Connected Communities

**VISION FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY
PUBLIC LIBRARIES 2017-2023**

NORTHERN TERRITORY
LIBRARY

NORTHERN
TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

With over one million visits each year, the Territory's public libraries are among its most valued social institutions.

They provide opportunities for all Territorians to learn and develop throughout their lives: by supporting children and families to build reading skills, and through family learning programs; by providing spaces and resources to complement formal education; by providing collections for recreational reading and for inquiring minds; and through access to the internet and technology to ensure that everyone can participate in our increasingly connected lives.

The Northern Territory Government has recently undertaken a public consultation process to find out what Territorians most value in their library services and what they would like to see into the future.

This process confirmed that services to children and families remain critically important, along with access to internet connectivity and a richer and more diverse range of collections, both in print and online.

This document confirms the many ways in which libraries add value to their communities and identifies areas for future development.

It will underpin the ways in which the Northern Territory Government will continue to support public library services into the future, and the ways in which the Northern Territory Library will continue to work in partnership with local governments to deliver library services for all Territorians.

Lauren Moss

Lauren Moss
Minister for Tourism and Culture

NORTHERN TERRITORY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries are vital and trusted resources for local communities.

They support literacy and education, community building and skills development through:

- collections of print, audio-visual and digital resources, for education and recreation, with a stock of over 400,000 items;

- accessible internet and technology;

- inclusive and welcoming community spaces;

- supportive and skilled staff.

There are 32 public libraries in the Northern Territory, serving a culturally and linguistically diverse, mobile and often remote population of 240,000 people. These libraries receive over a million visits every year.

They service urban areas such as Darwin, Alice Springs, Palmerston and Katherine, smaller towns, and 16 Aboriginal communities. Whilst many remote communities do not currently have a local library, free community internet is provided as a baseline public library service to 34 communities, rising to 46 by the end of 2017.

Territory public libraries are well connected. Membership at one library enables Territorians to borrow from any other library in the Territory. Books can be requested from other libraries and interstate, and extensive online collections of books, magazines and information resources are available across the Territory.

Evidence suggests the way in which public libraries are being used is changing. The annual Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report indicates that whilst visitor numbers to Territory libraries are holding steady at over a million visits per year, lending is decreasing, in line with a national trend.

At the same time, the number of library programs on offer to the Territory community has increased to nearly 9,000 programs with over 77,000 participants in 2015/16.

Data is not available on the overall level of online visitation but anecdotally it is likely to be increasing, as digital collections grow and are more widely used.

Most Territory public libraries are operated by local governments, but are strongly supported by the Northern Territory Government, which provides the bulk of the funding as well as a range of centralised support services through the Northern Territory Library.

Public libraries are forward thinking institutions which are rising to the opportunities and challenges of a changing world. Technological developments make it possible to get more information online - from libraries and beyond.

Communities value access to Wi-Fi and computers - but continue to find value in physical spaces and print collections. Libraries have the capacity to provide a wide range of programs, from Storytime for kids, to tech clubs for teenagers, to family history training: but the best mix of programs will vary depending on local community requirements.

> **Northern Territory Libraries receive over a million visits every year**

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

It has been ten years since the last comprehensive look was taken at how public libraries could best serve Territory communities.

Much has changed since then. Expectations about how and when people access information have been transformed by mobile connectivity.

Increasing satellite internet coverage and the NBN has improved the availability of internet access. Local government boundaries have changed. Greater opportunities for innovative library partnerships with community groups and between government agencies.

In October 2016 the Northern Territory Library engaged KPMG to conduct a consultation process to get a clearer picture about what Territorians most value about their current library services, and how they wish to see them developed in the future.

Public forums were held in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Palmerston and Tennant Creek. An online survey was also made available which received 298 responses.

Interviews were held with council staff responsible for operating library services to get their perspectives on the biggest challenges being faced in running libraries, and the biggest needs for the future.

> **Public library collections need to reflect all elements of the community**

Findings

KPMG received strong feedback from the community about how passionately local library services were valued.

The key findings from the public consultation process included:

- Print collections remain highly relevant. Digital collections are also highly valued, but as a supplement rather than a replacement.

- Collections need to reflect all elements of the community, and include diverse languages. Audiovisual materials are also a critical part of collection development.

- The most highly valued programs provided by libraries are those that support children, especially early childhood literacy programs and after school programs.

- Technology access is critical, but so is training and support for technology use. Along with early childhood programs and after school programs, technology programs are most in demand.

- Libraries are valued as flexible spaces for community use, such as meeting spaces for community groups and places for community members to run their own programs.

- Libraries play an important role in supporting individual small business and work activities, particularly by providing access to the internet and spaces to work.

- There is a demand for longer or alternative opening hours, the nature of which will vary between communities.

Consultation was also undertaken with local government staff, which confirmed the findings of the public consultation process and also highlighted issues to be considered in the development of a new Agreement between the Northern Territory Government and local government for the funding for public library services.

The full report from the public consultation is available on the Northern Territory Library website.

PRINCIPLES

On the basis of the consultation process a number of principles have been formulated which will be used to guide the future development of Territory public libraries.

Access for all

All Territorians, no matter where they are located, should have access to library services. Where access to a physical library building is not feasible, services should be provided through a mix of digital and outreach services and through partnerships with other local service providers.

Core library services should be free to the community and not dependent on the ability to pay.

Responsive to local community needs

The type and scope of library services required, including opening hours, depends on the needs and desires of the community it is serving. One size does not fit all. Libraries provide a platform for individual and community development and should provide opportunities for local organisations, community groups and businesses to utilise their spaces and resources.

Inclusive services

Library services should support the diversity of Territory communities and ensure that services are accessible for people with different languages and cultural backgrounds, for people of all ages and abilities.

Respect for Aboriginal culture

Libraries should support the continued strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Customer focused

People should enjoy their visit to the library, feel comfortable in the spaces and supported by staff.

Innovative solutions and partnerships

With a clear focus on community requirements and outcomes, libraries should explore new opportunities to deliver services, particularly through partnerships with other community organisations and expansion of online services.

Effective and efficient services

Libraries should ensure that public funding is used to deliver community benefits and outcomes effectively and efficiently through the development of a culture of evaluation and evidence-based decision making.

The Northern Territory Library should provide centralised Territory-wide services where this is the most effective and efficient solution.

Sustainable services

Funding and service delivery frameworks should be developed to ensure that they are sustainable into the future.

> **All Territorians, no matter where they are located, should have access to library services**

Effective network

The Northern Territory public library network is strengthened through collaboration, communication and shared skills development between library services.

THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Libraries change lives.

They provide a rich mixture of collections, spaces, programs, technologies and supportive staff to enable individuals and communities to learn, grow and develop.

They are free and accessible to all members of the community and support lifelong learning, for children, students, adult individuals, families, and seniors.

The variety of resources made available by libraries enables them to provide value to their communities across a wide range of areas.

The Australian Public Library Alliance and the Australian Library and Information Association have recently released *Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries*, 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

Connected Communities, Future Libraries uses this new outcomes framework to articulate the feedback from the consultation process, identify existing areas of activity, and indicate opportunities for future development.

It covers the period 2017-2023 to align with the period of the next Public Library Funding Agreement between the Northern Territory Government and Local Government.

> Libraries change lives

Chess Club at Alice Springs Public Library

LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Developing a family reading culture and inquiring young minds

The role of public libraries

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.

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 and Rhymetime designed to support the development of a culture of family reading.

Libraries also provide extensive collections and targeted programs to support adult learning, and can also act as spaces for the delivery of learning programs by other organisations.

Public libraries have for a long time played a valuable role in helping children to learn to read through Story Time and associated programs and provision of children's collections.

Through collections, programs and facilities public libraries also provide many opportunities for people of all ages and interests to pursue formal and informal study and lifelong learning.

This includes:

- homework clubs and after-school activities
- using library computers and work spaces to do school work, tertiary study and other research and learning
- provision of access to online classes
- encouraging reading through school holiday activities, youth reading programs and collections and book clubs
- programs supporting development of learning habits and skills.

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p77.

Current services

All Northern Territory public libraries currently provide children's collections and spaces. There are over 60,000 children's books in Territory public library collections, and the libraries are open to families and children for over 44,000 hours each year.

Thirteen libraries currently run early childhood reading programs such as Rhymetime (for parents of children up to 12 months old, which focuses on songs, rhymes and parenting information) and Storytime (for parents and children 1-5 years and focusing on group story reading). In 2015/16, the 5 larger library services ran over 1,000 sessions with over 20,000 participants.

Libraries complement formal school learning by providing facilities for study, and support social learning through after school programs. After school activities run by larger library services include Lego, coding, chess, creative writing, run your own business and book clubs, and children often meet with tutors in library spaces at this time.

Libraries also run a wide range of school holiday programs which can include activities such as workshops, arts/crafts, petting zoos, fitness classes, movie nights and the Summer Reading Club.

Adult learning is supported through both non-fiction collections and through programs. Larger library services have the greatest capacity to run these programs, but across the Northern Territory in 2015-16 there were 2,611 adult learning programs with over 77,000 participants.

> Public libraries foster a culture of reading in early childhood

These programs focussed on:

- Reading and Literacy (e.g. author talks, book clubs, quiz nights)
- Digital Literacy (e.g. computer classes, technology classes, resume writing)
- Seniors (e.g. Seniors Month activities, knitting and chess clubs)
- Culture and Creativity (e.g. art classes, exhibitions, lectures and workshops)

Non-fiction and reference materials are provided in a range of formats, print and digital, and include over 100,000 books as well as magazines and journals, newspapers, audio and DVDs.

Nurserytime and Storytime at City of Palmerston Library

Nurserytime and Storytime are regular programs designed to develop early childhood literacy through the development of family reading culture.

Nurserytime is for parents of babies up to twelve months old, who are introduced to songs, finger rhymes and nursery rhymes in ways that encourage development and movement.

Storytime provides a positive and safe environment for children to appreciate reading and literacy through storytelling, singing and dancing.

Storytime at City of Palmerston Library

Code Club at City of Darwin Libraries

City of Darwin Libraries offer is Code Club as part of a network of free, volunteer-led, after school coding clubs for children aged 9-12 years. Code Club helps strengthen problem solving and logical thinking and supports key academic subjects such as maths, science and technology.

Code Club at City of Darwin Libraries

Outcomes from consultation

Programs and activities for children were identified as the most valued and in-demand programs delivered by Territory public libraries and there is strong community support for expanding services in this area.

Some library services are already unable to meet community demand for these programs and existing sessions are over-subscribed.

Two areas were identified as especially valuable:

- Family reading programs
- After-school programs

Feedback regarding the availability of collections in languages other than English is also relevant, and increasing the range of children's books in community languages is seen as desirable.

The main focus for adult learning programs identified through the consultation relates to developing technology skills.

Club Kidpreneur at Alice Springs Library

Club Kidpreneur is a national program aimed at developing the innovation capacity of Australia's youngest entrepreneurs.

Kidpreneurs build a business, sell products at a market, donate profits to charity and pitch their ideas to real entrepreneurs.

The inaugural Club Kidpreneur Program launched at Alice Springs Public Library with 35 children awarded certificates in December 2016.

Kidpreneur graduates at Alice Springs Public Library

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

1. Expand and develop family reading programs. This could include the sharing of Territory-wide resources between libraries and the provision of library staff development activities in the early childhood learning area, an approach used for example in Queensland's First Five Forever program. It may also include partnerships with other early childhood literacy services such as the Department of Education's Families as First Teachers (FAFT) program.

2. Grow children's book collections, particularly in Aboriginal and community languages. The Northern Territory Library has previously collaborated with communities, government and non-government organisations to produce 25 Bilingual Baby Board Books in Aboriginal languages but there is considerable scope for further development in this area.

3. Strengthen Territory-wide digital collections of learning materials, reference and non-fiction collections to ensure access to a wide suite of resources to support individual learning, formal education and skills development.

Storytime at Wadeye Library

INFORMED AND CONNECTED CITIZENS

The role of public libraries

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.

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

In some jurisdictions libraries act directly as local government service points for a range of community services.

Public libraries are places where people can come together to connect with one another and with what is happening in their community.

The library is the new 'town square', a non-commercial place where people can:

- meet informally with family, friends and like-minded people
- conduct formal meetings in library spaces
- learn about the community, local news and current events
- discuss community issues and share and exchange opinions
- find out about government programs and services
- learn about local laws and regulations
- become involved in the democratic process

When new libraries are developed they are typically placed in a central location, co-located with other community facilities, education and cultural organisations.

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p79

Current services

Territory public libraries provide access to the internet for e-government services, and in some locations are able to provide a level of staff support to navigate these services.

Elsewhere in Australia libraries have been used as spaces for government information sessions about the Census or election enrolments and processes.

Some libraries also make spaces available for community meetings, and many also provide a local bulletin board and information on local services and events.

Seniors morning tea at Taminmin Community Library

For many years, Taminmin Library in partnership with Friends of the Library has been delivering regular Seniors morning teas.

Social isolation can be a problem for rural seniors and this program is aimed at promoting social and community connectedness.

Ongoing learning opportunities are also provided as a diverse range of speakers attend the morning teas including health experts, horticulturalists, historians and local authors.

Seniors morning tea at Taminmin Community Library

Outcomes from consultation

The informed and connected citizens theme emerged most strongly in the consultation in the context of digital literacy, which is treated in more detail in the next section.

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

4. Build the skills of library staff to further support community members in accessing online services via computers, tablets or mobile devices.

5. Promote the role of libraries as sources for information about government programs and elections.

> "People are increasingly turning to libraries for support in navigating e-government services"

Alice Springs Library

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Technology and connectivity for all

The role of public libraries

The ability to access and use technology is fundamental to meaningful engagement in Australian society. Access to the internet via computers, tablets or mobile devices allows people to:

- search and find useful public information (e.g. transport timetables, weather forecasts, news and current affairs)
- study online and access educational material access government services
- connect with family and friends via email and social media
- perform financial and administrative transactions
- engage with community activities and business organisations
- search and apply for jobs
- pursue recreational and leisure interests.

Increasingly, the only way to access some information, government and business services is through the internet.

Although internet access is now widespread throughout the community (86% of Australian households have internet access), access is not universal, and there are significant numbers of older persons, people with low incomes and people in rural areas (among others) who do not have home or mobile internet access. There are also many people, including those population groups mentioned here as well as other people, who have low levels of digital literacy and are not confident in accessing and using computers effectively.

Over the past 10 to 15 years public libraries have played an important role in supporting digital inclusion and providing a safety net for those caught in the digital divide by:

- providing library users with free access to computers and the internet
- providing technical support and advice to people using the library's computers
- providing training to people with low levels of digital literacy.

This is seen to be particularly valuable for people who:

- have no, limited or poor access to computers, the internet and reliable bandwidth
- face competition in their household for access to a computer
- are travelling or away from home
- need a quiet place to work or study
- want to use computers but do not have the necessary confidence or skills"

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p80

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.

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; language skills are also relevant)
- Relevance (people need a reason to engage with online services)

Library services aim to address the affordability and skills gaps in particular.

Current services

Provision of free internet access is a foundational public library service across Australia.

All of the Territory's 32 public libraries provide this service and the Northern Territory Library provides free community Wi-Fi to a further 18 remote Aboriginal communities, with plans for expansion of this service to a total of 46 communities by the end of 2017.

Libraries also provide access to PCs, printers, photocopiers and charging stations. Some of the larger library services also provide more advanced services such as access to 3D printers, laptop lending services and iPads.

The larger library services support the use of technology through a range of formal learning programs, for both adults and children (e.g. code clubs).

Some libraries are also able to provide informal technology learning support through staff assistance with both devices and online services, including e-government services.

FLINT Aboriginal Makerspace at Alice Springs

Alice Springs Public Library is keen for the local community not to be just consumers of digital technologies, but to be creators of it. IDX Flint is a program that sparks the interest, ideas and talent of young Aboriginal people in making digital technology, and provides training and workshops on topics such as robotics, 3D printing and drone flying.

Computer rooms in remote communities

Over the last seven years the partnership between Northern Territory Library and CAYLUS has delivered internet connectivity and computer rooms into many central Australian Aboriginal communities. These community spaces have enabled skills development, literacy and numeracy, access to internet banking and government services and self-directed learning for all ages – and not least, a fun way for kids to engage with the wider world.

Lajamanu Library

Outcomes from consultation

Access to internet and technology is regarded as a critical part of public library services. The consultation process found that "many members of the public [have] a strong desire for unlimited and improved Wi-Fi connectivity in public library locations."

Removal of daily time limits on usage, faster connections and greater data allowances were all highlighted.

Access to more up to date technology is sought. In many cases this related to speed and reliability of computers, but for library services that provide gaming, access to newer gaming consoles and recently released games was considered a priority for younger audiences.

The consultation also found that "importance was placed on the role of public libraries in the delivery of computer, device and other digital literacy training.

The growing role of technology in everyday life was highlighted as significant, with members of the public, particularly in more senior age groups, acknowledging that increased access to training and assistance in this field would improve their ability to undertake everyday activities such as banking, access to government services and communicating with friends and relatives."

(*Public Consultation Report*, p.19)

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

6. Continue to improve the scope and quality of community internet connectivity.

7. Continue to develop innovative technology learning programs, both for younger audiences and for other members of the community who wish to improve their digital skills.

The Northern Territory Library and CAYLUS have partnered to deliver internet connectivity and computer rooms into many central Australian Aboriginal communities

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

The role of public libraries

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.

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

> "Libraries contribute to the health prevention agenda"

Public libraries have the capacity to support personal development and wellbeing. They do this through their use and provision of library resources, staff and facilities. At the library people can:

- access authoritative information (independently or with the support of library staff) that they need to live, work, learn and play

- access information that supports health and wellness (e.g. learning about medical conditions, finding health care providers, assessing health insurance options)

- manage their personal finance and business matters (e.g. online banking, paying bills, making purchases online, contacting tradespeople)

- read for pleasure and enjoy a wide choice of reading, viewing or listening material

- meet friends and people with common interests

- talk to other library users and library staff

- relax in a quiet welcoming environment

- be somewhere safe, be where there are other people, and be somewhere cool on a hot day or warm on a cold day.

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p82

Current services

Territory public libraries contain extensive collections of over 400,000 print items, digital magazines and eBooks, DVDs and CDs, for recreational activity and for self-directed personal development.

Libraries also provide a range of recreational programs for both children and adults, from school holiday activities to talks and film nights.

Free and accessible community spaces also provide community benefit through the capacity to relax in a welcoming environment out of the weather.

Seed Library at Katherine

The Katherine Seed Library's primary focus is on providing free and easy access to viable seeds so that as many people as possible are encouraged to grow and enjoy healthy organic food. Community members donate seeds and seedlings to the seed library, which are "loaned" to library members who then return new seeds to the library after harvest.

Outcomes from consultation

Library collections remain at the heart of the services provided to the community, and are used for recreation as well as learning.

Extensive feedback was received about library collections: a desire for larger collections, and more up to date and varied collections of both print and digital material, especially within smaller libraries. Particular emphasis was placed on the availability of materials in languages other than English.
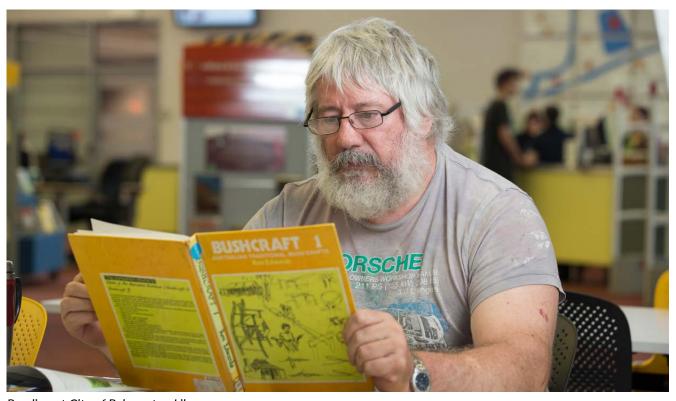
Books, newspapers, magazines and audio-visual resources were all highlighted as critical resources. Print remains the preferred format for many people, and audio-visual resources are a particularly high priority for Aboriginal communities.

Digital collections are valued as a supplement to print collections rather than as a replacement.

Library spaces are also important from a recreational and relaxation perspective, and there is strong community demand for quiet and reflective spaces within libraries as well as more active spaces, though it is acknowledged that separation of different areas is challenging in smaller libraries.

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

8. Review library collection strategies, particularly to increase the amount of material in community languages and to increase the scale and variety of collections available in smaller libraries.

9. Partner with community health care centres and experts to deliver learning and information sessions.

Reading at City of Palmerston Library

STRONGER AND MORE CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

The role of public libraries

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

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 groups and uses.

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

They host exhibitions telling local stories or highlighting the work of local authors, artists, musicians and community groups.

Public libraries around the world are increasingly enabling the development of creativity within their communities by providing access to creative spaces and tools such as recording studios, specialised design and music software, and integrated gallery spaces.

Public libraries help to strengthen communities and build social capital by providing an inclusive forum and support for expression of creativity and cultural identity. They are places that preserve the past, celebrate the present and embrace the future. They do this by:

- ensuring free and equitable access to all people
- providing access to general and community-focused content and collections
- collecting and promoting local cultural content (e.g. historical collections and artefacts, artworks and exhibitions, performance)
- showcasing and celebrating diversity
- promoting acceptance, tolerance and understanding
- promoting democratic principles
- nurturing and supporting community groups

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p83

Interest in Community Stories historical images at Umbakumba Library

Current services

Many public libraries have local history collections that document the stories of their communities. Library services are also helping to keep language and culture strong in many Aboriginal communities through the Community Stories digital keeping place software. Community Stories provides a platform for the digitisation and storage of significant local cultural content and is set up to ensure that communities retain full ownership and control and can manage access to materials in accordance with local requirements.

Larger libraries often run outreach services that deliver books to homebound residents, or programs in health and childcare centres.

Libraries hold a large range of community events and exhibitions that showcase the work of local individuals and community groups, and many of them make spaces available for community groups to hold their own events and workshops.

Community Stories at Milingimbi

Community Stories is a digital keeping place where Aboriginal communities can create, digitise and share together their stories, songs, culture, knowledge and culture.

In 2016, Makarrata Peace Making for Yolngu was held in Milingimbi which offered local Community Library Officers the opportunity to take photos of traditional ceremonies, capturing that knowledge on Community Stories.

The library has reported a surge in interest in historical stories and pictures, and reports that "The kids love nothing better than revisiting these days by looking at the photos".

Community Room at City of Palmerston Library

The Community Room plays an important role in providing opportunities for residents to engage in social, cultural, recreational and educational activities within their community.

Conveniently opening onto Goyder Square the space is in a prime location and was booked 463 times for a wide range of community activities in 2015-16.

Outcomes from consultation

The role of libraries in protecting and celebrating local culture and heritage is particularly important to members of the public, with strong support for the development of local history collections in both physical and digital form.

This role was regarded as especially important in remote Aboriginal communities, who also expressed a preference for audio-visual and photographic formats to document community history and culture, such as recordings of elders and community leaders and of song and dance.

There was also a widespread view that libraries needed to improve the availability and promotion of local history and cultural collections as they are often not widely known about within communities, and that they should be opened up more for local community use rather than just for more formal research purposes.

There is clearly a high demand for libraries to provide spaces that are usable by community groups. This includes both bookable meeting rooms, but also opportunities for community led programming, where libraries make space for individuals and groups to run their own learning and social programs that promote the sharing of skills and knowledge in a more relaxed and informal setting.

Outreach services were also consistently highlighted by members of the public as being particularly relevant in a Northern Territory context to connect with members of the community that may not be able to visit the physical library.

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

10. Explore ways of making local history collections more visible and accessible within communities. This might include exploring more integrated approaches to local community collections through partnerships with other local cultural organisations such as museums, galleries, art centres, and with interstate and international organisations with significant holdings relating to Northern Territory history.

11. Develop and further expand the Community Stories program to provide digital keeping place software to Aboriginal communities.

12. Support the development of creative industries in the Territory by providing spaces, programs, collections and technology that provide Territorians with the opportunity to develop and express their creative skills.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Supporting small business and pathways to jobs

The role of public libraries

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

Libraries support individual businesses through providing workspaces and internet connectivity, particularly valuable services 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.

Public libraries do not generally have a direct role in economic development, but use of library services and programs by different groups within the community can support improved employment and productivity outcomes.

Public libraries can support economic outcomes through:

- running programs to assist people in preparing a CV, writing a resume and applying for jobs

- providing access to the internet to allow people to search and apply for jobs and access to computers to allow people to write job applications

- partnering with local adult and community education providers to support provision of vocational education and training opportunities and job-ready skill development

- running programs in partnership with Council and other organisations to promote small business development and activity

- providing micro and small businesses with access to business and government information

- providing spaces where micro and small business operators can work, research, communicate and collaborate with customers and business partners.

In addition to this, a public library is a significant community institution and employer. It is a focal point for community activity, and can attract tourists who wish to access library services (e.g. internet) or see local history and cultural collections housed within the library.

Research in the UK, New Zealand and several Australian states over the last eight years has also shown that public libraries are a net contributor to the economy with estimates that the return on every $1 invested in public libraries is more than $3 on average.

Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, p85

Current services

Whilst there are a small number of programs targeted at job seekers, it is the availability of internet connectivity and computers in a comfortable public space that provides much of the benefit to people running their own businesses.

These are also the services which are most valued by tourists.

Get That Job program at City of Darwin Libraries

City of Darwin Libraries in collaboration with City of Darwin youth team provide jobs skills training to young people of Darwin through its unique "Get That Job" program.

Designed for young people aged 15-21 years of age to develop the skills for gaining employment, "Get That Job" provides people with the tools to find both long-term and holiday employment, as well as enabling them to better understand their career interests, learn about employment opportunities and gain career experience.

Outcomes from consultation

According to the consultation report, "Technology was considered as a fundamental facilitator for the use of libraries by job seekers, tourists and tourism services, and small business owners."

The consultation process found members of the public using the library to do banking, update business websites and book tourism activities.

There was strong support for the maintenance of fast internet connections and other technology infrastructure.

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

13. Increase partnerships with local employment and business organisations to increase the number of employment related programs within libraries.

OTHER CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Library collections underpin many of these six key outcome areas, providing resources for learning and study, for relaxation and reading for pleasure, for family reading with children, and for finding information about community and government services that address education and health issues.

Considerable feedback was obtained from the consultation regarding library collections. For most people there was a strong desire to see printed materials remain at the heart of library collections.

Aboriginal communities had a different emphasis, and would like to see much stronger collections of audio-visual materials in their local libraries.

There was a strong recognition across the Territory of the value of digital library resources, such as eBooks and online newspapers and magazines, as a supplement to printed collections.

Particular importance was placed on the 24/7 convenience of digital collections, and the capacity for these collections to significantly expand the scope of library collections in smaller communities.

Opening hours was another highly topical issue in the consultation, with a widespread desire for longer opening hours. Whilst this clearly demonstrates how highly communities value access to library services, there are financial constraints to the number of hours each library can open each week.

Nonetheless, further consideration should be given to whether the current opening hours of each library are appropriate to the requirements of the local community.

There are also communities where significant increases in population and demand for library services have made existing library facilities inadequate for local needs, as well as other remote communities that do not currently have libraries but wish to create one.

Local government staff also identified many issues relating to funding and governance of public libraries which needed to be addressed through the development of a new Public Library Funding Agreement between the Northern Territory Government and Local Government.

Future services and opportunities

The following opportunities are identified:

14. Create a public libraries collection development framework which includes the development of an extensive digital library collection that is accessible to all Territorians regardless of location; an increase in collections available in community languages; and an increase in audiovisual collections in Aboriginal community library services.

15. Review library opening hours to ensure maximum fit with community requirements.

16. Develop a new model for the funding of public library services across the Northern Territory that will better support the delivery of the six community outcomes identified in this document, and allow for future growth in library services within the Territory.

17. Investigate opportunities for the provision of library services to currently under-served communities through further extension of community internet services to unserviced communities and by seeking partnerships with other government and community organisations for the delivery of library programs to communities with no library building.

Parliament House
Corner of Bennett St & Mitchell Streets
Darwin NT 0800
Tel: +61 8 8999 7177
Freecall: 1800 019 155
Fax: +61 8 8999 6927
ntl.info@nt.gov.au