

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM PLNSW-C EXECUTIVE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 1 THAT PLNSW-C ENDORSE THE DRAFT PLNSW-C LOBBYING
STRATEGY 2009-10

PLNSW-C has demonstrated success in lobbying the state government throughout its 20 year history. Indeed, the organisation was formed in 1989 with a clear political agenda of addressing country library funding issues. Despite various successful lobbying campaigns, including the Day of Action in 2007, past funding models have been characterised by the same flaw – the failure to build in an annual growth index. In addition, the state government has failed to take any action on the recommendations made by the Library Council of NSW in June 2008 based on the findings of the 2007 Review of Public Library Funding (commissioned by the then Minister for the Arts, Hon. Frank Sartor, and undertaken by Dr Thomas Parry), to the extent that no information about the allocation of public library funding to local government for the 2009-10 financial year has been provided at the time of writing this motion.

The draft PLNSW-C Lobbying Strategy 2009-10 proposes to target these aspects of state government funding policy through recommending the following actions:

- 1. *Immediate endorsement of the recommendations of the Review of NSW Public Library Funding 2007 (the Parry Report)*** – a broad review of the allocation of state government funding to NSW public libraries was conducted by Dr Thomas Parry at the instigation of the then Minister for the Arts, Hon. Frank Sartor, in 2007. Library Council of NSW provided the Ministry with a set of recommendations arising from the review process in June 2008. No further action by the government is evident in this matter, and at May 2009 there has been no advice to local government about the allocation of 2009-10 funding for public libraries.
- 2. *Indexation of \$1.85 per capita subsidy to population growth*** – the Library Act prescribes that an amount of \$1.85 that must be provided for every resident of NSW annually. This amount is not indexed to population growth in current funding arrangements, meaning that an amount of \$1.85 for every additional NSW resident has to be found each year from elsewhere in the state's funding allocation to public libraries. For a number of consecutive years in recent history, the additional cost has been taken from the Library Development Grant funding pool, leading to the decimation of this pool over a number of years. It would be ironic in the extreme if the additional \$9m in state government Library Development Grant funding for country public libraries was raided on an annual basis to subsidise the \$1.85 per capita in population growth. This is a key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.
- 3. *Indexation of remaining elements of state government library funding to CPI or rate pegging*** – one of the ongoing problems with the current government library funding strategy is that it fails to keep pace with the cost of service provision because it does not include any growth indexation. This means that the actual value of government funding reduces each year, leading to lobbying action for more funds – which, whenever and however they are provided, suffer the same problem. This is a further key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.

The achievement of these key outcomes would provide a sustainable state government funding framework for NSW public libraries, and would at the very least maintain existing funding levels. It would also enable the Association to consider targeted lobbying strategies in future years.

A copy of the full PLNSW-C Lobbying Strategy 2009-10 is included as Attachment 1 at the end of the motions.

REPORT TO	PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FROM	PLNSW-C EXECUTIVE
DATE	15 MAY 2009

MOTION 2 THAT PLNSW-C ENDORSE THE DRAFT PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION, AS NEGOTIATED WITH PLNSW-M, AS A BASIS ON WHICH TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANISATIONS

RELATED MOTION THAT THE SOUTH-WEST ZONE SUPPORTS THE DRAFT
(MOTION 11) AGREED PRINCIPLES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN PLNSW-C AND PLNSW-c

**AGREED PRINCIPLES FOR COLLABORATION
BETWEEN PLNSW-C AND PLNSW-M**

**Draft 3
11 April 2009**

1. To be the most effective voice to government, industry and stakeholders, representing the NSW public library network and its communities.
2. To contribute to community development, cohesion and inclusion through social, educational and cultural interaction, facilitated by provision of a broad range of NSW public library network programs, services, activities and safe community spaces.
3. To develop and enhance the capabilities and capacity of the NSW public library network to meet the needs of its communities, through adequate resources including collections, through outreach, and by optimising both physical and virtual spaces.
4. To enhance the cooperative relationship between elected officials, library managers and other council officers in pursuit of the interests of the NSW public library network.

These Principles were endorsed by PLNSW-M at their Quarterly General Meeting held on Friday 8 May 2009

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM CENTRAL EAST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 3 THAT THE PLNSW-C EXECUTIVE SEEK TO CHANGE THE DISTRIBUTION OF COUNTRY PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDS THROUGH THE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROCESS TO A PER CAPITA DISTRIBUTION, AND THAT WITHIN THE CORE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT ALLOCATION, THE

PROPORTION OF FUNDS DISTRIBUTED TO COUNTRY
PUBLIC LIBRARIES NOT BE DIMINISHED

The Country Libraries Fund, announced by the Premier and Minister for the Arts in November 2008, will deliver an additional \$9m for country libraries in New South Wales from 2008/09 to 2012/13.

The approved allocation model for the distribution of funds through the State Library development grants relies on a competitive process to gain access to the funding.

The Central East Zone recommends that the PLNSW-C Executive advocate for a per capita distribution model to allow wider access to the Country Libraries funding, whilst maintaining the core library development grant fund allocation.

REPORT TO	PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FROM	NORTH EAST ZONE
DATE	15 MAY 2009
MOTION 4	THAT PLNSW-C, IN CONJUNCTION WITH PLA AND ALIA, LOBBY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO HAVE LIBRARY SECTOR QUALIFICATIONS ADDED TO THE PRODUCTIVITY PLACES PROGRAM

Under the 'Skilling Australia for the Future' initiative, the Commonwealth has funded the Productivity Places Program (PPP) which will deliver 711,000 training places over 5 years in areas of skills shortage to ensure that Australian workers develop the skills they need. These training places are being delivered in an industry-driven system, ensuring that training is more responsive to the needs of businesses and participants.

Of the places, 392,000 training places will be allocated to existing workers wanting to gain or upgrade their skills, and 319,000 will be allocated to job seekers.

PPP offers an alternative funding source for councils to get existing staff up-skilled, primarily to the level of Library Technician (Library Science Diploma). However PPP does not currently include any library qualifications on its list.

The NE Zone's current initiative with the North Coast Institute of TAFE to establish a new online library course (with strong industry ties) has discovered this gap in the current list of qualifications offered under PPP.

This local TAFE course is focusing on Certificate 4 and the Diploma. The cost of the Certificate 4 course can be currently subsidised by the traineeship scheme to the tune of approximately \$3,800. This does not extend to the full Diploma course, which is where the PPP provides a potential funding assistance solution.

More information is available online at: <http://www.productivityplaces.deewr.gov.au>

REPORT TO	PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FROM	NORTH EAST ZONE
DATE	15 MAY 2009
MOTION 5	THAT PLNSW-C REQUEST THE NSW STATE GOVERNMENT TO AMEND THE LIBRARY ACT 1939 TO CONFIRM THAT THE LIBRARY ACT DEFERS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993 IN MATTERS RELATING TO THE MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR REGIONAL LIBRARIES
RELATED MOTION (MOTION 9)	THAT THE PLNSW-C SUPPORTS THE PROPOSAL OF THE NSW REGIONAL LIBRARY MANAGERS GROUP TO SEEK AN AMENDMENT TO THE LIBRARY ACT 1939 THAT
PROVIDES TO SECTION	THE FOLLOWING (OR A SIMILAR) INCLUSION 12:

**TWO OR MORE LOCAL AUTHORITIES MAY ADOPT A MODEL
THAT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL**

GOVERNMENT ACT FOR THE JOINT PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Sections 11 and 12 of the *Library Act 1939* include a very specific and prescriptive operating framework for regional libraries in NSW which requires the appointment of an administering council to assume control for the provision of library services to and by other member Councils. This requirement is causing political, financial and operational problems for some regional libraries in NSW. Given that the 18 regional library services represent 68 of the 151 councils across the state, there is clearly a high proportion of country councils that are associated with regional libraries.

A relatively simple change to the *Library Act* stating that it defers to the *Local Government Act* in matters regarding the structure and governance of regional libraries would allow regional libraries to apply the best-fit model from those available under the *Local Government Act*. Furthermore, recent legal advice suggests that the delegation requirements of Section 12 of the *Library Act* are in conflict with delegations permitted under the *Local Government Act*.

A discussion Forum on this matter was held at State Library on 27th April 2009., attended by representatives from State Library, the Ministry for the Arts, and the Department of Local Government, and Councillors and Managers from Regional Libraries. It was agreed that Councils should lobby the Department of Local Government, the Ministry for the Arts and Public Libraries NSW-Country to effect the necessary amendment to the *Library Act* that will enable regional libraries to operate under the *Local Government Act*. This matter will also be brought to the attention of the Library Council.

It should be noted that the PLNSW-C Executive has considered and endorsed the proposal of the Regional Library Managers Group on this issue.

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM SOUTH EAST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 6 THAT THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS BE REQUESTED TO SCHEDULE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS BEFORE THE END OF THE CALENDAR YEAR SO THAT THE GRANT FUNDING CAN BE FACTORED INTO THE LIBRARY BUDGET CYCLE FOR THE FOLLOWING FINANCIAL YEAR

Councils and Libraries are required by the Local Government Legislation to begin their budget preparations at an early stage each year and generally finalise their budgets by April to go on public exhibition. If the Library Development Grants can be announced before the end of the calendar year it means that the grants can be fully incorporated into the Library budgets for the following financial year at an early stage, and the implementation of the grant projects can be properly planned for in that year.

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM SOUTH EAST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 7 THAT THE PLNSW-C UNDERTAKE A SURVEY OF THE RANGE OF NEW WEB2 TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE IN LIBRARIES, FOR BOTH THE PUBLIC AND FOR STAFF; AND THAT THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY BE CIRCULATED TO ALL COUNCILS WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PLNSW-C ENCOURAGING ALL COUNCILS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THESE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Some Councils are resistant to making the new Web2 technologies available in their libraries for both the public and for library staff. There is a perception within these councils that the Web2 interactive technologies, and in particular the so-called 'social networking websites' such as YouTube, Facebook and Blogs, RSS feeds etc, are not required or appropriate for their libraries.

These websites are a very valuable tool for online professional networking and for staying in touch. Young people in particular use them to access services such as libraries for information and education. A significant number of Library staff have been unable to undertake the Web2 online training at their work-stations because their council IT sections have blocked these sites for staff access and also for public access.

It would be very useful to conduct a survey of the use and demand for Web2 technologies in public libraries and to make councils more generally aware of the value, relevance and demand for these new technologies.

It would also be useful to ask those libraries who do provide access to Web2 technologies if they have experienced any significant problems with security breaches, virus problems or spyware.

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM SOUTH WEST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 8 THAT PLNSW-C URGES THE NSW GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUNE 2008 MEETING OF THE LIBRARY COUNCIL OF NSW WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW OF NSW PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING 2007 (THE PARRY REPORT) WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY

The report of the *NSW Public Library Funding Review*, which was undertaken by Dr Tom Parry during the second half of 2007, was distributed to NSW Councils in mid April 2008. This review was commissioned by the minister for the Arts, Hon. Frank Sartor, with a view to determining “*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*”.

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*
 - *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.

The Library Council of NSW meeting held on 28 April 2008 reviewed the actions the Minister for the Arts asked it to undertake following the release of the Parry Report and referred the matter to the Public Libraries Consultative Committee (PLCC), a sub-committee of Library Council, to provide advice concerning the full implementation of the Review's recommendations.

A series of meetings between the PLCC and State Library of NSW Public Library Services Division staff undertook the significant task of providing advice on implementation of Dr Parry's recommendations to Library Council, which subsequently made a series of recommendations for a future funding model based on the outcomes of the Parry Report its next meeting on 30 June 2008.

Since then there has been no further response from the State Government on this matter, including no advice regarding library funding to Local Government in 2009-10.

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM SOUTH WEST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 9 THAT THE PLNSW-C SUPPORTS THE PROPOSAL OF THE NSW REGIONAL LIBRARY MANAGERS GROUP TO SEEK AN AMENDMENT TO THE LIBRARY ACT 1939 THAT PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING (OR A SIMILAR) INCLUSION TO SECTION 12:

TWO OR MORE LOCAL AUTHORITIES MAY ADOPT A MODEL THAT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT FOR THE JOINT PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

The issue of the implications of section 12 of the NSW Library Act (1939) has for some time been a matter of concern for regional libraries. Section 12 of the Library Act includes a very specific and prescriptive operating framework for regional libraries in NSW, which requires the appointment of an administering council to assume control for the provision of library services to and by other member Councils. This requirement is causing political, financial and operational problems for some regional libraries in NSW.

Given that the 18 regional library services in country NSW represent 68 of the 111 country councils across the state, there is clearly a high proportion of country councils that are associated with regional libraries.

The NSW Regional Library Managers' Group considered this matter at its meeting held on 27 November 2008 and resolved to:

- develop a discussion paper for circulation to regional libraries and their member Councils
- liaise with State Library of NSW to hold a discussion forum with interested parties to discuss this matter

The discussion paper was circulated in February 2009 and a discussion forum was held on 27 April 2009. The forum was attended by representatives from Arts NSW, Department of Local Government, State Library of NSW, LGMA, PLNSW-C, PLNSW-M and a number of regional libraries and participating Councils.

Resulting from the forum, Regional Library Managers requested the PLNSW-C Executive to submit a paper for the 15 June 2009 PLCC meeting asking for a recommendation to Library Council to seek a change to the Library Act 1939 as specified in the motion.

It should be noted that the PLNSW-C Executive has considered and endorsed the proposal of the Regional Library Managers Group on this issue.

REPORT TO	PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FROM	SOUTH WEST ZONE
DATE	15 MAY 2009
MOTION 10	THAT PLCNSW-C BE THE AUSPICING BODY FOR THE FORMATION OF THE MOBILE LIBRARIES NSW GROUP

Mobile Libraries across NSW operate under their local government funding body and as part of that Councils Library Service. If there was an auspiced Mobile Libraries NSW Group then library managers could apply for cooperative grants for collections, information technology, author visits etc. As PLNSW-C is the organisation that has the majority of members who provide mobile library services it makes sense that it be the body under which Mobile Libraries NSW sits.

There would be no cost to PLNSW-C as all that is being asked is that it recognizes the need for the formation of such a group and agrees to be the “parent” organisation. We already hold the Mobile Libraries Muster on the Saturday and Sunday following the PLNSW-C Conference so there is already a link emerging between the mobiles and the organisation. This could mean that every third year when the conference is held in NSW that it would be a continuum of the annual PLNSDW-C conference thus adding weight to the value of the service.

Being auspiced by PLNSW-C would also provide an avenue through which Councils could lobby for better telecommunications and broadband for their rural and remote communities that are served by the mobile libraries.

REPORT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NSW – COUNTRY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FROM SOUTH WEST ZONE

DATE 15 MAY 2009

MOTION 11 THAT THE SOUTH-WEST ZONE SUPPORTS THE DRAFT
AGREED PRINCIPLES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN
PLNSW-C AND PLNSW-M

The South-West Zone meeting held on 14 May 2009 considered the *Draft Agreed Principles for Collaboration Between PLNSW-C and PLNSW-M*, as developed at a joint meeting between the two organisations on 12 January 2009.

The meeting agreed to endorse its support of the *Draft Agreed Principles for Collaboration Between PLNSW-C and PLNSW-M* with a motion to the PLNSW-C AGM.

Attachment 1

PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEW SOUTH WALES COUNTRY

DRAFT LOBBYING STRATEGY 2009-10

Summary

The attached paper outlines a Draft Lobbying Strategy for Public Libraries New South Wales Country (PLC) to pursue in 2009-10.

This lobbying strategy will provide a sustainable base that indexes key elements of state government library funding to simple but critical indicators – population and rate pegging (or CPI) increases.

Support Information

The Draft Lobbying Strategy 2009-10 is supported by the following information, which is articulated in more detail in the attached document:

- Information about the organisation (PLC)
- Stakeholder expectations
- State Government funding – past and present
- Contribution of Public Libraries to NSW State Plan Key Areas

Proposal

PLC recommends the following funding strategy to the State Government of NSW in 2009-10:

1. ***Immediate endorsement of the recommendations of the Review of NSW Public Library Funding 2007 (the Parry Report)*** – a broad review of the allocation of state government funding to NSW public libraries was conducted by Dr Thomas Parry at the instigation of the then Minister for the Arts, Hon. Frank Sartor, in 2007. Library Council of NSW provided the Ministry with a set of recommendations arising from the review process in June 2008. No further action by the government is evident in this matter, and at May 2009 there has been no advice to local government about the allocation of 2009-10 funding for public libraries.
2. ***Indexation of \$1.85 per capita subsidy to population growth*** – the Library Act prescribes that an amount of \$1.85 that must be provided for every resident of NSW annually. This amount is not indexed to population growth in current funding arrangements, meaning that an amount of \$1.85 for every additional NSW resident has to be found each year from elsewhere in the state's funding allocation to public libraries. For a number of consecutive years in recent

history, the additional cost has been taken from the Library Development Grant funding pool, leading to the decimation of this pool over a number of years. It would be ironic in the extreme if the additional \$9m in state government Library Development Grant funding for country public libraries was raided on an annual basis to subsidise the \$1.85 per capita in population growth. This is a key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.

3. ***Indexation of remaining elements of state government library funding to CPI or rate pegging*** – one of the ongoing problems with the current government library funding strategy is that it fails to keep pace with the cost of service provision because it does not include any growth indexation. This means that the actual value of government funding reduces each year, leading to lobbying action for more funds – which, whenever and however they are provided, suffer the same problem. This is a further key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.

Recommendation

It is recommended that PLC adopt the abovementioned funding principles as the foundation of its 2009-10 lobbying strategy. Support information for the strategy can be drawn from a variety of current and past studies, reports and research findings.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEW SOUTH WALES COUNTRY

DRAFT LOBBYING STRATEGY 2009-10

Issue

The Public Libraries New South Wales Country (PLC) Executive has developed a draft lobbying strategy for 2009-10 that builds on the success of the Day of Action campaign that was instigated on 29 November 2007. The Day of Action campaign significantly influenced the announcement of \$9 million in additional state government funding to country libraries in 2008-09 to 2012-13 (announced on 1 November 2008).

The PLC Draft Lobbying Strategy 2009-10 focuses on achievable outcomes that will assist the state government to build a sustainable model for calculation and distribution of public library funding into the future. This is the first step in an incremental strategy that will provide a solid foundation for further discussions about library funding in subsequent years

With a view to building a strong and cohesive public library network across NSW, the strategy applies to funding for both country and metropolitan libraries. This approach also acknowledges the collaborative focus currently being pursued by the two organisations.

Background

The Organisation

PLC represents the interests of public libraries and their users in regional and rural New South Wales. It has 129 members comprising 111 local government authorities and 18 regional library services from across country NSW. The Association has a vital interest in improving library services and access to information resources for all people living in regional areas through a range of initiatives, joint ventures and partnerships.

Stakeholder Expectations

Public libraries are widely acknowledged as being important places that serve the educational, economic and social needs of the local community. 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 2006.

Public libraries have a very broad demographic spread of users through all categories of age, gender, occupational status, ethnicity and income, with a higher proportionate use by those not born in Australia and Australians of non-English speaking background.

Local libraries have a high proportionate percentage of users in the 15-19 age group and there is a high correlation between childhood use of libraries and later professional and high-income careers. All public libraries have high levels of use for education and training, to the extent of functioning as an additional arm of the compulsory and post-compulsory educational infrastructure.

State Government Funding

There has been a serious and ongoing proportional reduction in State Government funding for public libraries over the past 25 years. In 1980, the State Government contributed 23.6% of the total operating costs of public libraries. The State contribution dwindled to 7.8% in 2004-05 with further reductions in years since then, including a massive cut of \$1,023,000 (4.16%) in 2007-08.

In the period since 1980, State Government contribution to public libraries has increased by **3 times** (from \$8.5m to \$22.4m) whilst Local Government contribution has increased by a massive **10 times** from \$27.5m to \$265m. Current indications are that this trend will continue.

A successful lobbying campaign undertaken by PLC in 2007, featuring a PLC-wide Day of Action on 29 November 2007, significantly influenced the announcement of \$9 million in additional state government funding to country libraries in 2008-09 to 2012-13 (announced on 1 November 2008). This funding has been allocated to the annual Library Development Grants pool (for country library applicants) in the amounts of an additional \$1m in 2008-09 and \$2m for each of the following 4 years.

State Legislation (the Library Act 1939) prescribes library service provision requirements even though the State Government contributes only 7.8% of total public library funding. NSW public libraries receive the lowest State Government per capita contribution in Australia (*Source: NSLA Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2003-2004, p24*)

The demands on public libraries are increasing as demonstrated by library visitation statistics. Library visitation in NSW increased from 27.5m in 2001-02 to 34.8m in 2006-07 – approximately 20%. (*Source: State Library of NSW, Public Library Statistics 2006/07*)

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.”

Contribution of Public Libraries to NSW State Plan Key Areas

Key Area - Rights, Respect and Responsibility

Key Area - Environment for Living

Public libraries are widely acknowledged as being important places that serve the educational, economic and social needs of the local community. 50% of the NSW population are registered members of public libraries, and many more are regular library users. Whether they are library members or not, 91% of people believe that libraries are important to their community.

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.

Over 50% of the population are members of their public library and many more use the library on a casual basis. In 2006-07, 34.8 million visits were recorded – 5 for each resident of NSW.

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.

In country NSW public libraries also offer services designed specifically to meet the needs of their communities. 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.

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, they 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 and the Australian Museum.

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.

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, they 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 and the Australian Museum.

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.

The Local Government and Shires Association of NSW has been 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). The challenges that lie ahead for libraries were 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.

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

Research has shown that the baby boomers are an engaged target group who require a higher level of service than that of their predecessors. This includes access to state of the art technology and value added programs such as seminars, book discussion groups etc. The current literature also shows that this group wishes to give back to the community through volunteering but require stimulating and challenging programs. These in turn require establishment and recurrent funding. Such examples are:

- Grandparents and Books (GAB), the volunteer reader program at Bega Valley Shire Library. Under this program adults trained in techniques that make books come alive read to children in the library. Training is provided where volunteers are introduced to popular read-aloud titles and learn fun ways to share books with children.
- At Western Riverina Community Library (Griffith) the critical importance of teaching seniors how to effectively utilise technology is considered of prime importance. Every week a local senior volunteers for about 6 hours to teach other seniors how to use computers.

Sustained cuts to library funding have eroded funds available for infrastructure renewal and innovative project development. This is particularly evident in country NSW where local government's ability to fund these projects is limited.

Without adequate funding the infrastructure necessary to provide public library services including staffing, buildings, opening hours and collections will need to be reviewed. The young, old, culturally diverse and disadvantaged have the most to lose.

Key Area - Delivering Better Services

Australian government agencies are making increasing use of the internet for service delivery. Public libraries across NSW provide free public access to the internet and are experiencing increasing demand from clients who want to access government services online. The resourcing implications for public libraries have been considerable and it is anticipated that the trend will continue.

The impact of eGovernment on public libraries over the past 5 years has been significant. *Public Libraries + eGovernment 2004* reports that most libraries claim 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 to help clients find information or carry out functions.

Challenges include a significant increase in demand for services and draw on resources; the lack of ability to manage resources effectively when grant based projects are not sustained, or fully sustained, by recurrent funding; and the impact of poor website design and changes to websites.

Public libraries are ideally placed as accessible information points with convenient locations, opening hours and diverse services, also providing access to specific government agency sites and information. This is particularly so in some country communities where the public library is the only public institution remaining.

However in devolving services to the public library there has been little if any consultation. Improvements in the channels of communication and greater cooperation between the library sector and government agencies will benefit the clients of government agencies and libraries alike. Examples of high use government websites include RTA, JobSearch, Health, Attorney General's Department, Births deaths and Marriages, Small business, Infringement Bureau. A mini case study on the RTA site is given below.

- The Roads and Traffic Authority no longer provides PCs for people to practise the Driver Knowledge Test (DKT). Rather the RTA refers their customers to public libraries, where the demand to practise the test on Internet public access PCs provided free by public libraries is high. The client group using this resource often require a high level of interaction with library staff due to low levels of functional and computer literacy and problems inherent with the site. The RTA DKT also requires high bandwidth access which means public libraries incur additional expense to provide this service adequately.

Key Area – Fairness and Opportunity

All public libraries have high levels of use for education and training, to the extent of functioning as an additional arm of the compulsory and post-compulsory educational infrastructure. This is an unfunded mandate.

Public libraries also have a strong history of delivering of pre-school literacy programs to establish the foundations of reading and learning. Despite this core role, government funding for similar initiatives is routinely directed to other agencies greatly reducing the effectiveness and feasibility of all projects.

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 changed 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.

Students use public libraries to access information when their schools are closed or when school library resources do not meet their needs. To meet this demand many libraries have developed homework help services for students K-12 including dedicated staff and access to online databases.

Some libraries subscribe to Your Tutor, an online, interactive homework help service, in order to provide a high level of assistance to these clients. Such innovative, virtual projects are particularly important to country students living outside the major centres whose access to the physical library is limited by the necessity to catch the school bus home. Even if they live in smaller, satellite communities the limited opening hours of many branch libraries restricts access.

For example:

- Riverina Regional Library (Wagga Wagga) launched Your Tutor, in July 2007. Your Tutor can be accessed at all 12 branches of the Riverina Regional Library which cover 9 Councils in a 25,000 sq km footprint with 105,000 residents. This service has been well received which is good news; however the demand does place a strain on staff at small branches – especially single staff libraries. The Library's ability to maintain this service (annual subscription of \$8,000) in future years will be directly related to funding that is available to support demand. The service offers rural and remote students access to expert homework support that would not otherwise be available in small and isolated communities.

Still other libraries offer special programs for HSC students.

- Monaro Regional Library and Information Service (Cooma) visits schools across the region and teaches students how to search on-line subscription databases available free to library members. This is particularly important for students who live on remote properties and therefore do not have the opportunity to visit the library after school.

The public library network is, by default, an essential component of initiatives such as the Premier's Reading Challenge. The Challenge has impacted on public libraries without any recognition for the critical role that they play in supporting this high profile state-wide program and with no government funding. Without public libraries, the effectiveness of the Challenge would be greatly compromised. In 2006, 40% of all books borrowed by children completing the Challenge were borrowed from public libraries. When taking the borrowings of those children who did not complete the Challenge into account this percentage would be significantly increased.

In order to meet demand many libraries have been forced to allocate funds to buying books on the Challenge reading list, to the exclusion of purchasing other more appropriate resources for the community. In addition, considerable staff time is spent in cataloguing, processing and affixing special labels to identify books from the Challenge book list. This scenario is repeated to varying degrees (depending on the size of the library) in all public libraries across the state. Although fewer books may be processed in small rural libraries, the impact on resource consumption may be greater when only one or two staff members are available to run the library.

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.

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. 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.

Baby Bounce programs reinforce Families First, the NSW Government’s prevention and early intervention strategy, to help parents give their children a good start in life. In particular these programs address the Families First aims of helping parents to build their skills and confidence in their parenting.

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.

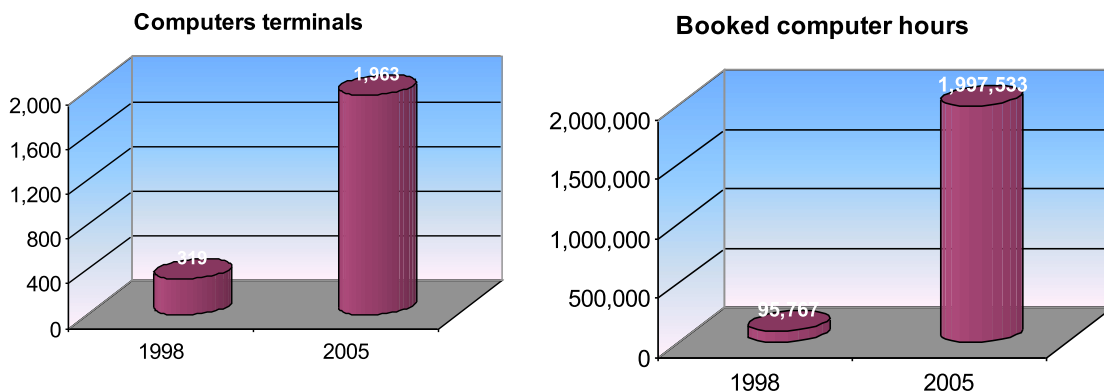
Key Area - Growing Prosperity Across NSW

Public libraries across regional and rural NSW provide access to new information technologies, including free internet access. While some believed that the introduction of information technologies would lead to a reduction in the size of libraries and the number of people using them the reverse is true. Library visitation continues to grow as does the use of computers in libraries. This puts an enormous strain on libraries as it is increasingly necessary to: increase the number of computer terminals available and budget for their maintenance and replacement; ensure that suitably skilled staff are available for servicing; provide appropriate training; and find the physical space to house these resources.

As public library funding continues to decline, the costs of providing adequate technology erodes other resource allocations - especially traditional formats such as books.

Connectivity across the state is extremely variable and sometimes very expensive which, in turn, results in great inequities.

As computer and Internet access at home has increased, 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 – resulting in further stress 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.”

Through technology, public libraries help to build strong communities and assist economic growth. For example:

- Staff at Clarence Regional Library (Grafton) report how a patron who was setting up a business in selling handmade buttons at first used the Library’s computer and internet access until she was established.
- Kiama Library describes clients who come in day after day looking for jobs on the internet, seeking help from library staff with word processing when writing their resumes and job applications.

The majority of libraries 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. For instance:

- Eurobodalla Shire Library Service offers training to the high number of aged/retired people in the community who are not skilled or confident in the use of the internet. There are also a high number of people from a low socio-economic background for who the Library often provides their only internet access point.

In summary, the collections, programs and services provided by public libraries in NSW align with the key areas of the NSW State Plan in many ways. The information provided above is a mere snapshot of a much broader picture of service provision that is characterised by principles of equity and access; community growth and development; social inclusion and working with marginalised target groups; encouraging community prosperity and partnerships; optimisation of technology applications; and development of capacity for the people of NSW.

Proposal

There is ample evidence-based documentation that NSW public libraries considerably enhance the capacity of NSW residents for equitable access to an exceptionally broad range of social, recreational, information and educational services. These services are delivered on behalf of a variety of government and non-government agencies based on a financial model that is funded by approximately 93% in Local Government and 7% in State Government contributions.

There is no model in place to ensure that State Government contributions maintain their relativity, leading to a reduction in its funding to the cost of operating NSW public libraries from 23.6% in 1980 to some 7% in 2008-09. NSW public libraries receive the lowest State Government per capita contribution in Australia.

This situation is not sustainable, and threatens the future provision of free public library services to the people of NSW.

PLC recommends the following funding strategy to the State Government of NSW in 2009-10:

- 1. *Immediate endorsement of the recommendations of the Review of NSW Public Library Funding 2007 (the Parry Report)*** – a broad review of the allocation of state government funding to NSW public libraries was conducted by Dr Thomas Parry at the instigation of the then Minister for the Arts, Hon. Frank Sartor, in 2007. Library Council of NSW provided the Ministry with a set of recommendations arising from the review process in June 2008. No further action by the government is evident in this matter, and at May 2009 there has been no advice to local government about the allocation of 2009-10 funding for public libraries. This issue needs resolution as a matter of urgency.
- 2. *Indexation of \$1.85 per capita subsidy to population growth*** – the Library Act prescribes that an amount of \$1.85 that must be provided for every resident of NSW annually. This amount is not indexed to population growth in current funding arrangements, meaning that an amount of \$1.85 for every additional NSW resident has to be found each year from elsewhere in the state's funding allocation to public libraries. For a number of consecutive years in recent history, the additional cost has been taken from the Library Development Grant funding pool, leading to the decimation of this pool over a number of years. It would be ironic in the extreme if the additional \$9m in state government Library Development Grant funding for country public libraries was raided on an annual basis to subsidise the \$1.85 per capita in population growth. This is a key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.
- 3. *Indexation of remaining elements of state government library funding to CPI or rate pegging*** – one of the ongoing problems with the current government library funding strategy is that it fails to keep pace with the cost of service provision because it does not include any growth index. This means that the actual value of government funding reduces each year, leading to lobbying action for more funds – which, whenever and however they are provided, suffer the same problem. This is a further key sustainability enhancement in the current funding strategy.

Recommendation

It is recommended that PLC adopt the abovementioned funding principles as the foundation of its 2009-10 lobbying strategy. Support information for the strategy can be drawn from a variety of current and past studies, reports and research findings.

REFERENCES

ABS *Attendance at selected cultural venues* (4114.0) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2004

Heather Nesbitt Planning and Bligh Voller Nield *People Places. A guide for public library buildings in New South Wales*. Second Edition. Prepared by Consultants Heather Nesbitt Planning in association with Bligh Voller Nield for the Library Council of New South Wales. Sydney: Library Council of NSW, 2005.

Jones "The Cost of Ageing Library Users" *APLIS*, Volume 19, number 1 March 2006

Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW and NSW Ministry for the Arts *Cultural Accord 3* Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, 2006

NSW Liberal/National Coalition *Investing in our Public Libraries* 2006
<http://www.nsw.liberal.org.au/policies/FinalInvestinginourPublicLibrariesSG.pdf>

Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and Legislation Committee *Libraries in the Online Environment* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra 2007

State Library of New South Wales, *NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment summary report 2006*, Sydney: Library Council of NSW 2006.

State Library of New South Wales, *Public Library Statistics 2006/07*, Sydney: State Library of NSW 2008.