council

Alice Springs Public Library hosted 821 sessions for its Read Write Chat and Tax Programs, with 1684 participants. Read Write Chat helps adults improve literacy, numeracy, and employment prospects. Tax Help builds skills in managing finances and accessing government services. These programs demonstrate the library's contribution to the development of financial and workforce skills.

Informed and Connected Citizens

Public libraries are community spaces where everyone can connect and learn about their communities. Misinformation, disinformation, and paywalls create barriers that prompt many to turn to libraries. There, people access information and develop information literacy skills to navigate these changes.

In Focus

Nhulunbuy Community Library, East Arnhem Regional Council

Nhulunbuy Community Library hosted numerous information sessions in collaboration with community and government services, including an Indigenous Support Officer, a Midwife, a Massage Specialist, a Community Liaison Officer from Home Affairs, Scamwatch, First Aid training, and Companion Card NT delegates. These activities resulted in free services and support for community members, as well as the promotion of important information and skills within the community.

Litchfield Community Library

Litchfield is a rural area with a large population of seniors who may experience social isolation. Litchfield Community Library runs a number of programs to ensure these citizens are able to connect, be informed and participate in civic life.

Seniors Morning Tea is held monthly and introduces topics such as:

- Elder abuse information
- Dementia information
- Wills and end of life planning
- Aged care services information
- History of flags and their meanings with The Flag Man
- COTA information session
- VR experience of a person with dementia

Students vs Seniors is an innovative intergenerational monthly activity that provides social cohesion in the rural Litchfield community. Structured and unstructured conversation over games or activities between seniors and high school students, provides a vehicle for breaking down barriers and misconceptions for both generations. A Science Week grant enabled a special excursion for the Students vs Seniors group – ‘BarraTales’ with Barramundi Adventures Darwin. Thirty-eight youth and seniors fished together, shared BBQ lunch and a quiz learning about the life cycle of barramundi and sustainable fishing practices. This initiative was a Finalist at the Radicle Science Awards NT 2024.



Litchfield Community Library – Students vs Seniors group excursion

Alyangula Community Library, DoE

The Alyangula Library has become a trusted resource for residents seeking information and services in an isolated community. Staff guided patrons in secure internet use, booking flights, completing online forms, and accessing government services. These sessions boosted digital confidence, reduced stress, and strengthened connections to services and community. In a transient town, the library offered continuity as a safe place to connect and belong, strengthening access to essential services and social ties.

Pine Creek Community Library, Victoria Daly Regional Council

The Pine Creek Community Library assists with the writing and editing of the community newsletter by providing a communal meeting space with Wi-Fi, air conditioning, and one-on-one assistance from library staff. This support enables the production and access of communications that inform the community about local events.

City of Palmerston Library

The library continues to strengthen its role as a community hub by partnering with external organisations to deliver vital information and services directly to the public through its Infohub initiative. In 2024/25 a number of organisations utilised this program. The initiative improves access to support, encourages community connection, and ensures key services are more visible and accessible to the community.



City of Palmerston Library Infohub



Alice Springs Public Library - Lego Legends