

# Report of the Review of Public Library Funding

**State Plan Priorities:**

- E1-E8 – Environment for Living
- F1 - Strengthening Aboriginal Communities
- P6-P7 - Stronger Regional and rural communities
- R1-R4 - Rights, Respect and Responsibility
- S1-S3 - Healthy Communities
- S4-S5 - Students fulfil their potential

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April 2008

This independent report was commissioned by The Hon Frank Sartor MP, Minister for Planning, Minister for Redfern Waterloo, Minister for the Arts on 21 August 2007.

The report's findings and the views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect those of the Minister or the New South Wales Government.

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## Executive Summary

The independent review of the public library funding formula was conducted between August and November 2007. Its terms of reference focused not on the level of funding for public libraries by the different levels of government – State and Local - but on the most appropriate way to allocate funding by the State Government to ensure the most effective delivery of public library services throughout New South Wales.

There were 22 submissions to the review and consultation meetings were held with a range of stakeholders. Stakeholder views focussed on the following points:

1. Libraries are vital cultural communication hubs that provide a range of services to a diverse clientele across metropolitan, regional and rural communities.
2. Libraries are delivering services and outcomes for the State Government, including areas of State Plan priorities, for which they do not receive specific funding.
3. NSW public libraries operate in the context of a cohesive and very successful network which provides substantial service benefits to the public.
4. Stakeholders are satisfied with existing arrangements for the distribution of State Government funding but expressed their strong view that funding should be increased.
5. There is support for the retention of a universal per capita subsidy, a 'disability' payment to provide support across the public library network where it is most needed, and a strategic grants program.
6. The existing process for libraries to receive State Government funding appears to be overly complex.

Notwithstanding the perceptions of key stakeholders and the level of support for current arrangements, it is evident that there is a lack of understanding of the rationale and workings of the existing funding formula. Furthermore, it is not obvious that there is a consistent view as to what are the policy objectives of State Government funding for library services. It is also clear that the basis for distributing the current \$6.2M labelled as a '*disability and geographic adjustments*' is not at all understood.

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## Recommendations

The following are the main recommendations arising from the review:

1. Introduce a funding model that:
  - retains a per capita subsidy amount,
  - contains a meaningful component that ensures an acceptable minimum level of access to library services across the State, with transparent allocation criteria the determination of which has input by key stakeholders, and
  - retains a grant component that is targeted to strategic outcomes, including the reinforcement of cooperation between councils to deliver regional and State wide development outcomes.
2. Review existing administrative processes to reduce unnecessary complexity and red tape in respect of the application and reporting processes for councils to receive State Government funding for library services.

There is good reason to believe that library services provide benefits across a broad range of government portfolios such as health, aged care, education and e-commerce. It is recommended that consideration be given to a comprehensive review which explores the broader benefits of public libraries to the community.

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## Review Brief and Process

On 21 August 2007, the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Frank Sartor, MP announced an independent strategic review of public library funding in NSW to ensure the most effective application of these funds for the benefit of the NSW public libraries system as a whole. The scope of the review did not extend to consideration of the appropriateness of the level of State Government funding.

The terms of reference are at **Appendix A**.

22 written submissions to the review were received (**Appendix B**) and consultation meetings were held with a range of stakeholders (**Appendix C**).

The following key questions were used to focus submissions from and discussion with stakeholders:

1. What should be the objective/s of State Government funding assuming that the total level will continue at current levels?
2. What are the pros and cons of the per capita funding?
3. What disadvantage/disability factors are the most relevant to public library funding?
4. What is the scope for more effective delivery of library services from networking?
5. What should library development grants be focussed on (if indeed they should be part of State Government funding)?

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## Public libraries

### Public libraries as social 'hubs'

Public libraries are modern information and communications hubs which are regularly the focus of cultural activity in suburbs and towns. The traditional view of libraries as repositories for books is outdated.

Libraries serve a broad range of clients from the very young to the elderly; and from visitors through the front door to users in cyberspace. To meet the expectations of these users, the services offered by libraries also extend well beyond the old fashioned notion of libraries being a place only for borrowing books.

Libraries are now communications hubs for community groups, providers of health, legal and drug information and education and training centres on information technology and the Internet. Libraries are also important focal points for social interaction; especially important for children and parents, students and the elderly.

*'Public libraries are critical information, education and cultural service providers, which make a significant contribution to the State's knowledge economy as well as to its education and cultural industries. Public libraries have evolved over recent decades from institutions that were primarily print-based serving communities that were largely Anglo-European, to multi-media institutions serving the diverse needs of communities made up of people from every corner of the world'*

- Public Libraries NSW-Metropolitan

*'Public libraries are widely acknowledged as being important places that serve the educational, economic and social needs of the local community. It can be argued that their centrality to community life is unrivalled'*

- Public Libraries NSW-Country

*'Public libraries are the only public institutions that provide free access to resources and services to all ages from babies to the elderly. They are the cornerstones of democracy and deserve to be recognised as invaluable and funded accordingly'*

- Fairfield City Council

### Public libraries deliver e-Government services

As a result of e-Government initiatives, libraries have developed as service outlets and providers for a range of State Government services. While submissions to the review acknowledged this, there was also concern expressed that this extension of library services had occurred without sufficient recognition, particularly in financial terms. Examples include:

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- the delivery of the Roads and Traffic Authority's online Driver Knowledge Test
  - Higher School Certificate Homework Centres

Opportunities exist for the Government to formally partner with libraries to further its service delivery outcomes, particularly in relation to access to e-Government services across rural and regional New South Wales.

*'Libraries provide more than just static printed information on government services. Library services are an access point for e-government services through free Internet, a distribution network for government services where library customers can complete transaction based services with the State Government, exhibition space for State Government displays and publications, and an information service for printed reports and government campaigns. This service also includes the many other local government services and programs mentioned earlier'*

- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd

*'A survey has established a conservative benchmark of over 15,000 hours a year spent by NSW public libraries assisting people to access online government information and services'*

- Public Libraries Consultative Committee

### **Public libraries and the State Plan**

Priorities E1- E8 (Environment for Living) are the most obvious links in the State Plan with libraries. Priority E8 relates to cultural use and participation, specifically, 'more people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activity'. In the context of their modern role as communication and cultural hubs, libraries also play a role in the following additional areas of the State Plan:

- Priorities R1-R4 - Rights, Respect and Responsibility
- Priorities S1-S3 - Healthy Communities
- Priorities S4-S5 - Students fulfil their potential
- Priority F1 - Strengthening Aboriginal Communities
- Priorities P6-P7 - Stronger Regional and rural communities

A more detailed discussion of how libraries contribute to the State Plan provided by Public Libraries NSW-Country is at **Appendix D**.

### **Libraries deliver benefits across Government portfolios**

In the context of their modern role, libraries deliver services which impact positively on a broad range of outcomes from social cohesion to health and education to recreational pursuits. There are good reasons to believe that libraries offer community benefits which lead to savings in different areas of Government expenditure, including health, aged care and education.

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Consequently, libraries have the potential to deliver direct benefits to the community as well as savings to different areas of government service provision.

There are studies<sup>1</sup> which point to libraries delivering such potential savings. However, these are not necessarily soundly empirically based nor undertaken in the context of New South Wales. It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to a proper examination of the broader benefits as well as the savings across Government which can be generated by library services to various groups, including school students and the elderly.

A comprehensive review of the costs and benefits of library services across key areas of State Government services could be conducted by a body such as the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

*'School libraries have limited hours and collections so students flock to their local library to do research, work on school projects, use Homework Centres, borrow books on the Premier's Reading Challenge book list, use the on-line databases and attend literacy classes'*

- Fairfield City Council

*'Reference and research services no longer only involve reference books and staff support but have expanded to include internet access and search support, on-line database access, and web-based library support providing 24 hour access and services to local businesses as well as direct access to other libraries and their resources and services around the world.'*

*This is combined with remote access to the library including interactive websites, housebound services, outreach visits to preschools, childcare centres and schools, information kiosks, community involvement, living libraries, lifestyle seminars, expos, festivals and many other activities'*

- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include:

- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* (2005) located at: [www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//N/ndsp\\_developing\\_evidence\\_doc\\_6649.doc](http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//N/ndsp_developing_evidence_doc_6649.doc).
- State Library of Victoria. *Libraries, Buildings, Communities* (2005) located at: [www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies\\_reports/plu\\_lbc.html](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies_reports/plu_lbc.html)
- A range of research papers produced by the State Library of NSW is located at: [www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public\\_libraries/publications/index.html](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/publications/index.html)

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## **The NSW public library network**

Public library services throughout the State form a strong and cohesive cooperative network.

According to submissions, this is largely attributable to the adoption of the Library Act and funding provided by the State Government. The State Library plays an important role in the coordination and administration of the network and in the provision of professional development and advisory services for library staff.

### Key facts:

- 363 public libraries
- 23 mobile libraries
- open over 14,600 hours every week
- 47% (over 3.1 million) of the NSW population are registered members – many more are regular users.
- over 33 million visits each year
- more than 1.8 million hours of internet use per year

The public receives substantial benefits as a result of the existence of a public library **network** across the State, including:

### Regional library services

72 councils across the State participate in 18 regional library services. This involves the sharing of funding and resources by two or more councils to provide a library service across a specific geographical region. Regional libraries optimise resources and ensure the sustainability of library services offered by smaller councils.

### Inter-library loans

Library materials are lent between public libraries throughout the State free of charge. This is a significant service to the public that results in substantial savings for libraries in respect of the acquisition of material. In 2005/06 there were 52,897 items lent within the network. With an average cost of \$19.27 for library material this equates to a minimum of \$1,019,325 that was not spent in purchasing multiple copies of library materials.

### Reciprocal borrowing

The majority of public libraries have agreed to participate in the reciprocal borrowing scheme. Under this arrangement a member of one library can join as a non-resident registered member of other NSW public libraries and thus be able to borrow library materials. As an example a resident in the Bankstown area would be primarily a member of Bankstown Library but could also be a registered member at Canterbury Library where they shop and a

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registered member at Willoughby where they work. In 2005/06 there were 457,521 non-resident members across the State.

Exchanges of library materials

A number of library services exchange collections as a way of extending the life of high demand collections. Collections that are most often exchanged are large print, talking books, and western and community language materials.

An example of this type of service is the exchange of material between Cobar, Wentworth, Broken Hill, Cobar and Bourke. In Sydney, the WESCOL collection of Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese materials are exchanged between Auburn, Liverpool, Canterbury, Fairfield and Bankstown. During the first 10 months of WESCOL, items in the collection were loaned over 38,000 times.

*'The NSW Public Library Network is widely recognised as an extremely effective network of 363 geographically and demographically diverse libraries that have some 50% of the State's population as members. The public libraries are very effective and strong users of networking systems with strong arrangements in place'*

- Public Libraries NSW-Country

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## Funding arrangements

Local government provides the majority of funding and is responsible for the management of public library services in New South Wales. These roles are long standing. They are clearly articulated in the *Library Act 1939* and the *Third Cultural Accord with Local Government* and are reflected in the funding figures below:

Year	Local Gov't Expenditure	State Gov't Expenditure
2005/06	\$259M	\$24.8M
2004/05	\$265M	\$22.4M
1999/00	\$186M	\$17.9M
1994/95	\$113M	\$16.2M

The State Government provides direct subsidy funding (approximately 8% of the total funding) and a coordination and advisory role to the public library network through the State Library of New South Wales. This coordination and advisory role is not fully reflected in the dollar value of direct State Government funding to public libraries.

### The objectives of State Government funding

While the Library Act is explicit in relation to the calculation of subsidy funding, it is less clear in respect of the objectives of State Government funding and the respective roles of State and local governments in relation to library services other than the objective of free library access.

Agreement on, and articulation of, the objectives of State Government funding and the role of the State Library in relation to public libraries have the potential to help resolve the ongoing issue associated with the State Government's role in public libraries.

Submissions to the review focused on two main points in relation to the objectives of State Government funding. It should be used to:

1. ensure the continuation of *free library services* and, not unrelated,
2. provide *equity of access* in the delivery of library services by compensating for different local circumstances affecting libraries in different parts of the State.

Funding for "equity of access" to library services for all (a so-called 'disability' payment) was strongly supported by all stakeholders, as were the factors currently in use to distribute this component of funding. This strong support is not surprising. All stakeholders identify the range of benefits to communities and individuals from having good access to a minimum level of library services. It follows that all communities across the State must have a minimum acceptable level of access to library services. This should be a clear priority for State Government funding.

*'Funding should complement the investment made by the local community in what they regard as a highly valuable service'*  
 - Public Libraries NSW-Country (Central East Zone)

*'Public library funding should ensure the free provision and consistent levels of service for a core range of products and services, including public access to technology and information, regardless of geographical location'*  
 - Parkes Shire Council

### Existing funding arrangements

In 2007/08, State Government funding totals \$23.5 million. This represents an increase of 40% on 1995 funding levels but is a decrease on funding in each of more recent years:

Year	State Gov't Expenditure
2007/08	\$23.5M
2006/07	\$24.5M
2005/06	\$24.8M
2004/05	\$22.4M
2003/04	\$21.9M

Submissions universally called for an increase in the total level of State Government funding, including an increase or at least indexing of the per capita subsidy. Existing funding is distributed as follows:

<b>Prescribed funding.</b> \$1.85 per capita as prescribed in the Library Act and Library Regulation	<b>\$12,624,639</b> (55% of funding)
<b>Disability and geographic adjustments.</b> Allocated to each council and calculated on previous financial year payments to councils, adjusted for population increase/decrease	<b>\$6,209,727</b> (26%)
<b>Library Development Grants.</b> Competitively awarded. \$200,000 is the maximum. Councils can make one application on their own behalf and an additional application for regional projects	<b>\$1,751,077</b> (7%)
<b>NSW.net.</b> Subsidised internet access and access to online databases	<b>\$1,940,000</b> (8%)
<b>Cooperative and networking activities.</b> Multicultural purchasing, professional development, research projects, Interlibrary loan van subsidy	<b>\$480,322</b> (2%)
<b>State Library services.</b> Retained by the State Library to support the provision of public library services to councils.	<b>\$278,190</b> (1%)
<b>Vision Australia (formerly the Royal Blind Society).</b>	<b>\$144,045</b> (0.6%)
<b>Outback Letterbox Library.</b> Service operated by Broken Hill Council for the unincorporated areas.	<b>\$100,000</b> (0.4%)

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## Disability and Geographic Adjustments

This component is the largest after the per capita subsidy (\$6.2M) and is largely driven by a formula that aims to ensure much the same level of funding to each council year after year, based largely on their historic share of library funding. It does not at all deal with ensuring minimum levels of access to library services across all communities in the State. The adjustment does not serve strategic objectives and is not responsive to local needs. Exceptional demographic changes would have to occur before any noticeable shifts in funding would result.

Only about 12% (\$750,000) of the \$6.2M that comprises this adjustment is distributed based on the disability factors of isolation, population distribution and demographic composition (NESB, elderly and 0-5 years clients). *It is clear that stakeholders do not understand the basis on which the “disability and geographic adjustment” formula works and incorrectly assume that this factor does directly deal with equity of access to basic library services across the state. **The existing disability and geographic adjustment component is not an effective means to ensure equity of access to minimum levels of public library services across the State.***

*‘Equity of access to a well resourced public library is the right of every member of our society’*

- Clarence Regional Library

## Stakeholder views on existing funding arrangements

Submissions to the review indicated widespread support for the existing arrangements including the universal per capita amount, the Disability and Geographic Adjustments and the Library Development Grants program.

*‘the per capita formula is an equitable division of resources to all citizens of NSW. This concept of equity is the foundation and the strength of the NSW public library network’*

- Public Libraries NSW-Country

*‘[Per capita] ensures all councils receive a basic safety net no matter what their revenue raising capacity or disabilities’*

- Local Government and Shires Associations

However, there is a clear lack of understanding of the rationale and workings of the existing funding formula, particularly the basis for distributing the \$6.2M so-called “Disability and Geographic Adjustments” component.

While stakeholders commented on the importance of a funding component which addresses local factors (population distribution or high level of NESB population, for example) and the related additional costs in delivering library

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services, none were aware that the amount actually used to address such factors comprises only 3% of the total funding pool.

#### Library Development Grants

All stakeholders who addressed this issue were strongly supportive of the Grants program being retained. Submissions noted the importance of the program to encourage innovation in library services and to support existing services. Suggestions for the program's focus were largely covered by its existing scope. There was some emphasis on using the grants program for State-wide initiatives (equally not outside the scope of the existing program). There were a small number of comments relating to the onerous nature of the application process.

*'These competitive merit-based grants are highly regarded and keenly sought by councils....The provision of such a grant has often made the difference with a council that is considering a new library building or purchasing a new mobile library – without the grant it might not have proceeded'*

- Local Government and Shires Associations

#### NSW.net

It is clear that NSW.net has provided a significant contribution towards public library internet access but may have served its purpose with initial infrastructure setup and is no longer justified as a discrete funding component.

#### Vision Australia

While funding to Vision Australia is a long-time commitment of Government, it is an anachronism. A number of submissions recommended that it be discontinued noting that library services to vision impaired clients was now adequately addressed through audio and large-print books.

#### **Existing processes for the distribution of funding**

A small number of submissions commented on the 'red tape' required, particularly in respect of the Library Development Grants application process.

The administrative burden of the application process, particularly for small councils, was also raised in 2006 by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Authority (IPART) in its report, *Investigation into the burden of regulation in NSW and improving regulatory efficiency*. Minor amendments to the application process were made as a result with an undertaking by the State Library for a more fulsome review in 2007.

Local authorities are also required to submit annual statements of library operations to receive the statutory per capita payment and project outlines for tied funding. It is not clear whether reporting in such detail and with such regularity is required. This is not to suggest that there should be less accountability for such funding. Rather, the reporting requirements could be more streamlined while still fit for purpose.

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## Framework for a proposed new funding model

The need to ensure a minimum acceptable level of access to library services across all communities in the State and to support the regional and State-wide library network was clearly supported by stakeholders in meetings and submissions to the review. Although there was no direct push for change, it is also clear that existing arrangements neither reflect the most effective means to support the network nor to direct State funding to ensure minimum standards of access to library services for all communities.

New arrangements are required to achieve the strategic objective of enhanced networking as well as the fundamental objective of minimum standards of access. A number of factors could be incorporated within a new funding model to:

- target the delivery of minimum levels of access to library services to all communities across New South Wales
- properly recognise and compensate for local factors (the proper identification of 'need')
- engage stakeholders in the process of negotiating outcomes for the public library network, and
- provide a strategic focus on the strengthening of regional and State-wide co-operation and networking.

The following components make up the 2007-08 public libraries funding allocation:

- \$12.6M per capita subsidy
- \$6.2M disability and geographic
- \$1.7M library development grants
- \$1.94M NSW.net
- \$1M administrative and other

### **New funding model**

A simpler funding model that better focuses on the strategic objectives of enhanced minimum levels of access and improved regional co-operation and networks could comprise three components:

- **Per capita subsidy (target 50%)**  
The per capita subsidy component currently comprises about 55% (\$12.6M) of total funding. The subsidy is highly valued by councils because it provides certainty in planning of their library services. This is a reasonable argument; funding certainty is an important consideration.

A universal per capita amount is viewed by many as critical to the ongoing existence of the public library network and free access to library services across the State. It was suggested that the elimination of the per capita

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subsidy component may lead to some councils moving away from free access to library services. This would not be a desirable outcome.

However, there is potential conflict between *equity of funding* which the per capita subsidy achieves and *equity of access*. Equity of funding – the per capita State subsidy - does not of itself ensure equity of access to a minimum level of service across the State.

A universal per capita subsidy may be seen as “equitable” but is unlikely to be the most effective way to distribute funding to public libraries that achieves the strategic objectives of access and regional co-operation.

On balance, however, given the strong support for the per capita subsidy as a key element of local government budget planning, it is reasonable to continue with this component for the time being and at present levels – approximately 50% of the total.

- **Access funding. (target 25%)**

It is proposed that the \$6.2M currently allocated to what has been (incorrectly) termed “*Disability and Geographic payments*” is used more effectively and strategically to meet identified needs of libraries to ensure the provision of minimal standards to their communities taking into account relevant disability factors.

The approach would involve advice to the Minister on a regular basis regarding the strategic focus for funding to ensure an acceptable level of library services across the State.

This could involve the Library Council identifying relevant criteria that should draw *access funding* (eg. factors such as maintenance of capital infrastructure, isolated, NESB or older clients). The criteria would need to be transparent and provide a ready basis for translation to specific funding adjustments to ensure access to an agreed minimum level of library services for all communities across the State.

Once the criteria are determined and accepted by the Minister, actual access allocations would be driven by relevant demographic and other data. The process should ensure clearly defined areas of need are identified and that funding is responsive to that need.

Funding for minimum levels of access could be on a rolling 3 year basis, with priorities reviewed and agreed and criteria adjusted each 3 years. For example, the initial triennium focus could be on library materials (not just books) for identified client groups (elderly; children; NESB), with the subsequent focus on physical infrastructure (buildings and technology), for example.

The State Library, through the Library Council and in consultation with key stakeholders is best placed to develop appropriate indicators for access funding across libraries. Given the potential impact on library budgets, it

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may be appropriate to phase in the new access funding arrangements over (say) 2 years.

- **Strategic and development grants (target 25%)**

This component would comprise the balance of currently available funds. It is suggested that consideration be given to its scope including encouragement of co-located cultural facilities (libraries, galleries and museums operating as one facility) and joint funding of physical infrastructure.

To this end, links with the capital infrastructure grant program operated by Arts NSW would be an obvious area for further exploration.

The focus of the grants could be shaped annually in consultation with stakeholders and approved by the Minister.

A feature of the consultation process was the value of the public library network. However, it was not clear that existing arrangements provided sufficient mechanisms for network-wide or regional initiatives to be supported. Instead the current arrangements focus heavily upon individual councils making applications for grants or receiving subsidy and other payments.

Discussions have focussed on using this component to more effectively encourage cooperation between councils. This may be achieved through application criteria or the allocation of the funding pool for specific purposes such as regional and State-wide initiatives.

The proportion of total library funding to be available for such grants would also need to be phased in over a few years in order to allow for Council budget planning.

### **Review of other funding components**

A number of stakeholders questioned the suitability of maintaining some other components of the current funding arrangements. In the context of comments concerning NSW.net and grant funding for Vision Australia, it would be appropriate to redirect these funds to the grants component which could include among its criteria funding available for relevant programs.

### **Reduction of red tape**

As with Library Development Grants, attention must be given across the board to existing or proposed application and reporting processes to ensure reduction in administration costs (both within councils and the State Library) and to ensure that information gathered serves to effectively identify the needs of the network and effectively guide the allocation of resources.

### **Implementation of new arrangements**

The distribution of funding is currently approved annually by the Minister on recommendation of the Library Council.

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It is recommended that this continue with advice to the Minister on the criteria for the distribution of access payments, and strategic and development grants on a rolling triennial basis.

It is recognised that many who made submissions may be reluctant to see change. However, it is also clear that there is broad commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for public libraries and their users.

There is a genuine recognition across the sector of the benefits of library services to the community and of the network and the need to provide support where it is needed most. The preferred approach enables ongoing support for councils through per capita funding while providing for more effective use of the \$6.2M '*disability payments*' targeted to ensuring minimum levels of access to the library services to all communities across NSW.

A number of transitional issues will need to be considered including continuity and budget planning. Specifically, if an historic share is not assured, councils may need adequate time to plan.

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## **Appendix A – Review Terms of Reference**

- Revenue raising potential of local government authorities by local government area (detailed for sources of revenue and demographic factors)
- Options for the most strategic application of State Government funding which would ensure this funding is directed towards areas of greatest need
- Any regulatory implications associated with these options
- Transitional arrangements including an implementation plan to guide the migration to a new more strategic system of funding
- Any other means by which library services may be enhanced in New South Wales
- Identification of special issues and anomalies.



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## **Appendix B – Review submissions received**

1. Blacktown City Council
2. Central East Zone – Public Libraries NSW – Country
3. Central West Libraries
4. City of Canterbury Council
5. Clarence Regional Library
6. Coffs Harbour City Council
7. Fairfield City Council
8. Friends of Ballina Shire Library
9. Friends of Tweed Library
10. Friends of the Library, Kingscliff
11. Great Lakes Council
12. Greater Taree City Council
13. Lake Macquarie City Council (via local MPs and forwarding Public Libraries NSW-Country (Central East Zone) submission).
14. Mosman Municipal Council
15. Northern Regional Library
16. Parkes Shire Council
17. Public Libraries NSW – Country
18. Public Libraries NSW - Metropolitan
19. Richmond-Tweed Regional Library
20. Richmond-Upper Clarence Regional Library
21. Sutherland Shire Council
22. Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd

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## **Appendix C – Stakeholder consultation meetings**

- Public Libraries Consultative Committee – 25 October 2007  
(comprising Public Libraries NSW-Country, Public Libraries NSW-Metropolitan, Local Government Managers Australia, Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, State Library of NSW, Library Council of NSW)
- Public Libraries NSW-Country – 25 October 2007
- Public Libraries NSW-Metropolitan – 25 October 2007
- Library Council of NSW – 30 October 2007
- Arts Advisory Council – 8 November 2007
- Local Government and Shires Associations – 8 November 2007



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## **Appendix D – Public Libraries and the State Plan**

Priority E8 is the most obvious link in the State Plan with libraries. This priority relates to cultural use and participation, specifically, 'more people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activity'. Its associated target is 'increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016'.

The following information has been provided by Public Libraries NSW-Country. It outlines areas of the State Plan which libraries impact including but by no means limited to the contribution they make to E8.

### **RIGHTS, RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY (Priorities R1-R4)**

NSW local public libraries facilitate social cohesion. Research demonstrates that 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 rural, regional 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. Consider:

- Living libraries at Lismore. A unique project to bring people face to face with their own prejudices. The Living Library Project is about bringing together people who are different, one on one, in the same way that readers borrow a book, engage with it and try to understand it.
- Support for CALD communities in country areas include bulk loans of materials in languages other than English, internet access, MyLanguage, - collections in Griffith, Woolgoolga (Coffs) etc.

Priority R4 relates to 'increased participation and integration in community activities' with a target, 'increase the proportion of the total community involved in volunteering, group sporting and recreational activity, or group cultural and artistic activity by 10 per cent from 2002 by 2016'. The level of volunteering undertaken in libraries through, for example, 'Friends' groups contributes to this target.

### **DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES**

#### **Healthy Communities (Priorities S1-S3)**

Public libraries act as distribution points for information on health and wellbeing. These include partnerships with other agencies and stand alone initiatives. Some examples are:

- Access point for drug Information @ your library a wide range of information on illicit drugs as part of the NSW Government's Community Information Initiative.
- Collaborations with the Cancer Council across country NSW to provide current information on cancer and its treatment and links to support service
- Black Dog Institute collections featuring quality information on mood disorders and issues affecting rural communities.

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- A women's reading group at Coonabarabran, to bring farm and town women together and address during the prolonged drought. A similar program in Cooma is "Blokes and Books".

### **Students fulfil their potential (Priorities S4-S5)**

Public libraries support students at all levels and have a strong focus on literacy. This includes:

- Significant support for the Premier's Reading Challenge – over 60% of items read for the Challenge are borrowed from public libraries.
- Homework help services for students K-12 including dedicated staff and access to online databases. Some libraries (eg, Central West Libraries, Riverina Regional Library) subscribe to YourTutor, an online, interactive homework help service to provide a high level of assistance to their remote clients.
- In addition to the traditional storytime sessions offered by libraries there is a growing focus on early childhood reading programs for 0-5 year olds. Baby Rhyme and Read programs for new-borns are common across the state, giving new parents the skills to read and learn with their children. This is enhanced by activities such as the "Little Big Day Out at Wagga Wagga, a festival of storytelling, literacy activities, etc or the annual town wide Reading Day at Parkes which reinforces the importance of literacy in building a smart community.
- Libraries are also about life-long learning and work closely with other providers such as the U3A in developing programs, offering venues and support.

### **FAIRNESS AND OPPORTUNITY**

#### **Strengthening Aboriginal Communities (Priority F1)**

Public libraries work closely with key agencies to engage the aboriginal community, to break down the barriers in accessing library services and to deliver appropriate high quality services. Examples include:

- Indigenous family history collection at Moree and the Indigenous archives at Broken Hill
- Indigenous mums and children brought into the Coonamble Library on a bus for story time
- Western Riverina Library has a mobile service to Indigenous 13-16 year olds
- Kempsey Library has a homework help van which takes the service out into the local Indigenous community
- Use of Indigenous art and programs to has been used to attract Indigenous clients at Forster

### **GROWING PROSPERITY ACROSS NSW**

#### **Stronger Regional and rural communities (Priorities P6-P7)**

Public libraries support economic development in regional, rural and remote NSW. Libraries meet community demand for programs that:

- Provide training in how to use and access information via the Internet in a safe and supportive environment. Many of these are targeted at particular groups for example students and seniors.

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- Provide a direct economic benefit to individuals and the community. Many people derive an economic benefit from their usage of the library. A '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. This is enhanced by the special Technology Centres available at libraries such as Lithgow and Eurobodalla.

Public libraries also offer services designed specifically to meet the need of regional and rural NSW. For example

- Outback Letterbox Library at Broken Hill offers a library service to the unincorporated area
- Broken Hill also offers special story time for children
- coming in from Wilcannia to go to the dentist
- In recognition of the library's role as a meeting and resting place for people "in town" for the day tea and coffee are part of the service at Crookwell, Forbes and Lismore.

#### **ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING (Priorities E1-E8)**

The significance of the New South Wales' public library network as a major contributor to cultural development in NSW is recognised in the third Cultural Accord established between the State Government and the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW in February 2006.

Public Libraries in country NSW enhance the cultural opportunities available to their communities through a diverse range of programs and services designed for all target groups. These are often offered in partnership with other stakeholders and key agencies. Programs encompass all cultural areas and include;

- Literature – author visits, reading groups, seminars and workshops. Writers' Centres funded by Arts NSW are incorporated into Central West Libraries (Orange) and Broken Hill.
- Heritage – libraries work in close partnership with local and family history groups in developing collections, preserving heritage and offering services such as workshops and seminars. In many cases the 2 are co located as at Kiama.
- In regional areas libraries are often used as exhibition spaces and work with organisations and agencies including State Library of NSW, Powerhouse Museum, Australian Museum.