



2007 State Election Public Library Policy Platform

1. Executive Summary

The platform outlines library funding issues affecting Local Government and recommends NSW Government action.

Background:

LGSA's *Policy Platform for the 2007 State Election* emphasises that local communities require community facilities, services and activities for their health, welfare and wellbeing. Amongst the measures to achieve this LGSA recommends that the NSW Government: 'Acknowledge the importance of public libraries and enhance funding to improve library services.' (Projected additional cost to the NSW Government: \$26m per annum when fully implemented).

The NSW Public Library Network is a cohesive, state-wide network based on cooperation between council public libraries and the State Library of NSW. Local Government meets 90% of the costs of the Network.

Current Position:

The NSW Government has in place a range of supports to the NSW Public Library Network ranging from legislative support in the *Library Act 1939* & regulation, through Public Libraries Grants & Subsidies of \$25.5m per year to logistical support from the State Library.

The NSW Liberals/National Coalition policy recognises the integral role that public libraries have in the educational, economic and social needs of the community and provides for an additional \$28 million dollars over the next four years.¹

Comment:

Experts and commentators agree the NSW Public Library Network is under considerable pressure. Public libraries are under increasing pressure to re-vitalise facilities, collections, electronic infrastructure and programs. These pressures come in many well documented guises including changing demographics (including population ageing, new child and youth usage trends), community demand for a wider variety of library services and programming, an increased variety of collection formats, new technologies and e-government.

To maximise the effectiveness of the NSW Public Library Network a significantly enhanced level of NSW Government funding is required. Only with improved funding will the Network deliver programs that meet community and government service delivery expectations.

Recommendation:

That the Government, Opposition and other candidates standing for election commit to:

- NSW Government significantly increasing the State's share of the total funding to local public library services to ensure it matches international and national benchmarks and meets unmet community demand for services,
- by enhancing the budget item *Grants and subsidies - Library services by Councils and other organisations* by \$5.2m per year for five years to reach a new recurrent target of \$51.5m per year.

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Date: December 2006

¹ NSW Liberals/National Coalition *Investing in Our Public Libraries*. 2006

2. Introduction

The LGSA *Policy Platform for the 2007 State Election: Community Well-being* states that “Local communities require a sense of identity, and ‘community’ facilities, services and activities to promote their physical and social health, welfare and wellbeing”.

Amongst the measures to achieve this outcome LGSA recommends that the State Government: “Acknowledge the importance of public libraries to local communities and enhance funding to improve public library services. (Projected additional cost to the State Government: \$26M per annum when fully implemented).”

This paper puts the case for enhanced funding. It is a collaborative project between:

- Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW (LGSA)
- Public Libraries NSW - Country and Public Libraries NSW - Metropolitan (PLNSW) formerly known as Country Public Libraries Association (CPLA) and Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (MPLA).

The Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW are the peak bodies for NSW Local Government. Together the two Associations represent the 152 general purpose councils in NSW. Special-purpose county councils and Regional Aboriginal Land Councils are also members. LGSA present councils’ views to Australian and NSW Governments, promotes Local Government to the community and provides specialist advice and services to councils.

PLNSW, Country and Metropolitan represent the interests of public libraries and their users across the state. PLNSW has a vital interest in improving library services and access to information resources for all people through a range of initiatives, joint ventures and partnerships. Over recent years the Associations have worked in close partnership with other key stakeholders towards the further development of the New South Wales Public Library Network so that libraries can take a lead role in developing informed and knowledgeable communities.

The NSW Public Library Network is a cohesive, state-wide network based on cooperation between Country and Metropolitan public libraries and the State Library of NSW.

To maximise the effectiveness of the NSW Public Library Network an enhanced level of NSW Government funding is required. With increased funding the Network can achieve programs that will meet community and government service delivery expectations and support community development. Over the next 3-5 years public libraries will come under increasing pressure to re-vitalise programs, facilities and electronic infrastructure and offer more Internet based services.

So pressing is the current funding situation that it is essential that the current levels of investment in the public library network as a whole are retained and increase. The NSW Public Library Network and the LGSA are committed to maintaining the levels of local funding, to gaining significant additional State support, and to ensuring the ongoing value management of the Network.

This proposal builds on existing services and programs, but will enable the network to provide services that meet demand, reduce user dissatisfaction and meet target benchmarks.

3. Position Statement

We believe that:

- the right to free and equitable access to basic information is a cornerstone of a democratic society;
- public libraries are centres for free and equitable access to basic information and thus for learning, literature and cultural activities critical to the development of informed vibrant communities; and
- public libraries are safe, convenient and accessible community spaces.

These points fit the philosophy embodied in the NSW *Library Act 1939*. They are also reflected in LGSA Policy Statements relating to Local Government and public libraries (see Attachment 1).

3. Public Libraries in the 21st Century

Changing demographics, community demand for a wider variety of library services and programming, an increased variety of collection formats, new technologies and e-government, have all created challenges for the delivery of library services in the 21st century and increased pressure on library budgets.

The State Library of Victoria 2005 found that:

Libraries make a fundamental contribution to our communities in four key areas:

- they provide free public access to computer and information technology resources
- by helping people locate information they create better informed communities
- they run programs that promote lifelong learning and literacy in the community
- they build connections between individuals, groups and government

Public libraries are no longer solely storehouses of information. They play an important educational, cultural and social role within the community.

It has also been shown in a variety of reports that public libraries provide a direct economic benefit to individuals and to the community (see McClure et al (2001); Holt, Elliott & Moore (1999); Barron et al (2005), Morris, Sumsion & Hawkins (1999/2000) and the British Library). The 'spin-off' effect for the local community has long been recognised. The ability to borrow books enables direct financial savings, for example, in the pursuit of interests and do-it-yourself maintenance. The library assists people to develop their skills. Personal ownership of computers and Internet connections has, in many instances, been the direct result of exposure to their potential within the public library.

Emerging trends impacting on public libraries include:

▪ Public libraries as places of social capital

NSW local public libraries facilitate social cohesion. They are one of the few public services that are available to the entire community, without exception. They provide public meeting places and shared spaces that are welcoming, accepting and safe. In many regional, rural and remote communities the public library is one of the last, if not the last, community service and meeting place that is available to everyone.

Public libraries are well established and recognised community hubs that offer insurance against the information and digital divides.

▪ **Ageing of the NSW Community**

In the coming decade, growth in usage will be largely concentrated among the age groups above 45 years and in particular those above 55 years. NSW's population aged 65 and older is projected to increase from 907,000 at June 2004 to 1.5 million in 2021 and to 2.5 million in 2051. Financial limitations for many of the baby-boomers due to retire in this period will drive demand for increased information services and cultural and recreational activities provided by publicly funded institutions.

LGSA began encouraging member councils to take population ageing seriously by commissioning research that led to the subsequent publication of *Planning the local government response to ageing and place* (2004). This paper is intended to offer a framework to assist councils in beginning to plan for the population ageing unique to their area by:

- i) providing information on what is happening with general population trends and access to population projection information for each local government area
- ii) providing information on the existing and likely diversity amongst older people
- iii) providing evidence on what population ageing means for all roles that councils performs and
- iv) encouraging councils to examine their numbers and proportion of older people and their rate of population ageing, in conjunction with the evidence on impacts, to identify what roles they may need to change and when.

The challenge for libraries was highlighted in this report. Specific services and collections for older residents and people with a disability are already becoming increasingly important, particularly in coastal NSW which is experiencing the fastest aging of the population. These include a high demand for large print collections and specialist resources and technology for people with a disability.

It is also apparent that changing demographics will result in far greater demand for Home Library Services both to individuals and nursing homes. The number of library services placing caps on Home Library membership because they cannot meet demand is likely to grow exponentially.

▪ **Students and Youth Culture**

Young people are significant users of public libraries, major consumers of information technology and hold social attitudes that are often different from other groups in our community. Education approaches have changes and the NSW Board of Studies now promotes co-operative learning, research and group interaction. For libraries, this has had a marked effect with many libraries now filled each afternoon with young people undertaking research projects, working on joint projects with fellow students, and discussing project approaches and outcomes.

Primary students use the public library to access information and for direct curriculum support in terms of fiction authors from school reading lists. Libraries run story telling and school holiday activities designed to encourage reading and literacy. The public library provides the initial pre school building block of introduction to reading and books for teachers to build on once the child reaches school. They also provide collections and staffing resources to support State Government initiatives such as the Premier's Reading Challenge.

Secondary students use public libraries to access information when their schools are closed or when school library resources do not meet their needs. Homework help desks are being created in many libraries to provide further help directly linking into the school curriculum during out of school hours.

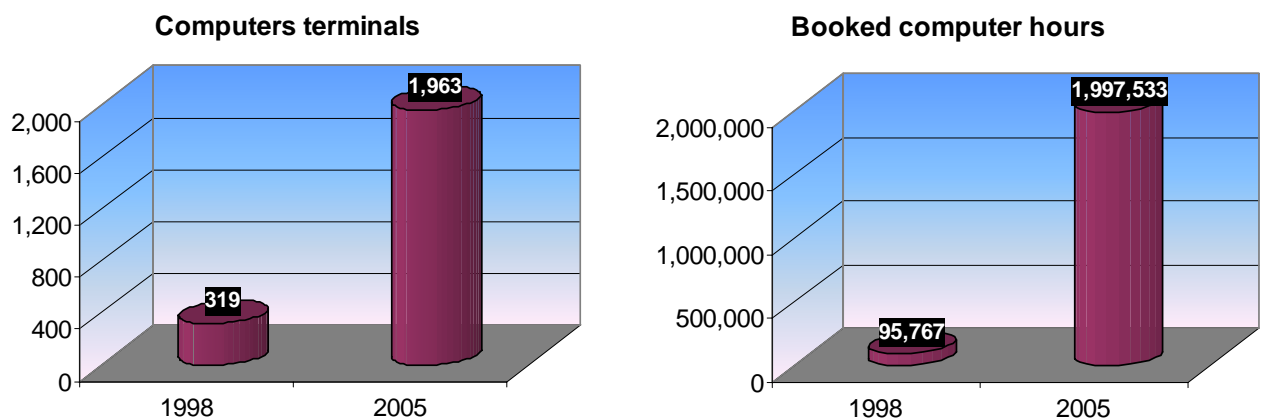
At the Tertiary level many rural students or distance education students rely on the local public library to provide course support material and Internet access for course availability information or for information required for assignments.

- **Lifelong learning**

As well as playing a part in the formal education process public libraries are increasingly finding themselves caught up in the growth of lifelong learning. This philosophy recognises that people continue to learn and want to learn throughout their lives. Our libraries support this through the provision of non fiction material accessible to the layperson, facilities for classes and support material and services for book clubs.

- **New Information Technologies**

As computer and Internet access at home has increase so too has the provision and usage of computers in NSW public libraries as can be seen in the following tables.



Total booked hours for computers has increased more than twenty-fold and the number of terminals required to meet this demand has increased six-fold (State Library of New South Wales, 2006).

The New South Wales Government, through NSW.net and the *connect.nsw* strategy has provided an electronic information network linking Councils and public libraries throughout NSW. This enables the community to access many Government electronic services free of charge regardless of their location. The network provides access to the Internet, selected databases, and in many instances, email facilities.

Though it was once envisaged that the new technologies may allow libraries to become smaller, there has actually been a need for additional space to locate the technology, which includes computer training rooms, large areas for public access catalogues, dedicated computerised work stations for staff and additional storage for audiovisual material and CD-ROMS. Again, another stressor on already stretched budgets.

The 2005 edition of “People Places” states that what is important for library stakeholders, is *not what is going to happen with information technology but rather making sure that public libraries are ready and able to take full advantage of the opportunities that are presented by technology.* This requires a vision and a commitment to providing dedicated infrastructure that will provide the technological services need by the community, as they become available.”

▪ **E-government**

Australian government agencies are making increasing use of the Internet for service delivery. Public libraries in rural and metropolitan NSW provide public access to the Internet and are experiencing increasing demand from clients who want to access government services online.

Public Libraries +eGovernment 2004 reports that most libraries report increased client use of individual government websites, both for content information and process or transaction based purposes. As a result, government online services have created a largely invisible demand on public library services

This exercise in cost shifting has resulted from government agencies putting their services online to provide better access to their users and to streamline their own operations. Most agencies do not understand that their actions place extra burdens on public libraries including:

- assistance to access web sites, manage booking systems
- collection of fees for printing etc
- supervision of terminals
- technical assistance
- preparation of finding aids.

The resourcing implications for public libraries have been considerable and it is anticipated that the trend will continue.

▪ **Our multicultural society**

Almost one in five people in NSW were born in countries where English is not the first language. In some communities in Sydney, more than half of the residents were born in non English speaking countries. Libraries have responded to the increasing demand from diverse and emerging communities through the introduction of LOTE collections and literacy classes.

Public Libraries promote social inclusion. They are accessible to all; they celebrate diversity and promote community development practices such as community engagement and participation. They reflect local community identity and through programmed activities, can provide social connection for users.

▪ **Our Indigenous community**

In many communities, public libraries play an important role in the promotion of Aboriginal culture, with many holding special collections of books, audiovisual materials and periodicals about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Several public libraries located in communities with large Indigenous populations are working to ensure that they are attractive, welcoming and relevant to all members of their community.

The incorporation of Aboriginal art and cultural activities into public libraries has also played a major role in encouraging indigenous users and must continue in order to facilitate the increased use of public library resources by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

▪ **Changing structure of NSW Coastal and Rural Communities**

Coastal NSW is expected to grow at a faster rate than the rest of NSW to 2051 (Mackintosh and Parr 2004). There is particular growth in the retired aged group population but also amongst young families. Servicing the demands of these diverse needs, in areas where public transport is often absent and communities are dispersed provides major challenges.

Coastal libraries have a higher than average turn over of stock which obviously impacts on library budgets as material wears out more quickly (Jones 2006).

- **Impacts of urban consolidation**

The policy of compact cities in order to reduce the spread of the Sydney region is made possible through increasing housing densities in strategic locations throughout Greater Sydney, the Central Coast, Illawarra and Hunter regions.

Libraries feel the impact of this urban consolidation, particularly in areas with a concentration of unit development. There is clear evidence of increased demand for study space and reading areas in public libraries because the lack of available space at home.

4. Why other Government spheres might want to respond

The NSW Government position

The previous Premier announced enhanced funding for public libraries just prior to the 2003 election. This strategy was planned to lift annual library funding from under \$21 million to nearly \$26 million a year in 2006-07. This meant the annual allocation would have risen by over 50% from the \$16.7 million in 1995.

Since that time the Commonwealth Grants Commission determinations resulted in a significant shortfall for the NSW Government which had to be managed through the 2004-05 budget process. As a result, savings were applied consistently across all NSW Government agencies. In this context, public library funding has been effected like other government funding. Nonetheless funding for public libraries continued to increase over what it could have been.

The State Budget allocation for the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies in 2006/07 is \$24,551,010. This is a reduction from the \$24,799,000 of 2005/06 as a result of the 1% Budget reduction for 2006/07.

To manage budget reductions and population increases the Library Council decided that the funds needed be taken from the Library Development Grant funds. However, Library Council noted this reduction in the Library Development Grant funds is not optimal as the grants play an important role in the ongoing development of public libraries. Library Development Grant fund is just over \$3 million. With the impact of the Budget cuts and the increasing population there will be approximately \$839,000 less funding available for this program in 2007/08.

From another perspective, the NSW State Government and the LGSA have signed their third Cultural Accord, which includes a mooted new Arts NSW funding program. The Accord runs from 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2008. *Cultural Accord 3* mentions public libraries in the following way:

- Local and State Government will advocate for all spheres of government to work together to develop and provide up-to-date, easy to use and accessible public library and information services for their communities.
- In recognition of the important cultural collections held by Local Governments, to jointly encourage greater integration of the operation of Local Government cultural facilities including libraries, museums and art galleries.

Finally, the State Plan launched in November 2006 can be supported through public libraries. Public libraries are effective avenues for the achievement of many of the goals in the State Plan, including the following:

- 'Invest in parenting support to help parents develop the skills they need to instil respect and responsibility in their children' through Parenting collections, Early reading and literacy programs (e.g. Let's Read and Book Start) and Premier's Reading Challenge
- 'Increase the involvement of young people in community and cultural activities' through Homework help centres, Reading clubs, Youth selection panels for library resources and Youth-targeted programs and events
- 'Support local councils, community groups and our schools to initiate cross-cultural and inter-faith activities' through Indigenous and cross-cultural collections and programs, English as a Second Language (ESL) collections and services
- 'Encourage participation in community and cultural activities (e.g. sports, volunteering, arts)' through Friends of the Library organised activities, Meeting facilities, exhibition spaces and community noticeboards, and Access to Local and Family History information

- ‘More active promotion of events, sports and community and cultural facilities’ through established and effective links with local media and community groups
- ‘Improved access to artistic and cultural activities’ through Extensive opening hours including evenings and weekends and Wide network of access points across rural and metropolitan NSW, including mobile services to remote communities

The Opposition position

The Opposition position is set out in the NSW Liberals/National Coalition policy document *Investing in Our Public Libraries*.

This policy recognises the integral role that public libraries have in the educational, economic and social needs of the community and the community’s right to access a high quality library service.

This policy provides for an additional \$28 million dollars over the next four years to:

- purchase additional resources;
- improve access to the Internet;
- improve infrastructure, technical and professional support and development for staff;
- increase access to programs and services that target students; and
- allow for the development of partnerships.

General financial capacity

Local Government’s financial capacity to maintain existing services and infrastructure is already stretched. In many instances councils are being forced to cut services and defer critical infrastructure expenditure.

This has been confirmed and rapidly accelerated by the recent Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government, chaired by Professor Percy Allan. The Inquiry has found that there are a number of pressing problems that need urgent attention. The biggest of these is a huge backlog in infrastructure renewals (over \$6 billion), which is expected to grow to almost \$21 billion within 15 years if the annual renewals gap (the difference between the rate at which councils’ physical assets are depreciating and the rate at which they are being replaced) stays at around \$500 million per annum.

This report concludes that NSW Local Government needs to find an extra \$900 million a year to overcome its infrastructure crisis. \$400 million of this would go in debt charges to service a \$5.3 billion debt raising to overcome the infrastructure renewals backlog problem (excluding water and sewer assets). The remaining \$500 million would be used to close the annual gap between what is spent on renewing assets and what is actually consumed in assets as measured by their depreciation.

This extra \$900 million a year does not take account of the additional infrastructure needed in future to accommodate a larger population that is shifting to new growth centres. Nor does it take account of the higher standards of service, and therefore public assets, that people increasingly demand of their councils.

Further, it does not address the special problems of rural councils, which, because of their vast road networks and narrow rate bases, will only survive with increased grant funding.

The Inquiry found that 25% of NSW councils are financially unsustainable into the future under current policy settings. A further 50% of councils are at risk and only around 25% are in a strong position.

The current situation is the result of several factors including:

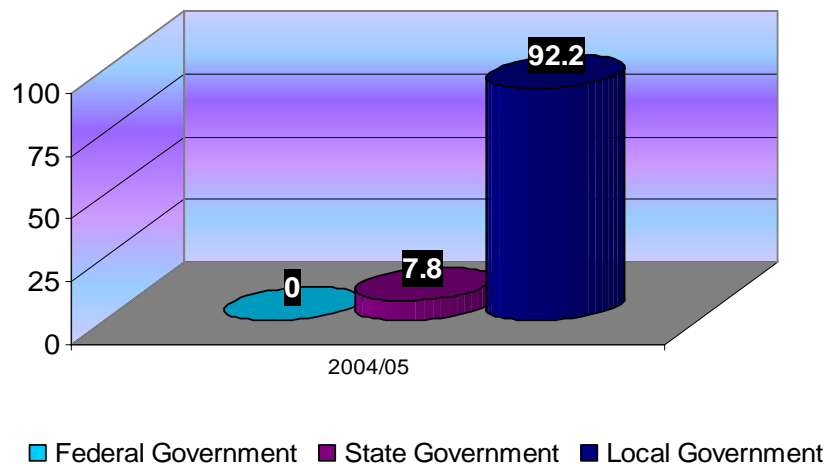
- cost shifting
- rising community expectations
- increased standards and compliance requirements
- revenue constraints such as rate pegging
- the inadequacy of financial support from Australian and NSW Governments.

It should be noted that Local Government only receives 5% of national public financial resources (total taxation collected by all 3 spheres of government).

Given the financial situation, the capacity of many councils to continue to provide, maintain and develop public library facilities, collections and services is under threat. If Local Government is to be in a position to maintain existing public libraries and develop new library services to meet growing demands amidst all the other competing council functions, it will need increased general financial assistance from the Australian and NSW Governments.

Revenue Sources

Public libraries in NSW are principally funded by Local Government with an annual subsidy received from the State Government. Additional State Government funds are available through a competitive grants program. No library funding is received directly from the Australian Government. The situation in 2004/05 is demonstrated below:



State Government Funding

In 1980 state government funding accounted for 23.6% of the total funding required to operate the NSW public library network. Since that time this contribution has declined significantly and now comprises approximately 7.8% of total funding.

Year	State Government Expenditure		Total Local Government Expenditure	
	Total	% of whole	Total	% of whole
1980	\$8.5M	23.6%	\$27.5M	76.4%
1990	\$13.1M	12.6%	\$90.9M	87.4%
1998/99	\$16.7M	8.0%	\$191.8M	92.0%
2002/03	\$21M	8.8%	\$217.3M	91.2%
2003/04	\$22M	8.4%	\$240M	91.6%
2004/05	\$22.4M	7.8%	\$265M	92.2%

At the same time membership of public libraries increased from 35% to 48% of the total NSW population. This represents a 37% increase in membership levels. During the same

period the state government levels of funding as a percentage of the total funding dropped by nearly 70%.

Since 1980 local government expenditure has increased by a staggering 864% while during the same period state government funding has increased by 164%.

The demands on public libraries are increasing as demonstrated by library visitation statistics. The ABS records a 4% growth in the attendance of people aged 18 and over between 1999 (38.1%) and 2002 (42%).

In its report *Libraries in the Online Environment* the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and Legislation Committee recommended:

“Where there is shared responsibility for public library funding between state and local government the Committee recommends that the states significantly increase their share of public library funding, moving towards matching local government levels of contribution.”

Budget case 1: Avoiding negative implications

Without adequate funding, there is a serious risk that libraries will fall behind in meeting community demand and individual councils may indeed choose to opt out of restrictions placed upon them by the *Library Act*, thereby forgoing the subsidy funding but opening the way to a situation in which core library services, even the provision of library materials, will be charged for.

By postponing the decision to address the inadequate funding, the cost of rectifying it is escalating and decades of investment by the State and Local Government will be compromised.

The following are all possible outcomes:

- Failure to comply with *Library Act 1939*, and *Library Regulation 2005*, through inability to maintain free services as required by the Act.
- Reduced capacity to meet current community demand, and increasing levels of unmet demand
- Fragmentation of the Public Library Network, resulting in loss of network advantages, loss of value for money
- Inequitable distribution of funds for library and information services between State and Local Government?
- Increasing threats to the sustainability of small communities
- Inequitable access to library and information services across the state
- Impairment of the educational and social roles of the Network

LGSA cannot hope to work in cooperation with the NSW Public Library Network, to develop and disseminate information resources on cultural planning and to strengthen local and regional cultural networks, in the present context where public libraries do not have the resources to tackle this type of work.

There cannot be increased collaboration between local and regional cultural services and greater access to information, training and networking for cultural organisations, if public libraries are not given the finance to undertake the role.

The relationship between Local Government, State Government and the State Library is seriously compromised by the present level of State Government funding of 7.8%, a contribution too low to enable the Network to meet its commitments as a partnership and that undermines the viability of the Network.

Given the increasing shift from State Government to Local Government in the funding of public libraries there is a real threat that some LGAs may withdraw from the *Library Act* and charge for services. This is probable in rural NSW where citizens are already disadvantaged by isolation and an ongoing reduction in community infrastructure. Rural citizens already have access to lower levels of library service provision.

Budget case 2: positive outcomes for NSW Government from greater Investment

The NSW Public Library Network can clearly demonstrate how increased funding will be used to achieve appropriate service outcomes for the people of NSW.

The Network has a strong track record in measuring and reporting service and performance levels. For almost 40 years the Network has collected statistical and other information to monitor and report on service delivery and development. The results are published annually in *Public Library Statistics*.

The Public Libraries Evaluation Group, established in 1989, works with the NSWPLN and the State Library to foster and promote evaluation methodologies to improve the quality, accountability and profile of public library services. The 1993 *Local Government Act* further developed management within councils and their public libraries.

The Network has undertaken quantitative research for many years. This is now complemented by an increasing emphasis on qualitative research, as demonstrated by numerous client research projects and user/non-user surveys. Such an example is *Sustaining Communities, Measuring the value of public libraries*, a research project currently being coordinated by the NSW Public Library Network Research Committee.

The Network will continue to develop and extend this commitment to ensure that the State Government is in receipt of current qualitative and quantitative data to track the progress and development of the NSW Public Library Network and the return on its investment.

In return for State Government assistance to promote, provide and maintain free and equitable public library services, NSW Local Government guarantees further commitment to social justice agendas, cultural development, education and training and community access.

The NSW Public Library Network is a high value, high profile, widely distributed and cost efficient means of ensuring that the community has equitable access to library and information services. However, it is a network that is in immediate financial need and this should be addressed by the State Government without delay.

5. Conclusion

The public library is present in rural, coastal and metropolitan communities, both large and small. It offers *all* citizens a safe venue in which they can pursue their social, cultural, education, leisure and information needs. The public library in NSW is a much loved and used resource with some 50% of the population registered borrowers and many more casual users.

As well as being of importance to the community there is an increasing demand for programs that:

- Provide training in how to use and access information via the Internet and print resources.
- Provide information literacy training and access to new technologies with hardware, software, online services and training in a safe and supportive environment.
- Support community online businesses by developing and storing content, providing information/resources for the production of content, providing a place for experimentation with new multimedia products and providing state wide access.
- Support and develop early literacy
- Provide curriculum support including homework assistance and HSC seminars
- Support for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- The provision of collections and services to assist in the pursuit of Life Long Learning

The financial limitations for many of the soon-to-retire 4.3 million baby boomers will drive demand up even further.

The realisation of these programs is not possible within the current funding constraints. We therefore, reiterate our request that the State Government provide for significant increase in State Government funding for Public Libraries, as one of the most important institutions throughout the State. One which has the capacity, if adequately funded, to help bring social justice to our communities, whether metropolitan, regional or rural.

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APPENDIX 1: EXTRACTS FROM LGSA POLICY STATEMENTS

VISION

Local Government commits to pursuing the Australian vision of a fairer, more just and more equal society.

Local Government recognises that unless the pursuit of economic development is accompanied by both strong support for social justice and strong support for ecologically sustainable development (ESD), the Australian vision of a fair, just and equal society will be diminished.

For Local Government 'social justice' is based on the application of the following four principles:

- *Equity* - fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those in need
- *Rights* - equality of rights established and promoted for all people
- *Access* - fair access for all people to economic resources, services and rights essential to their quality of life
- *Participation* - opportunity for all people to genuinely participate in the community and be consulted on decisions which affect their lives.

Local Government acknowledges and supports:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (especially Article 25, which recognises that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and wellbeing including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services)
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the right to social security, the right to a reasonable living standard, the right to food, the right to education, the right to housing, the right to health, the right to work and the right to rest and leisure)
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (freedom of speech, and other civil and political rights).

Local Government further acknowledges and supports the Commonwealth and State legislative frameworks that reflect these international instruments, such as the *Race Discrimination Act (C'th) 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act (C'th) 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act (C'th) 1992*, *Anti-Discrimination Act (NSW) 1977*, *Library Act 1939* and the like.

MANDATE

Local Government social/community planning and community services play important roles in contributing to the physical, psychological and social health, welfare and wellbeing of citizens:

Local Government is the appropriate sphere of government to take a lead role in social/community planning and community services for its citizens because:

- it is in the best position to identify and respond to the unique needs of the local area and diverse populations within the area
- it is easily identifiable and democratically accountable (through Management Planning, Land use planning and social/community planning requirements and ultimately the election process) to the community for the nature and quality of services provided
- it has a capacity for flexibility and adaptation
- it actively develops strategies that encourage social cohesion or social capital, build stronger and more self-reliant communities and deliver positive economic outcomes.

Local Government's charter involves providing directly or on behalf of other governments adequate, equitable, appropriate, efficient and effective services, and facilities, after consultation (Section 8 *Local Government Act* 1993 as amended).

...

The Charter emphasises that local government is a sphere of government with an essential and legitimate role in managing the local environment and in providing the variety of services that local residents require.

Local Government can choose to involve itself in the provision, management or operation of the following service functions (amongst others): community services; public health; cultural, educational and information services; public transport; sport, recreation and entertainment; and housing (Chapter 6 *Local Government Act* 1993 as amended).

Local Government has a long history in certain types of community service provision, predating or anticipating the present legal mandates, some elements of which can be traced back to the 19th century, some to the mid-20th Century and the balance to the 1970s (see *Resourcing communities* 2000).

...

DEFINITION

Local Government uses the term "Community Planning and Services" to cover:

- community and social planning
- community development and/or service development activities flowing from social/community planning and/or leading to any of the facilities and services listed in the subsequent points.
- general community facilities and services (such as welfare services and/or support and development services for various specific age or target groups),
- cultural services (such as cultural facilities and programs, inclusive of public library and information services),
- health services (such as immunisation and early childhood health centres),
- recreation facilities and services (such as open space, sports and swimming facilities)
- housing (such as facilitating affordable and appropriate housing, and providing or supporting housing services).

...

Library and information services

Local Government recognises that the right to free and equitable access to basic information is a cornerstone of our democratic society.

Local Government recognises that public libraries are centres for free and equitable access to basic information and therefore for learning, literature, heritage, knowledge and cultural activities that are critical to the development of well informed and vibrant communities.

Local government recognises that public libraries are safe, convenient and accessible community spaces that encourage interaction and information seeking.

Local Government recognises the value of the NSW Public Library Network, which comprises 383 local public libraries, including the State Library of New South Wales.

Local Government:

- acknowledges all spheres of government must work together to develop and provide up-to-date, easy to use and accessible public library and information services for their communities
- acknowledges public libraries have an essential role in the community giving equitable access to local and worldwide information, to collections and works of creative

imagination which will encourage participation in cultural, democratic and economic activities

- recognises the role of libraries in the dissemination of council and other community information
- recognises and respects community and cultural diversity in the provision of library collections, services and activities that reflect local information, education and recreation needs.
- ensures individuals and communities have, without bias, access to information on any subject
- Ensures that all age groups have access to library materials, in a range of formats, relevant to their needs
- Acknowledges that public library services should be provided to those who are unable to visit
- Recognises the local public library network, including the State Library, as the major community access point to information and communication technology and training, and welcomes Commonwealth or State initiatives to support this access
- Recognises the role of public libraries in supporting literacy.

Local Government seeks:

- Commonwealth and State Government fully acknowledge the significant and long-term commitment Local Government has and continues to demonstrate in funding, planning, managing and supporting public library and information services in NSW
- State Government significantly increase the State's share of the total funding to local public library services to redress the burden that has been shifted to Local Government and to the NSW Public Library Network as a whole, to ensure it matches international and national benchmarks and meets unmet community demand for services
- Commonwealth Government provides significant ongoing funding to enable equitable public access to information technology.

Cultural planning and development

Local Government recognises culture encompasses our diverse heritage and avenues of expression in the environment, leisure, work and daily life, architecture, arts, history, language and education which people use to express their fundamental character and aspirations.

Local Government:

- recognises creating liveable communities is fundamental to Australia's social well being, long-term ecological sustainability, and economic prosperity
- acknowledges that innovation and creativity are critical to the sustainability and growth of communities
- recognises the right of individuals and communities to determine their own cultural identity by promoting consultation and encouraging participation
- supports the development, integration and promotion of cultural expression within communities to protect against the homogenising effects of globalisation
- recognises strategic cultural planning is a key initiative enabling local communities to respond to changing social, environmental and economic needs, and to address the increasing demand for cultural resources
- fosters local economic development by promoting a community's cultural strength and uniqueness
- identifies, provides or facilitates the provision of facilities, services and programs which meet the cultural needs of communities
- recognises that access to cultural experiences should not be impeded by geographical

location or on the basis of gender, marital status, sexuality, language, culture, race, religion, disability, status or age, and that those groups at the margins of society require special assistance to prevent their further disenfranchisement

- recognises Indigenous Australians are the custodians of their cultures, and as such, only they have the right to make decisions about the use and reproduction of their cultures and such decisions should occur with the full and informed consent of the relevant custodians, and where appropriate, be informed by customary law and traditional practice.

Local Government seeks:

- Commonwealth and State Government acknowledge the significant commitment Local Government has in funding, planning, managing and supporting cultural development in NSW.
- Commonwealth and State Government provide significant ongoing funding to enhance regional and local cultural development, and cultural facilities, services and programs.