



Australian Library and Information Association

NATIONAL VISION AND FRAMEWORK 2010 – 2015

DOCUMENT 1 OF 3: *STRATEGIC OVERVIEW FOR THE LIBRARY SECTOR*

Developed by the Australian Library & Information Association, in partnership with Public Libraries Australia, Friends of Libraries Australia, State and Territory Libraries, ACT Library and Information Services and the state public library associations

This overview is intended for library professionals, to explain the background to the development of the national vision and framework for public libraries and to provide information that can be used in support of local business cases.

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Information
Association



A NATIONAL VISION AND FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Objectives

The objectives of a national vision and framework are to:

- Provide a strategic direction for public libraries at a macro level
- Reshape the public library system for the 21st century
- Raise public libraries higher on the government agenda
- Secure an appropriate level of funding
- Support Australia as a reading nation
- Provide all Australians with access to quality information

Background

The *Little Book of Public Libraries*, published by ALIA in 2009, provides the context for the national vision and framework. The latest figures (2008-2009) show that:

- There are nearly 1500 public library service points across Australia and some 8000 library staff who provide expert guidance.
- Almost 10 million people, around 46% of the population, are public library members, and many more use them as study spaces, for online research, and just to browse the collections, giving a total of more than 110 million visits a year.

- There are over 11,600 PCs in public libraries, the majority of them with internet access.

Why people love libraries

Public libraries are community-owned spaces, providing a safe environment, where everyone is welcome and respected and no-one has to justify their presence. There are quiet areas for study, but there are also fun events and programs.

Libraries offer universal free access to information, knowledge and ideas, in a wide variety of formats, including traditional print material, online content and e-books, and in many different languages. There is expert help on hand if it's needed and most of the services are free.

Public libraries support formal and informal learning, especially reading and literacy, through all stages of life. Very young children are given a better start in life through baby rhyme-time and storytime sessions. Older children can take advantage of study space and homework clubs to improve their performance at school. There are classes for adults and opportunities to learn new skills at any age.

Job seekers find the resources they need to research vacancies and apply online; others use the internet to return information to government; for recreational pursuits, or to communicate with friends and family.

Public libraries are places where people can meet, share and be inspired by each other, for example through reading groups – and if people are unable to travel to their library, it can go to them through mobile libraries, the home library service, and the internet.

Most public libraries have a local history section and often there is a display charting the development of the community or some aspect of local heritage. These are places where cultural identity can be explored and diversity celebrated.

Economic contribution

Research carried out in New South Wales showed that for every \$1 invested in public libraries, there was a return of more than \$4¹.

The 2007 Americans for Libraries Council (ALC) report on library valuation stated, 'A benefit-to-cost ratio of 3:1 or better is common among the library valuation studies ALC reviewed. Because this type of economic analysis is commonly used across industries and businesses, it puts libraries into an evaluative framework that permits comparisons with other types of organizations. When this occurs, public libraries consistently outpace other sectors, such as transportation, health, and education, on the efficient use of tax dollars.'²

¹ Library Council of NSW (2008) *Enriching Communities: the value of public libraries in NSW*, prepared by JL Management Services for the Library Council of NSW

² Susan Imholz and Jennifer Weil Arns, 2007, *Worth Their Weight, An Assessment of the Evolving Field of Library Evaluation*, Americans for Libraries Council, USA: retrieved 14 August 2010 from <http://www.ala.org/ala/research/librarystats/worththeirweight.pdf>



Role and purpose

- Public libraries offer universal free access to information, knowledge and ideas
- They support formal and informal learning, especially literacy, through all stages of life
- They provide a place for people to meet, share and be inspired
- Programs, events and collections are recreational and fun
- Public libraries house, protect and promote community heritage
- By providing access to technology, they address the digital divide

Outcomes

- Public libraries contribute to people's emotional well-being, providing a safe place where everyone is welcome and respected, and resources that give pleasure to individuals and families
- Early literacy programs give very young children a better start in life
- Public libraries enable young people to improve their performance in school and tertiary education, and they

provide opportunities for people to return to study later in life

- They help people develop new skills and find employment
- They address disadvantage through free access to resources on-site, online and through outreach services
- They express cultural identity and celebrate diversity
- They help build safer, stronger, sustainable communities
- They act as an essential portal for e-government services
- They contribute to economic prosperity

Assets

Public libraries fulfill their role and purpose through:

- The expertise, enthusiasm and commitment of library staff
- The quality and depth of their collections
- Their investment in new technologies
- Their relationships and standing within the community
- The provision of an attractive, well-resourced, community-owned space

Issues

However, there are challenges which threaten the foundations of the Australian public library system.

Funding: Australian public libraries are funded by local and state government. In most states, there has been a noticeable shift, with local government having to pay a greater proportion of the cost of running the public library system. This has put pressure on public library finances, and there is the potential for the situation to worsen.

Structure: As public libraries are managed at local and state level, they have not been seen by federal government as having a national role. This has meant that:

- There have been lost opportunities to deliver appropriate nationally-funded initiatives through the public library system
- The federal government has not taken advantage of a nationwide network whose core users are described by other agencies as 'hard-to-reach'
- There has been duplication of effort by public library services in different states and territories, for example in terms of research, program development and improved management systems
- State governments have not been held to account for under-investment in public libraries .



Diversity: Each community has different requirements of its library service; there is no “one-size-fits-all” model. This has an impact on programming and means that national or state/territory initiatives must have built-in flexibility.

Demographics: In common with many other sectors, public libraries have an ageing workforce and there are concerns about where future library staff will come from.

New technologies: Public libraries are seen as technology hotspots and many Australians rely on them for internet access. If they are to continue to fulfill this role and remain relevant to the next generation, the investment in new technologies, for example e-books, must be increased, and further training must be provided for library staff.

Vision

Taking into account the political, economic, environmental, social and technological landscape, the vision for Australian public libraries is that they should be

**United, Collaborative,
Community-focused, Valued**

Internal vision

United: a further step-change in the level of interstate and national cooperation between public library services, cementing the concept of a national public library system

Collaborative: an exciting opportunity for public libraries to work together and in partnership with other organisations, in a way that reflects the spirit of the age

External vision

Community-focused: ensuring that services are appropriate

to the wants and needs of local communities

Valued: providing a service that gives a good return on investment; appeals to users; is admired by non-users and brings libraries to the attention of politicians and their advisers

Framework for action

This vision has been used to develop a workplan for the ALIA Public Libraries Advisory Committee (Document 2), for 2010 and 2011, and it will be the basis for an approach to the Commonwealth Government for funding for specific programs.

**Why we will be asking the
Commonwealth Government
to invest in Australian public
libraries – and how it could do so
in partnership with state and local
governments**

Public libraries are a crucial part of a community's social, cultural and economic capital. Few other services have the multiplicity of roles, user range and diversity, and potential to influence so many lives.

Australia's public libraries build safer, stronger, sustainable communities; promote social inclusion; support early literacy; make citizens healthier; facilitate lifelong learning; assist people to find jobs; promote innovation; provide facilities and skills to expand the digital economy; and contribute to prosperity.

The opportunity

Australians know the value of their public libraries – nearly half of us are public library members and many more use them on a casual basis.

It costs less than \$40 per Australian per year to run the public library system, which means that for less than the cost of one family trip to the cinema, every one of us has access to an endless supply of books, CDs, DVDs, newspapers and magazines.

- Almost 10 million people, around 46% of the population, are public library members, and many more use them as study spaces, for online research, and just to browse the collections, giving a total of more than 110 million visits a year.

With this level of interest, public libraries have the potential to be a shop window for government, providing an inexpensive and highly effective way of reaching a wide cross-section of society.



National vision and framework

Australian public libraries have developed a shared national vision and framework 2010 – 2015 within which there are four national initiatives that fall outside the scope of state and local government funding and require an alternative approach.

These four essential initiatives complement what is already happening at a state and local government level, while providing a much-needed body of work to strengthen and underpin the public library system for the future.

Australian public libraries will be asking federal government to:

1. Endorse, support and contribute funding towards the National Year of Reading 2012, a major campaign driven by public libraries and involving partners in the book trade, publishing, public and private sector
2. Endorse, support and fund a national family literacy initiative, delivered through public libraries in partnership with early years practitioners
3. Confirm the role of the public library system as a major partner in delivering the National Broadband Network
4. Support and fund a national public library development program, identifying innovation in Australia and overseas and within this:
 - a. The provision of guidance for public library managers about new opportunities and new challenges, particularly in the area of technology
 - b. The development of a community engagement profiling toolkit for public library managers to enable libraries across the country to improve the service to their communities
 - c. The maintenance of national standards for public libraries

Program	Government Department	Timing	Submissions to government
1. National Year of Reading 2012	Prime Minister and Cabinet	July 2011 – June 2013	Based on the National Year of Reading scoping document http://www.love2read.org.au/reading-professionals.cfm - submitted November 2010
2. National early childhood reading development initiative	School Education, Early Childhood and Youth	From July 2011	The Big Book Club submission to government January 2010 (not publicly available at this time)
3. National Broadband Network	Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy	Current	http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/national.broadband.html
4. National public library development program	Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	July 2011 – June 2015	To be developed



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Prime Minister & Cabinet	Building a stronger Australia Boosting economic productivity – education revolution and workplace productivity	<p>Public libraries play a critical role for people who lack basic skills. They provide books, support material, and many have expert guidance or offer a venue for adults who need help with reading. They have a valuable role in assisting non-English speaking members of the community to develop English language skills.</p> <p>Improving adult literacy and language ability, teaching people to use computers, providing access to knowledge and information: these are ways in which public libraries help people develop the skills companies need.</p>
	Building a fairer Australia Broadening social inclusion	<p>Public libraries play a major role in developing sustainable, socially-inclusive communities. They are the original ‘street corner universities’ - they are the new ‘village green’.</p> <p>Public libraries are for everyone. They bring people together and foster strong community partnerships, involving local councils, businesses, schools and individual volunteers.</p> <p>Human Libraries is a particularly successful initiative to encourage a greater understanding of the rich multi-cultural nature of our society.</p> <p>Public libraries offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ early literacy and storytelling: early intervention and transition from home to formal learning setting■ an environment which is language rich, stimulating, non-threatening, respectful and welcoming■ quality settings with trained library professionals■ storytelling visits to communities to engage those who may not take part in a more formal setting■ mobile libraries visiting remote and rural communities■ active involvement of the family with parent-child interactions and a partnership approach with professional library staff■ single entry point to e-government services■ providing a range of services to deal with differing needs■ involvement of community in development and delivery of culturally-aware programs, and employment of Indigenous staff■ lifelong learning opportunities■ access for disadvantaged families to job websites, computers and assistance in using them, health information and skills development, thus addressing the digital divide■ programs and resources for non-English speakers■ training for seniors in using the internet■ services to people with a print disability



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
	The Arts Development of a rich and stimulating cultural sector for all Australians	<p>Libraries contribute to the cultural sector through activities that often focus on, but are not exclusively concerned with, books and reading. Public libraries break down barriers, bringing cultural activities into the heart of the community.</p> <p>Public libraries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ promote books and reading, and literacy■ coordinate book clubs and reading groups■ run creative writing programs and workshops■ play host to musical events and the performing arts■ often have gallery and exhibition spaces■ are an important source of sheet music, scores, plays, scripts and other materials required by amateur arts groups■ collect local history material and support research■ are custodians of our cultural heritage and significant items that are held in trust for all Australians■ have a fundamental concern in the preservation of information contained in the published and documentary record in order to ensure enduring access
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	Cybersafety and security We will increase awareness and education and undertake research and consultation to inform policy and deliver programs that better protect Australian internet users	<p>Public libraries are very aware of cybersafety and security issues, particularly for younger users. All public libraries have implemented internet-use policies and publicise these policies widely in their user community.</p> <p>The federal government has emphasised the importance of parental responsibility and education in achieving safe internet access for children. ALIA fully supports this position while ensuring freedom of access to information for all in the community.</p> <p>ALIA has conducted four surveys on internet access in public libraries. The surveys provide current information on how public library internet services are managed, delivered and used in responding libraries.</p> <p>http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/</p> <p>ALIA has collaborated with ACMA in producing cybersafety training guides for library staff and for families as well as training videos and posters. ALIA has also reviewed the list of safe sites for children.</p> <p>ALIA is represented on the Department's Cybersafety Work Group and, as a founder of the Safer Internet Group, is in discussions with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy about internet filtering.</p> <p>Public libraries play a critical role in bridging the digital divide, providing every Australian citizen with free use of computers and access to the internet.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
	<p>Digital economy</p> <p>We will work to further develop Australia's infrastructure, confidence, skills and regulatory settings so that all Australians are able to take full advantage of economic, educational and social opportunities offered by the digital economy</p>	<p>Australia's long-term economic development is closely connected to the ability of all of us to participate in the digital economy and use information in our daily lives.</p> <p>Many people are not sufficiently information literate and with the creation of information and the use of electronic information resources increasing the need for information skills, training has never been more critical.</p> <p>ALIA supports the development of an information infrastructure with libraries as the conduit for a sustainable knowledge economy.</p> <p>Public libraries offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ use of computers and assistance in developing these skills■ free access to the internet■ promotion of awareness of cybersafety and security, particularly for younger users■ online homework assistance for students in many public libraries■ computers for unemployed people to produce professional CVs and apply online for jobs■ senior Australians the opportunity to learn new computer skills■ an essential delivery point for e-government services including online government forms not available in print
	<p>National Broadband Network</p>	<p>Public libraries provide internet access to people without computers or internet access at home. Access to the internet, and particularly to broadband, is an extremely important enabler for the delivery of better health, education, community and emergency services in regional, rural and remote Australia, particularly as many government services are increasing online service delivery to clients. Public libraries offer community training to enable people to learn to access the internet safely and effectively.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
School Education, Early Childhood and Youth	Education To build and promote individual development through equitable and accessible education from early childhood services to skills training and higher education	Public libraries help give our children the best start in early literacy and lifelong learning, with support for reading such as pre-schooler storytimes, early literacy programs, and ALIA's public campaigns, National Simultaneous Storytime and Summer Reading Club.
Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations	Workforce participation To increase workforce participation and promote fair and productive work practices National economy and skills development To develop national economic potential and capability that builds future economic prosperity and international competitiveness through skills development and employment growth	<p>Information and literacy skills are vital. Recent research has found that they are associated with individual and business success. The habit of daily reading, for instance, overwhelmingly correlates with better reading skills and higher academic achievement. On the other hand, poor reading skills correlate with lower levels of financial and job success.</p> <p>Public libraries enable unemployed people to search for vacancies in newspapers, magazines, and through websites, and apply for jobs online. They also enable people to explore new study, skills and career opportunities.</p> <p>Public libraries employ a major workforce: there are approximately 25,000 library workers in the library and information sector.</p> <p>Public libraries play a crucial role for people who lack basic skills. They provide books and support material, and many have expert guidance or offer a venue for adults who need help with reading. They have a valuable role in assisting non-English speaking members of the community to develop English language skills and through this, gain employment. Many libraries are at the frontline, providing access to the International English Language Testing System.</p> <p>Public libraries help people develop the skills companies need by improving adult literacy and language ability, teaching people to use computers, and providing access to knowledge and information.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities	<p>The environment</p> <p>The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved</p> <p>More efficient and sustainable use of Australia's water resources</p>	<p>Libraries provide a shop window in nearly every community for government and environmental agencies to promote messages about the wise use of natural resources.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	<p>Families in Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing families' economic wellbeing • Providing support to all families in priority areas such as the education and health care systems • Supporting Australia's carers and strengthening family relationships <p>Providing support for particularly vulnerable families</p> <p>Participation Improving the lives of Australians by creating opportunities for economic and social participation by individuals, families and communities</p> <p>Closing the gap Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians</p> <p>Safety and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering family policy that best fosters the development, well-being and safety of children • Promoting women's safety, economic security and participation 	<p>Public libraries support working families.</p> <p>All public libraries target people who lack basic skills. They provide books, support material, and many have expert guidance or offer a venue for adults who need help with reading. They have a valuable role in assisting non-English speaking members of the community to develop English language skills.</p> <p>They enable unemployed people to search for vacancies in newspapers, magazines, and through websites, and apply for jobs online. They also enable people to explore new study, skills and career opportunities.</p> <p>Public libraries support kindergartens and schools with activities such as pre-schooler storytimes, early literacy programs, Summer Reading Club and Premiers' Reading Challenges. For older children, there are homework clubs and for adults, there are opportunities to learn new skills.</p> <p>Public libraries strengthen family relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public libraries provide people with a refuge from the stress and expense of modern living. ■ They are places where parents, grandparents, carers, young people and children can share the excitement of discovery, whether it's through books, the internet or activities. ■ Public libraries provide a free family outing with something for everyone. <p>Libraries foster strong community partnerships, involving local councils, businesses, schools and individual volunteers.</p> <p>Public libraries are for everyone. They bring people together and celebrate our Indigenous heritage. Indigenous Knowledge Centres progress the social inclusion agenda in regional and remote communities.</p> <p>The public library is a place where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and people feel secure.</p> <p>Young people can find out more about world views and experiences, safely within the covers of a book or via the internet. Vulnerable members of society can find a peaceful haven and gain inspiration from what they discover, again through books or the internet.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Health and Ageing	<p>Healthier citizens Focusing the health and aged care system more on healthy lifestyles, prevention and early intervention and a 'best practice' handling of chronic disease</p> <p>Preparing for future challenges Health, ageing and hospitals</p>	<p>Public libraries make citizens healthier.</p> <p>Reading is known to contribute to people's personal well-being and all public libraries have information and advice about wider health concerns, including obesity, cancer, mental health issues, the effects of smoking and the importance of maintaining an active mind as well as an active body.</p> <p>Future demographics will place an increased focus on the role of public libraries. Older people read more and are more frequent visitors, with those over 65 visiting libraries on average five times more a year than younger age groups.</p>
Human Services	<p>Disaster recovery Provide effective leadership to support Portfolio agencies in responding to natural disasters in a rapid and flexible manner</p>	<p>As was demonstrated in the aftermath of the 2009 Queensland/New South Wales flooding and the Victorian bushfires, public libraries play an important part in helping those affected to rebuild their communities.</p>
Immigration and Citizenship	<p>Diversity Enhance the delivery of humanitarian, settlement, Australian citizenship and cultural diversity programs</p>	<p>Public libraries are for everyone and they celebrate diversity.</p> <p>All public libraries perform a critical role for people who lack basic skills. They provide books, support material, and many have expert guidance or offer a venue for adults who need help with reading. They have a valuable role in assisting non-English speaking members of the community to develop English language skills.</p> <p>Human Libraries is a particularly successful initiative to encourage a greater understanding of the rich multi-cultural nature of our society.</p>



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	Infrastructure Promote economic, social and regional development by enhancing Australia's infrastructure performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring information about relevant Government policies and programs is disseminated effectively to regional Australia• promoting efficient and effective local government which fosters a strong sense of community	Public libraries build safer, stronger, sustainable communities. Planners and developers recognise this unifying role and site public libraries at the centre of new buildings and regeneration projects. Public libraries are already an essential delivery point for e-government services, and they provide a physical shop window in nearly every community for the government to promote key messages.
Climate Change	Natural resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions• adapting to the impacts of climate change we cannot avoid• helping to shape a global solution	Libraries provide a shop window in nearly every community for government and environmental agencies to promote messages about the wise use of natural resources.



How libraries fit with government priorities

Department	Objectives	How public libraries are delivering these goals
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	<p>Commercialisation, collaboration, and investment in innovation</p> <p>As part of the Government's innovation policy agenda the Department will continue to focus on the linkage between innovation and growth, stimulate collaboration, improve data collection and analysis, and seek to maximise the return on public sector investment in research and innovation</p> <p>Skills development to meet business needs</p> <p>Implementing the Government's skills shortages agenda</p>	<p>Companies, especially those developing new technologies, need reliable market information, but it can be prohibitively expensive for some smaller businesses. Public libraries subscribe on their behalf to statistical information, news and business intelligence, and online directories.</p> <p>In addition, special and university libraries give access to valuable records and books (print and online) relating to all aspects of commerce and science.</p> <p>Public libraries help people develop the skills companies need by improving adult literacy and language ability, teaching people to use computers, and providing access to knowledge and information.</p>

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