



*Noosa Shire
Council*

*Western Downs
Regional Council*

**Public Library
STRATEGIC PLANNING BACKGROUND
PAPER**

September 2022



I & J Management Services

Noosa Shire Council / Western Downs Regional Council

Public Library STRATEGIC PLANNING BACKGROUND PAPER

September 2022

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
PART A. A DYNAMIC AND CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES	5
A1. An evolving population	5
A2. Social inclusion, community wellbeing and capacity building	7
A3. An economy under stress	11
A4. Exponential growth in the power and reach of technology	12
A5. Climate change and environmental sustainability	15
A6. Government policy and public libraries	16
A7. Local Government Areas	18
A8. Public library standards	19
A9. COVID and public libraries	25
PART B. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES	28
B1. The evolving role of public libraries	29
B2. Library location and building design	31
B3. Physical and digital collections and content creation	32
B4. Library as place	33
B5. Digital inclusion	34
B6. Emerging service models	35
B7. Storytelling	37
B8. Industry and community partnerships and collaboration	37
B9. Library workforce, qualifications and retention	38
B10. Political and community advocacy	39
SUMMARY. A CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC LIBRARY	42
APPENDIX 1. ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES	43
APPENDIX 2A. POPULATION SUMMARY – NOOSA	47
APPENDIX 2B. POPULATION SUMMARY – WESTERN DOWNS	51

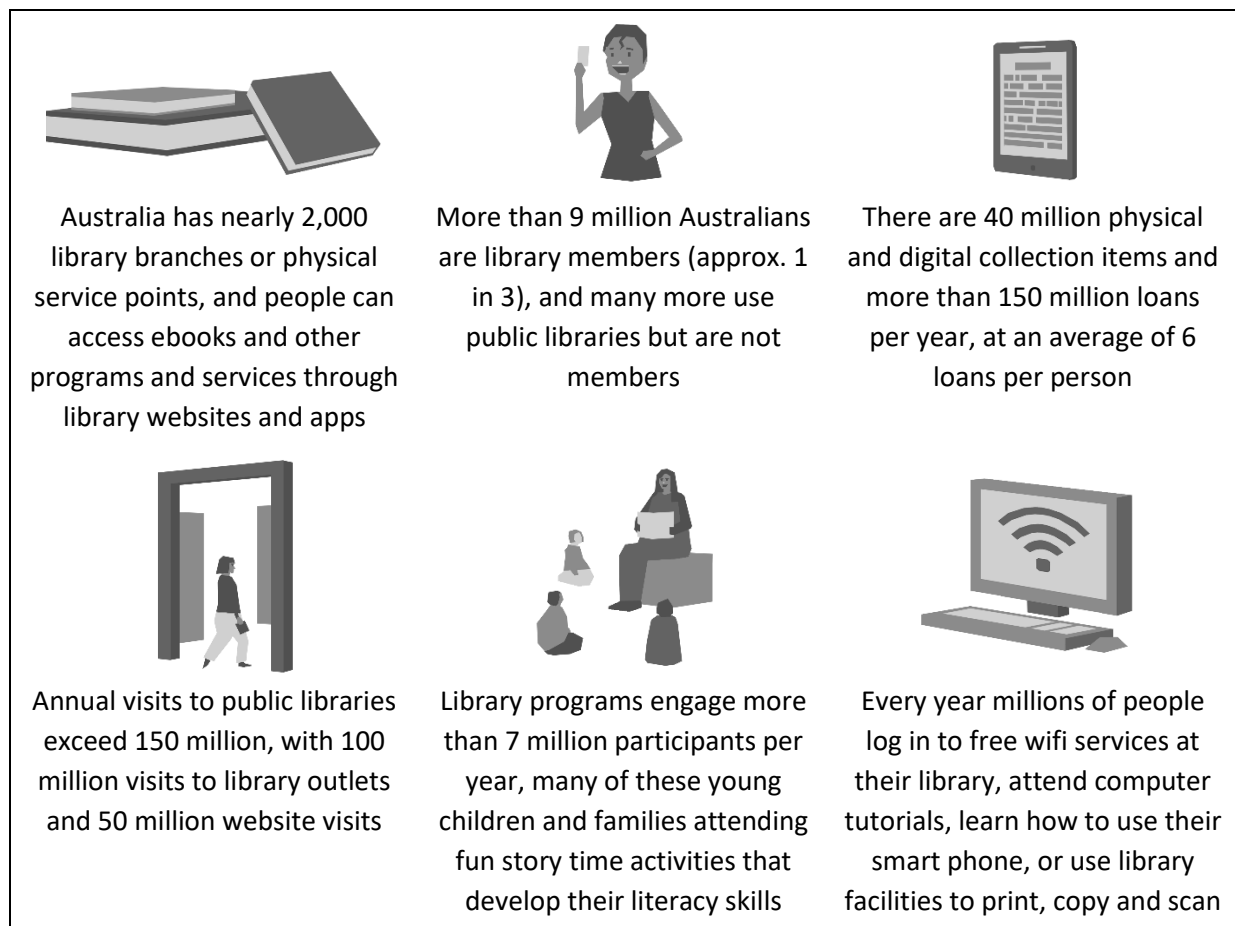
This Strategic Planning Background Paper was prepared for Noosa Shire Council and Western Downs Regional Council by I & J Management Services.

This report is copyright. Fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review is permitted under the Copyright Act. The creator of the report and the parties that commissioned the report grant permission to use images and content from this report for commercial and non-commercial purposes provided proper attribution is given. For example, 'Public Library Strategic Planning Background Paper, I & J Management Services, is used by permission, Noosa Shire Council and Western Downs Regional Council.'

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries – an integral part of Australian communities

Public libraries play an important role in the life of our communities. Every day more than 300,000 Australians visit their local public library to borrow books or DVDs, search for information or ask library staff for help, participate in a learning or social activity, access free computer or wifi services, find a place to study or work, catch up with a friend or just sit in a quiet place and watch the world go by.



Customer surveys show that public libraries are a well-loved community service – consistently returning customer satisfaction scores of 8 or 9 out of 10.

More importantly, public libraries are a highly-valued community service in the eyes of both people who use library services and those who don't – many of whom access similar services through their own means but still see the library as an important community asset for others. Research shows that 80-90% of Australians believe that public libraries:

- are a safe place in the community
- attract people from all walks of life
- are a hub for community connections
- offer access to authoritative and credible information
- are staffed by professional, helpful and caring people.

Public libraries have achieved this status by being embedded in and understanding the needs of their local communities. As the Australian population grows, as social norms and expectations change, as technology advances and as the economy ebbs and flows, libraries have adapted to changing circumstances and continued to serve their communities.

Planning for the future

Remaining relevant in a fast-changing world does not happen by chance. It comes from having a strategic outlook, constantly monitoring social trends and the global library sector, and being innovative and agile in response. In this context, Noosa Shire Council and Western Downs Regional Council commissioned development of this Strategic Planning Background Paper for public libraries. The Paper brings together information on the strategic, legislative and operating environment for contemporary Australian public libraries. It examines:

- the Commonwealth, State and Local Government policy landscape
- national and international trends in delivery of community-focused public library services
- recent research on the value and contribution of public libraries to communities
- likely opportunities and challenges for public libraries in the next five years.

While the research necessarily has a ‘whole of public library sector’ perspective, in some areas – given the interests of these two Councils – it concentrates on the particular context for Queensland public libraries (e.g. policy settings, funding arrangements, local library standards).

The Paper is neither exhaustive (in covering every factor that might influence library futures) nor predictive (in anticipating what will happen in the library operating environment over the next five years). It has been produced as communities around the world move forward from the ravages of the COVID pandemic.

The Paper is intended to be used as a reference to inform and support strategic and operational planning. It is presented in three parts.

- Part A identifies significant features of the current environment for Australian public libraries.
- Part B notes the possible implications and challenges for libraries.
- The Summary identifies, from among the many possibilities, what might be seen as the most important priorities for public libraries as they plan for their future.

Notes for reading the Paper

In reading the Paper it is important to note:

- a list of the information sources used in development of the Paper is presented in Appendix 1
- a glossary of the many acronyms and abbreviations used throughout the Paper is also presented in Appendix 1
- demographic data for Noosa Shire Council and Western Downs Regional Council from the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and other relevant data sources is presented in Appendices 2A and 2B.

PART A. A DYNAMIC AND CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Australian public libraries operate in a complex, dynamic and challenging environment. The services libraries offer and their capacity to professionally and efficiently deliver those services to local communities are influenced by a myriad of social, economic, environmental, technological and political factors. For example, the 2022 once-in-a-decade report from CSIRO – *Our Future World* – identifies seven global megatrends that hold the key to challenges and opportunities over the next 20 years.

- **Adapting to a changing climate** – The protection of livelihoods, infrastructure and people’s quality of life as the climate changes.
- **Leaner, cleaner and greener** – The global push to reach net zero and beyond, protect biodiversity and use resources efficiently.
- **The escalating health imperative** – The promotion of health in the face of rising demand, demographic ageing, emerging diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- **Geopolitical shifts** – The increase in efforts to ensure global stability, trade and economic growth.
- **Diving into digital** – The rapidly growing digital and data economy.
- **Increasingly autonomous** – The rise of artificial intelligence and advanced autonomous systems to enhance productivity and outputs across all industries.
- **Unlocking the human dimension** – The elevating importance of diversity, equity and transparency in business, policy and community decision-making.

Part A describes the current context for Australian public libraries, highlighting the following issues.

- A1. An evolving population
- A2. Social inclusion, community wellbeing and capacity building
- A3. An economy under stress
- A4. Exponential growth in the power and reach of technology
- A5. Climate change and environmental sustainability
- A6. Government policy
- A7. Local Government Areas
- A8. Public library standards
- A9. COVID.

A1. An evolving population

As of August 2022, the ABS estimated that Australia’s population was 25.95 million. Annual estimated population growth in 2020-21 of 68,900 people (+0.3%) comprised a net natural increase from births and deaths of 136,200 and a net decrease from overseas migration of 67,300. The COVID-related decline in population from overseas migration in 2020-21 was the first net loss since 1946 and the second largest on record. Every Australian state and territory experienced a drop in population due to overseas migration. Immigration fell 71% from 506,900 in 2019-20 to 145,800 in 2020-21. The 294,000 registered births in 2020 was a decline of 3.7% from 2019. There was a shift in population from capital cities (-0.1%) to regional areas (+0.9%).

The COVID-affected outcomes in the past two years are inconsistent with the major long-term trends in Australia's population. It is expected that most of those trends will recommence as Australian society and the economy advance into a 'living with COVID' state. Key features of Australia's demographic profile are noted below.¹

- **Population growth** – Prior to COVID Australia's population was growing at an annual rate of 1.2%, a relatively high rate for developed countries. In the past 50 years Australia's population growth has been driven by inward migration for economic, family or humanitarian reasons.
- **Internal migration** – Following an extended period when internal migration on the east coast was of movement from south to north (i.e. people moving from Victoria to NSW or Queensland), the pre-COVID years saw population growth in Victoria (and Melbourne in particular) exceed that in the northern states. Where there was internal migration during 2020 and 2021 this reverted to a historical south to north trend.
- **Ageing population** – Reflecting international trends in developed countries, Australia has an ageing population as: i) the Baby Boomer generation moves from working years into retirement; and ii) as advances in health care and living standards prolong life expectancy. Over the 20 years between 1999 and 2019, the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over increased from 12.3% to 15.9%. The ABS anticipates that by 2026 people aged 65 or over will outnumber those aged under 15 years, and that by 2051 nearly 25% of the population will be 65 years or older, and 5% will be 85 years or older. The rapid ageing of the population presents an unprecedented set of challenges:
 - shifting disease burden (e.g. higher incidence of chronic-degenerative diseases) and increased expenditure on health and long-term care
 - labour force shortages
 - dissaving (where spending exceeds income) and potential problems with old-age income security (as there are fewer working age people to support the non-working population).
- **Overseas-born** – 29.1% of Australia's population was born overseas, ranked 9th internationally for the total number of migrants in the population.
- **Language spoken** – In 2021, 22.3% of the Australian population spoke a language other than English at home, an increase from 18.2% in 2011. While there was growth in the proportion of the population speaking many non-English languages, there were also declines in some language groups linked to post-war migration.
 - Mandarin up from 1.6% of the population in 2011 to 2.7% in 2021
 - Punjabi up from 0.3% to 0.9%
 - Filipino/Tagalog up from 0.6% to 0.9%
 - Hindi up from 0.5% to 0.8%
 - Italian down from 1.4% to 0.9%
 - Greek down from 1.2% to 0.9%.
- **Single-person households** – One in four Australian households is a lone- or single-person household. The number of people living alone is forecast to surge from 2.4 million in 2021 to around 3 to 3.5 million in 2041 (an increase of 25-45%). The single-person household demographic is a diverse cohort, ranging from the elderly who have lost their partners, to middle-aged persons who have separated and young professionals choosing the solo life. For some it is a choice of lifestyle, for others an unexpected outcome. The rise of single-person

¹ As of August 2022 the ABS has published some, but not all, of the data from the 2021 census. The analysis above presents the most current data available as of August 2022.

households has implications for social connectivity, mental health and wellbeing, building design and housing efficiency, and provision of civic and social infrastructure.

- **Educational qualifications** – Commonwealth and state public policy initiatives over the past 20 years have sought to increase economic productivity through skilled migration and increasing educational qualifications. From 2011 to 2016 the proportion of Australians aged 15 years or over with a Bachelor or Higher degree increased from 18.8% to 22.0% and the proportion with Diplomas or vocational qualifications increased from 26.1% to 27.7%. The proportion of persons aged 15 years or more with no post-school qualifications decreased from 44.1% to 39.9%.
- **Internet access** – An internet connection is now an important utility for most Australian households, increasingly required for accessing essential information and taking part in the digital economy. Australia-wide in 2016, 78.8% of all households had internet access via fixed or mobile connections (up from 73.9% in 2011). The lack of internet access generally indicates a level of disadvantage and can be related to socio-economic factors, age or geographical isolation (e.g. seniors are less likely to have internet access at home). Stay at home measures implemented during COVID contributed to an accelerated uptake of internet connection in previously unconnected households.
- **Need for personal assistance** – As the population has aged the proportion of people who need assistance due to a severe or profound disability has also increased. In 2021 it was estimated that 5.8% of the total population required some form of assistance (up from 4.6% in 2011), with this peaking at 48.9% for people aged 85 years or more.
- **Volunteering** – The proportion of people aged 15 years or more volunteering in community activities had been increasing prior to COVID (up from 17.8% in 2011 to 19.0% in 2016). This was primarily attributable to the increased number of people moving from work to retirement. However, the latest census data reports a significant drop back in volunteering to 14.1% of people aged 15 years or over.

The best public libraries are a reflection of their local community. As demographics change, so too must libraries monitor those changes and adapt: i) the type of collections, programs and services they provide; and ii) the way those services are delivered to the community.

A2. Social inclusion, community wellbeing and capacity building

Social factors, norms and expectations have a critical impact on how people live – both as individuals and within their communities. These factors have a flow on effect to demand for and use of different public library services, most notably in the way each library plans for and delivers a mix of library services that best meets the needs of their local community.

A2.1. Childhood, adult and English language literacy

Literacy is a foundational skill – essential to productive engagement in society and a pre-requisite to acquisition of more advanced skills that support employment, cultural engagement and recreational pursuits. In Australia and around the world, higher literacy rates are associated with healthier populations, less crime, greater economic growth, higher employment rates and higher living standards. A society's economic prosperity and literacy have great influence on each other as they jointly grow together. Therefore, maintaining high literacy standards is of critical interest to the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.

- **Early years' literacy (AEDC)** – The Australian Early Development Census (conducted every 3 years) tracks early years development of children against 5 key domains. The language and cognitive skills domain (assessed as children commence their first year of schooling) measures aspects of children's early literacy and numeracy skills. While there has been some improvement since the first AEDC in 2009, the national results in COVID-impacted 2021 saw a reversal of early gains. In 2021, in terms of language and cognitive skills:
 - 82.6% of children were assessed as developmentally 'on track' (vs 84.4% in 2018)
 - 10.1% of children were developmentally 'at risk' or facing some challenges (vs 9.0%)
 - 7.3% of children were considered to be developmentally 'vulnerable' or facing significant challenges (vs 6.6%).
- **Reading at home** – Research shows that young children who are read to 6 to 7 times a week have a literacy level almost a year ahead of children who are not read to at home. On average, children from poorer families and those from a CALD background are less likely to have a literacy-rich environment and are most at risk of starting school with fewer literacy prerequisites. Furthermore, if a child is a poor reader at the end of Grade 1, there is a 90% chance they will still be a poor reader at the end of Grade 4.

"The single biggest predictor of high academic achievement and high ACT (American College Test) scores is reading to children. Not flash cards, not workbooks, not fancy preschools, not blinking toys or computers, but Mom or Dad taking the time every day or night (or both!) to sit and read them wonderful books." (Y Childcare Newsletter)

- **Student literacy (NAPLAN)** – In line with the Australian school curriculum, NAPLAN reading tests measure literacy proficiency in English. The 2019 NAPLAN results (the last year before COVID significantly interrupted teaching and learning in all Australian jurisdictions) show that reading levels for students in Years 3 and 5 have increased significantly since the first NAPLAN in 2008, and remained relatively stable for students in Years 7 and 9.

Year level	2008 score	2019 score	Change	% 2019 students achieving the National Minimum Standard
Year 3	400.5	432.2	+31.7	95.9%
Year 5	484.4	506.1	+21.7	94.7%
Year 7	536.5	546.3	+9.8	94.5%
Year 9	578.0	581.3	+3.3	91.8%

- **Student literacy (PISA)** – The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey of 15-year-old students that assesses the extent to which they have acquired the key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society. The assessment focuses primarily on proficiency in reading, mathematics and science.
 - The latest PISA results from 2018 show that in reading literacy Australian students scored 503 points against an OECD average of 487 points.
 - 59% of Australian students achieved the national proficient standard in reading.
 - Australia's ranking on reading literacy dropped from 10th in 2012 and 12th in 2015 to 16th in 2018, and is now significantly below 10 leading countries.
 - Since PISA first assessed reading literacy in 2000, Australia's mean score has declined by 26 points, the equivalent of around three-quarters of a year of schooling.

- **Adult literacy (PIAAC)** – The OECD’s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills, including literacy, numeracy and problem solving. The most recent PIAAC data from 2011-12 found that 44% of Australian adults aged 16 to 65 years read at a literacy Level of 2 or below. This is considered to be below the international standard required for productive participation in work, education and society.
 - Australia had the 5th highest literacy rate (Levels 3 to 5) of the participating countries.
 - Migrants and indigenous Australians have, on average, lower rates of reading literacy than the population average, with as many as 70% of Aboriginal Australians in some remote areas considered to be functionally illiterate.
 - The Australian Government launched an inquiry into ‘adult literacy and its importance’ in February 2021.

A2.2. Vulnerable communities

Economic, health and wellbeing outcomes in Australia are, at a macro level, better than ever before, but some groups still experience greater rates of economic hardship and poorer access to quality healthcare and personal support. While definitions of vulnerable communities vary, the following groups are among those who can, for different reasons, be considered socially, physically or economically vulnerable. They include groups who are structurally (e.g. demographics) and/or situationally vulnerable. For example:

- low-income households and the economically disadvantaged
- unemployed
- children in low-income families
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- refugee and migrant populations
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities
- racial and ethnic minorities
- LGBTQ+ population
- people with an intellectual disability
- the elderly
- people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping
- people experiencing incarceration
- victims of family and domestic violence.
- defence force veterans
- ‘at-risk’ or socially disengaged adolescents
- people with chronic health conditions
- people suffering from anxiety and mental health issues
- people experiencing drug or alcohol dependency.

COVID-related social and economic disruptions have exacerbated vulnerability, and in some regards increased the number of Australians at risk, the degree of vulnerability and the severity of risk exposure.

A2.3. Social inclusion

Social inclusion means that all people have opportunities to enjoy life and do well in society. It is an important determinant of health, for without connection to community people are more likely to experience poor health (including poor mental health), loneliness, isolation, poor self-esteem and poorer education and employment outcomes. With this in mind the central, transformative promise of

the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (see A8.5) is making sure "no-one will be left behind".

Factors influencing social isolation can include:

- number of single person households and people living alone (especially older persons)
- access to public transport and personal mobility
- proximity to family, friends and social support systems
- opportunities for social connection
- access to safe welcoming community spaces.

A2.4. First Nations people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people face entrenched inequality and have, on average, lower health, economic and social outcomes than non-Aboriginal Australians due to experiencing disadvantage, political exclusion, intergenerational trauma and ongoing institutional racism. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap seeks to re-dress these inequalities, acknowledging the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustaining the world's oldest living culture.

The Closing the Gap Agreement defines four Priority Reform targets focused on measuring the change governments are making in the way they work with ATSI people, and 17 Socio-economic targets focused on measuring the outcomes experienced by ATSI people. For example:

- **Target 4** – By 2031, increase the proportion of ATSI children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC to 55 per cent
- **Target 16** – By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of ATSI languages being spoken
- **Target 17** – By 2026, ATSI people have equal levels of digital inclusion.

State, Territory and local governments are now in the process of developing and beginning to implement Reconciliation Action Plans that articulate the journey to reconciliation and how the Closing the Gap targets will be supported at a local level.

A2.5. Fake news and post-truth

The rise of social media, the Brexit referendum in June 2016 and the election of US President Donald Trump in November 2016 are seen to have crystallised the emerging concepts of fake news and post-truth. In simple terms:

- **Fake news** refers to false information that has been created in a way that makes it look like a trustworthy news report.
- **Misinformation** is incorrect or misleading information presented as fact, either intentionally or unintentionally.
- **Disinformation** is information that is deliberately incorrect, and can include made-up information like statistics or scientific opinions.
- **Post-truth** refers to circumstances where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

The Australian Government's eSafety Commissioner notes that the motivations behind creation of fake news range from:

- a desire to position or aid a political agenda, presenting information or data that validates misinformed opinions and convinces people to vote in an intended way
- a desire to create a more comforting version of the truth ('fake news can be easier to believe than real news')
- a desire to engage people with news content or commercial opportunities (as controversial headlines generate more attention, more engagement and more subscribers).

The dissemination of fake news creates (unwarranted) distrust in the media, undermines the democratic process, creates platforms for harmful conspiracy theories and hate speech, and facilitates the spread of false or discredited science (as demonstrated through the COVID vaccination debate).

Public libraries have always had a role in supporting literacy and social outcomes. Libraries support early years' literacy through provision of children's collections and Story Time activities that assist families to access resources and develop skills to support reading in the home. Libraries also provide resources and programs that support development of adult and English language literacy. Libraries support vulnerable communities by providing free access to reading and information resources, learning and social inclusion programs, computers and wifi connections, and safe welcoming community spaces.

Public libraries have historically been credited as sources of objective, credible and authoritative information. Where there is mistrust or dismissal of 'factual' information the role of a librarian becomes both more important in civic debate and more difficult to perform.

A3. An economy under stress

Both the global and the Australian economies are, in 2022, under significant stress. Major contributing factors include:

- the impact of COVID-related restrictions on business structures and workplace productivity
- the Russia-Ukraine war and the flow-on effects on global supply chains
- rapidly increasing interest rates
- rapidly increasing inflation, with significant increases in the cost of food, energy and petrol
- negative growth in real wages
- high levels of government debt.

The compounding implications of these economic and workplace stressors are being felt in businesses and households across Australia.

- **Labour market** – Australia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to a record low of 3.5% in June 2022, down from 3.9% in the prior three months, amid a recovery in the economy from the COVID pandemic. Full-time employment was up 53,000 to 9.5M and part-time employment rose 36,000 to 4.1M. The participation rate was at an all-time high of 66.8%, while the underutilization rate of 9.6% is steady at its lowest level since April 1982. This situation is in part due to massive reductions in inward migration of skilled labour over the past two COVID-impacted years. While high employment and low unemployment levels are desirable at an individual level, they also mean that businesses find it more difficult to obtain skilled staff, constraining net economic growth.

- **Work from home** – Widely implemented ‘work from home’ (WFH) models adopted during the COVID pandemic are now becoming an integral part of operations for many previously office-based businesses. While WFH has been embraced by both workers (for the lifestyle benefits and reduced commuting time/cost) and employers (reduced office rents), experience shows that for some people home is not a productive or comfortable work environment due to competing home demands, family and pet distractions, technology access issues (e.g. hardware, internet speed) and/or lack of dedicated workspace.
- **Cost of living** – The rising cost of essential household items (e.g. food, utilities, transport) and higher mortgage repayments associated with increasing interest rates are putting significant pressure on family finances. In households where home-based learning has now become standard for school and tertiary students a reliable internet plan has shifted from a desirable to a ‘must have’ item. All of which is happening at a time when growth in average wages has fallen behind the inflation rate, resulting in negative real wage growth.
- **Housing affordability** – Housing affordability in Australia is among the worst in the world, with Sydney ranked number 2 for least affordable housing markets internationally – behind only Hong Kong. Melbourne (5th), Adelaide (14th), Brisbane (17th) and Perth (20th) also rank among the 20 ‘least affordable’ cities among 92 major markets in Australia, Canada, China, Ireland, New Zealand, Singapore, the UK and the US. House prices across Australia rose by 24.5% in the year to December 30 2021, with median Sydney house prices 15 times the annual gross median household income. The property market is only now starting to show signs of cooling as home lending interest rates increase. High levels of housing affordability can lead to:
 - families and individuals relocating to regional areas where average housing costs are lower than in urban areas
 - increased numbers of share, group and cross-generational households as a means of spreading housing costs across a greater number of people
 - increased household debt to income ratios and reduced disposable incomes (i.e. mortgage stress)
 - negative impacts on physical and mental health
 - increased risk of homelessness.

Increasing cost of living pressures are likely to increase the appeal of free lending and wifi services at public libraries. Libraries that offer quiet individual or co-working spaces are also witnessing increasing use of their spaces by people who are choosing to ‘work from library’ (WFL) rather than ‘work from home’.

A4. Exponential growth in the power and reach of technology

A4.1. Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion is based on the premise that everyone should be able to make full use of digital technologies and the benefits they bring. While the digital economy is generating social, cultural, and economic benefits for many Australians, these benefits are not equally shared.




In the early days of the internet, access to a connection was considered the primary driver for digital inclusion. Those without a fixed or mobile household connection, or with limited access in other ways, were seen as falling on the wrong side of the digital divide. However, it is increasingly clear that connection alone is not enough to ensure digital inclusion. People also need: i) skills and knowledge to

use the internet and digital technologies effectively; and ii) financial capacity to maintain an appropriate internet plan and (potentially) complementary devices (e.g. printers, scanners and consumables).

There are still groups in the community that have very limited or no access to the internet, and therefore little chance to acquire basic digital skills. However, as both connections and digital skills have gradually improved across the population, concern remains about the ways in which 'offline' social and economic advantages and disadvantages may influence 'online' opportunities, resources, and networks.

A4.2. Australian Digital Inclusion Index

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) produced by Telstra, RMIT University and Swinburne University uses data from the Australian Internet Usage Survey to measure digital inclusion across three key dimensions.

	<p>Access – Access is about the types of digital connections and devices and how frequently they are used to get online. A typical individual with a high Access score has daily use and high intensity of use, fixed broadband, fast and unlimited data allowances, and access via a range of devices.</p>
	<p>Affordability – The Affordability dimension measures the percentage of household income required to gain a good quality service with reliable connectivity. This takes into account the price of an internet bundle of goods and services required for a well-connected household.</p>
	<p>Digital ability – Digital Ability is about skill levels, what people are able to do online and their confidence in doing it. A person with a high Digital Ability score can perform a diverse range of tasks while those with lower scores may only have basic or no operational skills.</p>

The Index is a relative measure of inclusion, where a score closer to the 100 maximum indicates higher inclusion while scores closer to 0 indicate greater exclusion. The 2021 ADII data shows that:

- digital inclusion at the national level is improving, from an average Index score of 67.5 in 2020 to 71.1 in 2021
- the divide between metropolitan and regional areas has narrowed but remains marked, with regional areas scoring 67.4 in 2021 vs 72.9 in metropolitan Australia
- the number of Australians who are highly excluded has declined but remains substantial, with 11% of the Australian population registering an Index score of 45 or below
- Access scores are increasing but mobile-only users (43.4), people over 75 years of age (53.5), people who did not complete secondary school (57.0), people who rent from a public housing authority (57.2) and people who fall into the lowest income quintile (57.7) are being left behind
- 67% of Australians in the lowest income quintile would have to pay more than 10% of their household income to obtain quality reliable connectivity
- digital inclusion increases with education, employment, and income
- couples with children are the most digitally included household type in Australia (78.0), while people who live alone (including many older people) are much less digitally included (61.5).

A4.3. Emerging digital services and technologies

Growth in the power of mobile devices has accelerated the diverse and increasingly ubiquitous application of digital technologies into everyday life. This was highlighted during the COVID pandemic when access to a mobile phone and nominated apps became a necessary part of check-in to most health, retail, commercial, hospitality and government buildings. The average mobile phone is still a major communication device but is seldom used to make or receive phone calls. It is more likely to be used to access social media, to search for online information and directions, or as a repository for documents, a payment tool, a camera, a health aid, an online shopping portal and a library card.

On a wider scale, new technological applications continue to emerge across society, become part of the new normal, and are then overtaken by more new technological applications. In the last few years alone the new normal (for those who are digitally 'included') has come to involve:

- telehealth appointments with a local doctor, not just as an aid for people in rural and remote areas to access a distant specialist
- online learning for students of all ages, with more than 50% of university learning in many courses now undertaken online
- working from home for some or all of the working week, and online meetings for work, sporting clubs, community organisations and family and social networks
- online ordering of meals, online shopping, online scheduling of appointments and online ticketing
- widespread access to subscription-based streaming music and video services that challenge traditional media and entertainment models
- personal use of 3D printers and laser cutters, equipment which previously only had industrial applications
- curation of news content via preferred channels.

Emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are beginning to find mainstream applications in entertainment, tourism and education. VR creates an immersive completely virtual environment in which users can (appear to) move about and undertake activities defined and controlled by the system. VR users require a headset device. AR uses a real-world setting and users can control their presence in that world as they explore, access information and increase knowledge and understanding. AR can be accessed with a smartphone.

Public libraries play an important role in providing free access to computers and the internet, especially for people who might otherwise not have access because of cost (of devices, data, printers and consumables), difficulty of use, or a need to access specialist equipment (e.g. large format display and keyboards for people with print disability).

Emerging technologies may also provide libraries with additional tools to promote and encourage more active engagement of library users with resources and services. For example, intelligent systems capable of profiling an individual's past reading habits could lead to tailored push promotion of similar authors or titles.

A5. Climate change and environmental sustainability

A5.1. Scientific projections of climate change

CSIRO reports that the international scientific community accepts that increases in greenhouse gases due to human activity have been the dominant cause of observed global warming since the mid-20th century. Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system.

It is also generally understood that Australia's changing climate represents a significant challenge to individuals, communities, governments, industry and the environment. Australia has already experienced increases in average temperatures over the past 60 years, with more frequent hot weather, fewer cold days, shifting rainfall patterns and rising sea levels.

CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology have concluded that most of the changes in climate observed over recent decades will continue into the future. Projections suggest that for Australia:

- hot days will become more frequent and hotter
- sea levels will rise and oceans will become more acidic
- snow depths will decline
- extreme rainfall events will become more intense
- seasonal-average rainfall changes will trend downwards over the longer-term, although in the medium-term this will be driven by natural variability more than greenhouse emissions
- the time in drought over southern Australia will increase
- soil moisture will decrease from mid-century in the southern regions
- southern and eastern Australia will experience harsher fire weather
- tropical cyclones may occur less often but become more intense.

The effects of extreme weather events (e.g. bushfires, floods, cyclones, drought) are already felt widely across Australia.

A5.2. Climate change and the 2022 Federal election

Community concerns about climate change and government responses to curb greenhouse emissions are argued to have reached a peak in the 2022 Australian Federal election where the number of Greens candidates elected to the House of Representatives increased from one to four, with three Greens candidates successful in Queensland electorates. The Greens also gained an extra three seats in the Senate (in NSW, Queensland and SA). Six successful independent candidates who ran on a strong climate platform in formerly safe Liberal party seats in NSW, Victoria and WA were labelled 'teal' candidates because they represent a voting base with conservative fiscal politics (blue is the traditional colour of the Liberal Party) combined with green views on climate.

While the Labor Party has sufficient seats to control the House of Representatives (and is not reliant on support from the Greens or Independents), it will need to negotiate with Green, Independent and other senators to pass legislation through the Upper House. Therefore, regardless of any individual party's policies, it is likely that the Australian Parliament will, over its next term, be placing greater emphasis and recognition on climate change issues than was the case for previous parliaments.

Public libraries are not at the forefront of political or public debate on climate change. However, as has already begun, public libraries can play a role in supporting community outcomes and facilitating greater awareness of the impact of climate change and environmental sustainability.

A6. Government policy and public libraries

Commonwealth, State and Territory government policies provide a context within which public libraries operate. These tend to have more of a trickle-down effect than a direct impact on public library operations. The broad economic and social portfolio areas that can influence the way in which libraries respond to and serve their communities include:

- education
- diversity and inclusion
- social services, health and aged care
- labour market and workforce reform
- transport and civic infrastructure
- energy
- climate change.

A6.1. Local government responsibility for provision of public library services

Local government in Australia plays an important role in community governance and delivery of highly localized community services. As a forum for local decision-making, it also helps in local and regional delivery of Commonwealth and State Government priorities.

For example, the nature and extent of each Queensland council's responsibilities and powers is lawfully outlined within the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act) to ensure that the system of local government is accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable. The Act applies to all Queensland councils except Brisbane City Council, whose legal and policy principles are contained within the *City of Brisbane Act 2010*.

Provision of public library services is a responsibility of local government. Library services are referenced in S92 of the Act as an example of a service that benefits the community in general, and for which the collection of general rates is applicable.

S43 of the Act proscribes the competitive neutrality principle to significant business activities undertaken by local government authorities. That is, that a council conducting a business activity in competition with the private sector should not enjoy a net advantage over competitors only because the entity is in the public sector. However, S43(5) explicitly excludes provision of library services from the definition of a significant business activity, meaning that local public library services are not subject to the competitive neutrality principle. In effect, this condition implies that an important and valuable 'public good' arises from the local and resourced provision of public library services.

A6.2 Queensland Public Library Grant and Service Level Agreement

While the majority of funding for public library services in Queensland is provided by local government (approx. 88% in 2020-21), on average 10% of public library funding is provided by the Queensland Government (\$26.4M in 2020-21). State Library Queensland (SLQ) administers the Queensland

Government's annual Public Library and First 5 Forever funding to enable the delivery and development of library services, programs and collections that meet the diverse needs of their communities.

The allocation of funds through the Public Library Grant is regularly reviewed to ensure the Queensland Government's strategic priorities are addressed and there is equity in the distribution of funding to local government to support the provision of public library services. From 1 July 2022 a new Public Library Funding methodology was introduced. The new methodology will be in effect for two years (July 2022 to June 2024) and provide councils with financial certainty as the state recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. Funding will be guaranteed at a minimum of 2021-22 levels.

Public Library Funding is administered under a Service Level Agreement (SLA). SLQ groups library services into three categories and tailors the obligations in the SLA to suit the diversity of councils and communities across the state.

1. Independent libraries – operated by larger local governments.
2. Rural Libraries Queensland – a partnership model for local governments with populations of under 15,000.
3. Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) – a partnership model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local governments

Public Library Funding is calculated in 'tiers' based on regional classifications defined by Remoteness Area (RA) values from the ABS. The classification has five tiers:

- Tier 1 – Major Cities of Australia
- Tier 2 – Inner Regional Australia
- Tier 3 – Outer Regional Australia
- Tier 4 – Remote Australia
- Tier 5 – Very Remote Australia.

Public Library Funding is provided to support collections, services, programs and operations of public libraries and IKCs through:

- investment in, and development of, library collections which cater for the diverse needs of the whole community
- priority projects that:
 - meet emergent needs and local community priorities
 - facilitate positive service development outcomes for libraries
 - assist public library managers to reshape and improve library services
- subsidies that enable libraries to be open and staffed by council employees for a minimum of 6 hours per week (24 hours per week for IKCs).

In accordance with the SLA, councils are required to submit annual reports each year including annual statistical data, a self-assessment against the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines, and a current strategic/operational plan for the library.

State and Territory Government grants are a modest, but valuable, financial contribution to efficient delivery of quality public library services in Australia.

A7. Local Government Areas

A7.1. Variability in Queensland LGAs – by population served and geographical area

Queensland has 77 local government areas (LGAs) that cover the length and breadth of the state. The LGAs are classified as Cities, Regions or Shires. Queensland also has one Town Authority (Weipa).

Queensland's LGAs vary significantly in terms of population served and geographical land area. With a population of 1.27 million in 2021 the City of Brisbane is home to 24.2% of the Queensland population. The Cities of Gold Coast, Moreton Bay, Logan and Sunshine Coast each have populations over 300,000 and collectively account for another 34.9% of the State's population. The 12 LGAs with population in excess of 100,000 account for 4.26 million people or 81.2% of the Queensland population of 5.22 million.

In contrast, the Shire of Barcoo has a 2021 population of 267. Thirty nine rural Queensland Shires (50% of the total) have populations below 5,300, and collectively represent 1.2% of the state's population.

Population (30 June 2021)				Area			
	LGA	'000	%		LGA	sq km	%
1	Brisbane	1,273	24.2%	1	Cook	105,718	6.1%
2	Gold Coast	643	12.3%	2	Diamantina	94,722	5.5%
3	Moreton Bay	487	9.3%	3	Bulloo	73,722	4.3%
4	Logan	348	6.7%	4	Charters Towers	68,382	4.0%
5	Sunshine Coast	344	6.6%	5	Quilpie	67,414	3.9%

76	Croydon	288	0.01%	76	Cherbourg	32	0.002%
77	Diamantina	287	0.01%	77	Wujal Wujal	12	0.001%
78	Barcoo	267	0.01%	78	Weipa	11	0.001%
	Queensland	5,221	100%		Queensland	1,730,171	100%

However, those same 39 LGAs also cover 64.7% of Queensland's 1.73 million square kilometres, including seven of the eight largest LGAs by area. The Shire of Cook is the largest LGA in Queensland, covering an area of 106,000 sq km. The City of Brisbane covers 1,342 sq km, ranked 61st in the state.

The City of Brisbane has a population density of 948 people per sq km. The Shire of Diamantina has a population density of 0.003 people per sq km.

A7.2. Rate capping

State Governments in NSW and Victoria have introduced rate capping mechanisms to put a ceiling on annual increases in the rates levied on residential and business property owners by local councils. This is intended to provide certainty to ratepayers and consistency in annual cost increases.

- In NSW rate caps are set annually by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The Tribunal takes into account the annual change in the Local Government Cost Index (LGCI – which measures the average costs faced by NSW councils) and each council's population growth. The resulting rate peg is the maximum amount by which a council can increase its general income in a particular year. In 2022-23 IPART set rate pegs that ranged from 0.7% to 5.0%.
- In Victoria the Minister for Local Government, on the advice of the Victorian Essential Service Commission, sets a rate cap for all Victorian councils. The rate cap limits the maximum amount a

council can increase general rates and municipal charges and can apply to all councils, a group of councils or a single council. An individual council can submit an application for a higher cap. The statewide rate cap in 2022-23 was 1.75%.

Although rate capping approaches have been explored by some other State Governments, at this time rate caps do not exist in Queensland, WA, SA or Tasmania.

Local government authorities are generally not in favour of rate capping as it removes the flexibility for them to determine the level at which they can set rates to deliver on community expectations for local service provision. Nor, it is argued, do rate capping mechanisms account for cost-shifting that is reported to occur from Commonwealth and State Governments to Local Government. Regardless of whether rate capping is in place or not, the local government sector is still accountable to local communities to improve the efficiency and transparency of its operations and put downward pressure on council rates.

Funding of public libraries is made within the context of each council's rateable income (capped or otherwise) and the competing demands of all business units to deliver on that council's strategic community priorities.

A8. Public library standards

A8.1. APLA-ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries

The *APLA-ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* (Australian Public Library Alliance, Australian Library and Information Association – the Guidelines) present a consistent framework for the management and delivery of public library services across Australia. The Guidelines were updated in December 2020 and, for the first time, include quantitative standards (both a benchmark target and an enhanced standard) that recognise the different circumstances, capabilities and expectations of public libraries that differ by size (i.e. population catchment served) and location (i.e. metropolitan, regional, rural).

Standards	Guidelines
S1. Library expenditure	G1. Community engagement
S2. Staffing	G2. Governance
S3. Opening hours	G3. Library management
S4. Expenditure on library materials	G4. Collections
S5. Physical collection size	G5. Information and reference services
S6. Collection age	G6. Programs
S7. Public technology Access	G7. Technology access
S8. Membership	G8. Places and spaces
S9. Visits	G9. Targeted services for young, old, culturally diverse and other groups
S10. Loans	G10. Service points
S11. Turnover of stock	G11. Staffing
S12. Electronic service use	G12. Funding
S13. Program participation	G13. Partnerships and collaboration
S14. Customer satisfaction	G14. Customer service

The Guidelines identify five core services provided by modern libraries to meet the recreational, educational, social, information and employment-related needs of library users of all ages, interests and backgrounds. These services are:

- physical and digital content and collections, including general, specialist, local studies, heritage and cultural collections
- information and reference services
- reading, literacy, learning, wellbeing, cultural and creative programs
- access to computers, the internet, printers, scanners and other mainstream technology, as well as support in developing digital literacy
- places and spaces where people can relax, work, meet, learn, connect and create.

The Guidelines also identify six broad individual and community outcomes from the provision and use of public library services.

Public library outcomes	
Literacy and lifelong learning	Public libraries help children to learn to read, support youth and adult literacy, and help people to improve their English language skills. Libraries also provide opportunities for people of all ages and interests to pursue formal and informal study and lifelong learning.
Digital inclusion	The ability to access and use technology is fundamental to meaningful engagement in modern society. Public libraries play an important role in supporting digital inclusion and providing a safety net for those caught in the digital divide.
Personal development and wellbeing	Public libraries are safe welcoming and universally accessible places that provide access to authoritative information on health and wellness, support reading for pleasure and provide social interaction.
Stronger and more creative communities	Public libraries strengthen communities and build social capital by providing an inclusive forum and support for expression of creativity and cultural identity. They preserve the past, celebrate the present and embrace the future.
Economic and workforce development	Use of library services and programs by different groups in the community can support improved employment and productivity outcomes (e.g. job seekers, entrepreneurs).
Informed and connected citizens	People come together at the library to connect with one another and with what is happening in their community.

The 2020 update to the Guidelines drew heavily on the 2016 version and the state-level public library standards and guidelines published by the State Library of NSW and the State Library of Queensland.

A8.2. Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines

The *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines* (July 2020) are an important tool for the advancement and effective operation of public libraries in Queensland. They are guided by the *Libraries Act 1988* and work alongside Service Level Agreements and *Realising our potential: A vision for Queensland public libraries*. The Queensland standards suit the local needs and conditions of public library services in Queensland and are intended to be used in conjunction with the APLA-ALIA national standards and guidelines.

The standards are quantitative measures for benchmarking, comparison and attainment. They are evidence based and informed by Queensland public library data contained in the Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletins. Each standard contains measures, definitions and additional notes. The guidelines are qualitative measures documenting best practice and are intended as operational suggestions for improving library performance. They recognise key trends in the provision of future focused Queensland, Australian and international public library services. Each guideline contains an objective, guidance for how to achieve the objective, and additional resources for further exploration.

The standards and guidelines work together to outline what is achievable and what is aspirational for all Queensland public library services. While local conditions dictate what is feasible regarding service scope and organisational capability, all library services are expected to strive towards the highest levels of service they can deliver.

Queensland Standards		Queensland Guidelines
Operations	Opening hours Public internet access Staffing	Operations Additional Service Points Facilities
Collections	Physical collection size Collection age Electronic collection expenditure Collection usage	Staffing Technology Collections Community Engagement
Facilities	Base Floor Area of a Library Facility Base Floor Area for Additional Functional Areas Library Shelving	Inclusive Spaces Visibility Information Services
Usage	Membership Visitation Program Attendance Customer Satisfaction	Programs Outreach

A8.3. People Places – A guide for planning public library buildings

ALIA and APLA have endorsed *People Places: A guide for public library buildings* from the State Library of NSW as a primary source of practical advice and tools to assist in the planning of public library buildings to meet community needs. *People Places* includes advice on:

- recommended size of central and branch libraries to serve a population catchment (including base floor area, additional functional spaces and back of house/central management areas)
- expected range of functional areas within a library
- standards for furniture and fittings
- minimising barriers to access for users with physical limitations or disabilities.

A8.4. Professional qualifications

The Australian and Queensland standards and guidelines for public libraries (see A8.1 and A8.2) each address expectations in terms of library staff qualifications, with the aim of ensuring that:

- the number and mix of library staff support development and delivery of a range of services and programs which meet the needs of the community
- each library service has the minimum number of library qualified staff to undertake reference and technical services.

The standards are identical in terms the number of library qualified staff per 10,000 population, and similar in terms of total staffing levels (with the national standard operating on a sliding scale with a midpoint matching the Queensland standard).

Measure	Population	Queensland Standard	Australian Standard
Number of staff (FTE) per 3,000 population	250,000 or more	1.0 (regardless of population size)	0.8
	150,000 to 249,999		0.9
	50,000 to 149,999		1.0
	10,000 to 49,999		1.25
	Less than 10,000		1.6
Number of library qualified staff (FTE) per 10,000 population		1.0	1.0
Number of specialist staff (FTE) per 25,000 population		1.0	No standard

In August 2022, ALIA released a consultation paper on development of a new professional framework for the library and information services (LIS) sector that supports career pathways into and within the sector. The Professional Pathways project aims to ensure that Australia has a diverse, valued and supported LIS workforce with the skills, knowledge and ethics needed to deliver quality library and information services that anticipate and meet the needs of the community. The consultation paper supports two major strands of the project; i) the frameworks of skills, knowledge, ethics and professional practice; and ii) the pathways and support needed for people to successfully enter, transition through and grow within the LIS sector.

The draft Framework contains three domains – Foundation, Professional Knowledge and Active Professionalism.



A8.5. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

In September 2015, Member States of the United Nations (UN) adopted *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This agenda is an inclusive integrated framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) spanning economic, environmental and social development. By fulfilling this agenda, “no-one will be left behind”.



Since 2017, ALIA has worked with Commonwealth and Local Government, GLAMR institutions (galleries, libraries, archives, museums and records), library leaders and other relevant organisations to promote and further these goals. ALIA has also signed an international advocacy agreement with IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), which commits the ALIA to carry on advocacy work on how libraries are helping Australia, and the rest of the UN Member States, to achieve the SDGs. ALIA has also included an additional Object to its Constitution:

“To endorse the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 19 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in response to the many challenges faced by the world today and into the future.”

While the SDGs are universal goals, each country is responsible for developing and implementing national strategies to achieve them and is expected to track and report progress. As these national plans are developed, public libraries – as trusted civic and cultural institutions – are in a unique position to create initiatives which promote the SDGs and foster change in their communities. Several of the goals align perfectly with the work that many libraries are already undertaking, including (but not limited to) ‘Access to information’ under SDG 16.

ALIA has established 10 SDG-related stretch targets for the Australian library sector.

ALIA Sustainable Development Goals – Stretch Targets	
1.	Libraries’ contribution to literacy in all its forms is recognised and libraries are embedded in national strategies for early language and literacy, digital inclusion and media literacy.
2.	2. Adoption of open access practices and principles enables Australians to benefit from scientific knowledge, by informing further research in the area, or benefitting as the end user.
3.	Achieve copyright reform to enable Australians to have certainty and flexibility to access library collections.
4.	All Australians have access to public library services online and 90% have access to a physical public library service point.
5.	In collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, libraries have adopted practices to ensure management and access to collections and services is culturally informed and respectful.
6.	ALIA has an open and transparent position on climate change.

ALIA Sustainable Development Goals – Stretch Targets	
7.	Public libraries are acknowledged as centres for personal development and wellbeing.
8.	Library workforce, collections and services reflect the diversity of Australia’s population and local communities. Asylum seekers and refugees have access to library collections and services which recognise their needs.
9.	As a sector we commit to lifelong learning for our own workforce and we provide opportunities for all Australians to pursue lifelong learning.
10.	10. Australian Library and Information Sector professionals are actively engaged with libraries and library associations in the region and internationally.

A8.6. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

IFLA works with libraries and information services to assist people throughout the world to create and participate in an equitable information/knowledge society and to exercise their rights of freedom of access to information and freedom of expression in their daily lives. As is the case with ALIA in Australia, IFLA has a whole of library sector perspective which includes academic, research, public, special and school libraries.

IFLA operates six strategic programs related to:

- library standards
- copyright and related legal matters
- freedom of access to information and freedom of expression
- library development
- preservation and conservation
- UNIMARC and strategic resource referencing.

IFLA has endorsed and collaborated on several manifestos that cover a wide range of issues related to libraries. These manifestos include the 1994 IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto which is internationally recognised as a clear statement of the fundamental principles of the public library service. An abridged version is presented below.

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. ... (The public library is) a living force for education, culture and information. The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. ...

The following key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture should be at the core of public library services:

- *creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age*
- *supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels*
- *providing opportunities for personal creative development*

- *stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people*
- *promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations*
- *providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts*
- *fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity*
- *supporting the oral tradition*
- *ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information*
- *providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups*
- *facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills*
- *supporting and participating in literary activities and programs for all age groups.*

The public library shall in principle be free of charge. The public library must be supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments.

Services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies outreach services for those unable to visit the library.

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.

The principles described in the manifesto are incorporated into the APLA/ALIA *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, 2020*.

All Australian public libraries should operate in accord with the national and any relevant State or Territory library sector standards and guidelines. Public libraries should also, as far as possible, strive to contribute to national library sector initiatives that advance the role of libraries, build the sector's capability and enhance community outcomes.

A9. COVID and public libraries

The COVID-19 pandemic struck Australian in February/March 2020, resulting in major changes to the normal order of Australian society and the workings of the economy. Everyday life will never be the same after repeated lockdowns, border closures, restricted movement of people, public health orders, mask wearing mandates and multiple vaccination rounds. The toll was high, in terms of deaths and illness, but also evidenced in the impact on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, business closures and job losses, interrupted and ceased education pathways, demonstrations of public disorder and distrust of public institutions.

In mid-2022, COVID continues to have a major impact on Australians' health and wellbeing, with COVID cases and death rates per capita among the highest in the world. The current period is neither 'post-COVID' nor 'COVID-normal', and might be termed 'living with COVID'.

While some of the implications of the COVID pandemic and the response of Australian governments, businesses and citizens have been mentioned earlier, there have been (and continue to be) some specific COVID outcomes related to the administration and delivery of public library services.

- **Reduced use of public libraries** – With reduced access to public libraries during civic closures and lockdowns, use of public libraries in 2020 and 2021 dropped by around 40-50% nationally, and as much as 60-70% in New South Wales and Victoria (where lockdowns were wider and longer). In Queensland public libraries, from 2018-19 (the last full year pre-COVID) to 2020-21:
 - physical visits to libraries dropped 44% from 21.4M to 11.89M
 - program attendance dropped 44% from 1.82M to 1.02M
 - usage of the physical collection dropped 16% from 29.1M to 24.5M
 - usage of the digital collection increased 47% from 7.8M to 11.5M
 - total usage of the collection dropped 3% from 36.9M to 35.9M.
- **Innovation in service delivery** – Public libraries proved to be highly responsive to community needs and quickly pivoted to alternative service models to enable library members to continue to access library collections. Click and collect and home delivery services were implemented whenever onsite access to library branches was prevented or restricted in line with public health orders. Libraries also assisted members to shift borrowing from physical to digital collections. Consequently, for example, while visits to Queensland libraries dropped by 44% over two years, borrowing from the physical collection dropped by only 16% and total borrowing dropped by only 3% as downloads of digital items jumped by 47%.
- **Libraries seen in a new light** – The innovative responses of public libraries across Australia contributed to libraries being seen in a new light by some councils. The capacity of libraries to quickly transform service models and provide service continuity at near pre-COVID levels demonstrated the deep understanding library staff have of their communities and their commitment to service provision. Some councils leveraged this community-connectedness and used their libraries as a channel for providing other community services to people in need.
- **Reluctance to return to the library** – As has been experienced across society, the easing of COVID-related access restrictions has not seen a speedy or complete return to pre-COVID conditions. People have begun returning to their libraries, but total visitation levels are still below pre-COVID benchmarks. What was once a strength of the public library brand – its position in welcoming people from all walks of life and being a melting pot of people of all ages and interests – has now become a major risk factor as customers are concerned about exposure to COVID in an environment populated by many different people. It is not known when or if public library usage will return to pre-COVID levels.
- **Staff burnout** – Again, as has been the case across the economy, COVID has taken a toll on the library workforce. In part this is due to the demands of transitioning to new service models and having to deal with a constantly changing service context (e.g. in and out of lockdowns, social distancing limits, sanitising of physical collection items, enforcing mask mandates). Staff morale in libraries has also been hit by the loss of regular contact with library customers and the shift (for many staff) from a predominantly customer facing role to more transactional work with little or no customer interaction. As restrictions on library access eased from late 2021 into 2022, libraries in some jurisdictions also faced a backlash from library customers who were not able to visit the library due to their non-vaccination status.
- **Recruitment of a new workforce** – For many years the library workforce had been fairly stable, with some regular turnover of staff and many librarians who had been working in libraries (and often the same library) for 20 or 30 years. While this was beginning to change before COVID hit, some library services have experienced a significant loss of staff over the past two years. The opportunity to replenish the library workforce has both positive and negative aspects – allowing for recruitment of staff with different skill sets and experience to meet the changing role of

libraries, but also bringing challenges where the labour market is tight and there are few people looking for work in libraries.

Public libraries must work strategically and collaboratively over the next few years to return previous customers to regular library use, attract new library users and reinvigorate a weary library workforce. Libraries should also strive to leverage the innovation shown during the COVID period to trial and deploy more flexible and far-reaching service models.

PART B. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Great Library of Alexandria was built in 285 BC on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, in a city regarded as the capital of knowledge and learning. It had a vast collection of scrolls and texts, and for hundreds of years influential scholars gathered there to work, study and engage in debate. Following civil wars, cuts in funding and a purge of intellectuals the Great Library fell into disrepair and was finally destroyed and demolished in 391 AD.

In 1850, the UK Parliament passed the *Public Libraries Act*, giving local boroughs the power to raise taxation to establish free public libraries. This was a time when civic leaders felt that *“libraries would provide for self-improvement through books and reading for all classes ... and popular lectures on subjects both entertaining and instructive might draw off those who frequent public houses for the sole enjoyment they afford ... leading to greater levels of education and lower crime rates.”* So it was that the concept of a public library was established in enlightened society, not as a book repository, but to provide collections, programs and places that delivered positive outcomes for their communities.

During the 20th century the public library emerged throughout the Western world as a widespread and enduring civic institution – home to freely accessible borrowing collections and activities that brought together and connected people in a spirit of community and learning. Welcoming places for people of all ages, of all races, of all interests and all beliefs.

In many ways the Australian public library of 2022 is very much the same as those that came before it. It still offers the same basic services that have always been at the core of any good public library. That is:

- collections to meet the reading, information and educational needs of the community
- information and reference services that answer our questions about the world in which we live
- programs and activities that feed our minds and warm our souls
- access to technology to keep us connected in a global world
- safe comfortable places and spaces to read, study, work and relax.

In other ways the contemporary library is unlike its predecessors. The public library of 2022 is not the same as the public library of 2012, and even less like the library of 2002 or 1972. No more imposing reference desks where a librarian looks down from their elevated seat of knowledge and power. No shelves full of encyclopedias, dictionaries and atlases. Less shush-ing and lots more activities at peak times. There are ebooks, self-checkout, remote printing, *Tech Savvy Seniors* classes, STEAM programs and online Story Time. You can borrow tools, toys, ties and appliances. The library is accessible 24/7, in line with changing lifestyles and circumstances.

For more than 2,000 years public libraries have proven themselves to be adept at evolving to meet community needs. They have shifted from transactional to transformational places, and there is no reason to think that this will not continue to be the case.

Part A of this Strategic Planning Background Paper describes a dynamic and challenging environment for Australian public libraries. This includes, among other factors:

- an ageing population, an increase in the number of people living alone and changes in household structures

- new and emerging technologies that influence the way we work, live, play and access information, government, business and consumer services
- the need for people to be multi-literate in order to have a meaningful life (e.g. reading and writing, language literacy, digital literacy)
- increasing numbers of people who need support due to mental health issues, homelessness, addiction and domestic violence
- the need for Council's to deliver more cost-efficient services under financial pressure
- greater awareness of social interactions, physical and mental wellbeing, and economic fragility arising from the COVID pandemic.

As they have always done, public libraries must and will consider the implications of a changing world and transform the services they deliver and the way those services are delivered.

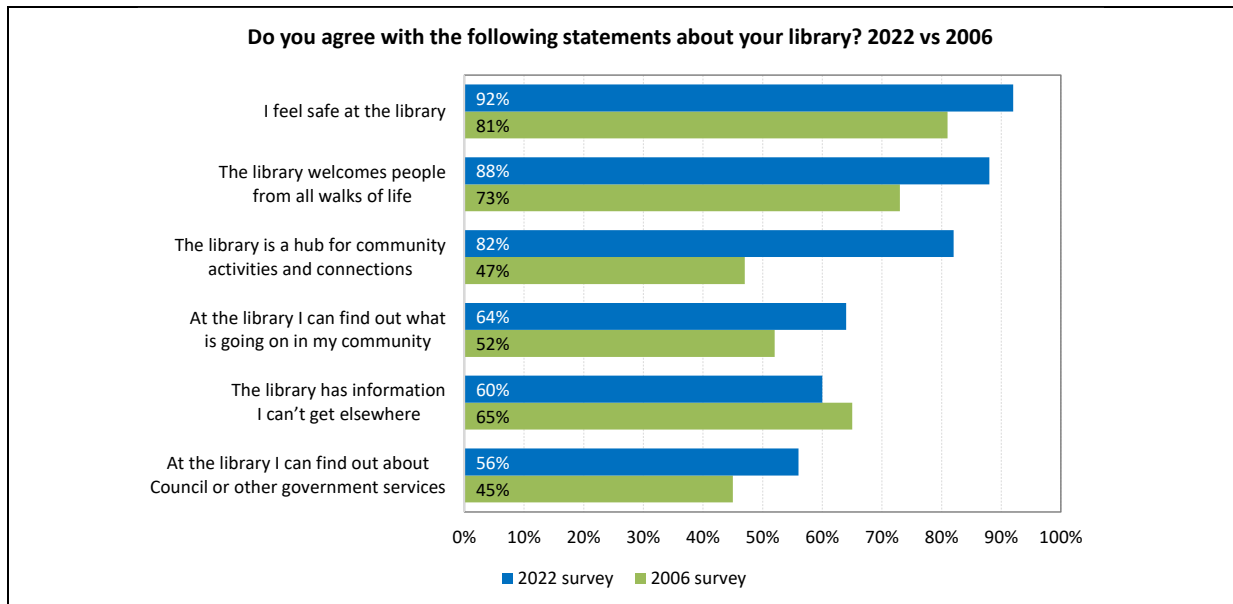
B1. The evolving role of public libraries

From 'book palace' to information centre to community hub, public libraries have remained relevant because they work in, are part of and have a deep understanding of their local communities. As the community's interests, needs and capabilities change, so do libraries adapt to their evolving environment. This was highlighted during the COVID-pandemic when libraries quickly responded to forced closures and constraints on customer access by implementing more flexible service models.

As public libraries continue to evolve, the collection will remain the core asset. Despite claims to the contrary the book is not dead. People who read for pleasure still overwhelmingly prefer to have a physical book in hand. Even with the significant growth in use of ebooks during COVID, loans of physical items still outnumber digital downloads by more than 2 to 1. The demand for non-fiction collections is diminishing as a wider range of and more up to date information is available on the internet. Still, around 80% of library users borrow something from the collection in any year.

The evolution of public libraries leverages both the collection and one of a library's other key assets – its reputation as a safe welcoming universally accessible free and non-judgmental community space. Research shows that 90% of library users and around 80% of people who do not use libraries believe that a library is a safe community space that welcomes people from all walks of life.

This was highlighted in a 2022 survey of more than 18,000 users of Victorian public libraries which found that the perception of the library as a hub for community activities and connections had increased significantly over the past 16 years. While libraries were less likely to be a sole source of research and community information (consistent with the growth in alternative information sources), the library had come to be seen as a valuable community asset through its sense of place.



There is now a global trend toward public libraries taking an active role in supporting the growth, wellbeing and resilience of their communities, as demonstrated through ALIA's establishment of stretch targets for libraries in supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Public libraries are increasingly being seen as places that support:

- literacy and learning – with a focus on early years' literacy, lifelong learning, and family and cross-generational learning
- digital inclusion – bridging the digital divide
- health and wellbeing – especially as an information source, safe haven and referral point connecting people experiencing life challenges to appropriate support services
- community and cultural connections – as a keeping place for local history and a place for celebration of local and indigenous culture and identity
- economic and workforce development – complementing formal education through supporting learning pathways
- public movements and government policy objectives – as a source of community information and gathering point for interested persons (e.g. environmental sustainability, climate action, cultural diversity, reconciliation with Aboriginal people).

For example, while public libraries are not at the forefront of political or public debate on climate change, some are already playing a role in supporting community outcomes and facilitating greater public awareness of the impact of climate change and environmental sustainability. This can occur through:

- public libraries being a **source of authoritative information** on climate change – where people can access up-to-date information on the causes and impact of climate change
- public libraries being **collection points for recycling** of household items (e.g. batteries, ewaste)
- public libraries being nominated as **climate refuges** in times of extreme weather events – building on the reputation of libraries as safe non-judgmental community spaces, their central location in communities, and being facilities built to accommodate a moderate number of people (which could be stretched in the event of an emergency)
- public libraries being **places where communities can learn and talk about climate change** issues – by attending Council or community programs hosted in the library or gathering to discuss local initiatives

- public library buildings being **examples of sustainable development** – incorporating design features that limit their carbon footprint and showcase approaches to environmental sustainability.

B2. Library location and building design

Historically, public libraries were stand-alone single purpose buildings designed to house a collection of physical books. A modern library is now likely to be situated in an activity precinct, co-located or integrated with other community facilities, and offering flexible spaces that allow for a diverse range of individual and community uses.

Many councils have moved away from small, one-off library buildings that serve local neighbourhoods towards the provision of larger, but fewer, libraries designed for a bigger population catchment. Larger facilities are preferred because it is believed that these can:

- provide a higher quality and wider range of uses, spaces, services and activities
- better cater to a diverse range of community members with different types and levels of need
- be a highly visible focal point for the community
- have greater capacity to develop a workforce with the diverse skills required of a modern library
- provide greater cost-efficiency in terms capital and maintenance costs and can more easily address security issues
- be complemented, as necessary in smaller neighbourhoods, by flexible and/or technology-assisted service models (e.g. pop-ups, kiosks, small community-based borrowing collections).

Library facilities are also now likely to be located in community hubs where libraries, community centres and a range of other functions are co-located in a single building, site or precinct. These could include:

- arts and cultural spaces (e.g. galleries, museums, cinemas)
- maternal and child health services and childcare
- education providers (e.g. schools, TAFE, university, U3A)
- community centres and neighbourhood houses
- community, health, welfare and support services (e.g. youth services, aged services).

This approach enhances both coordination of services and convenience for clients who can access multiple services from a single location – ideally in activity centres close to public transport. Co-location or integration has efficiency and service advantages by pooling resources to deliver better shared facilities (e.g. meeting rooms, training facilities), shared infrastructure (e.g. administrative support, telephone and computer networks) and services (e.g. library and Council customer service).

The design and furnishing of contemporary library buildings has also changed to allow for flexible and diverse use of spaces. For example:

- collection, activity, digital, functional and relaxation spaces all within the overall library design
- quiet spaces and activity spaces (differentiated through zones or different use at different times)
- individual and group spaces (for quiet study, co-working, collaboration, training, meetings and programs)
- indoor and outdoor spaces (including reading nooks, booths, play areas, rooftop gardens)
- creative and exhibition spaces (e.g. Makerspaces, tech labs, recording studios, galleries)
- flexible spaces that morph during the day in response to different audiences and needs.

Growth in the use of 'library as place', where people come to the library to do things other than browse and borrow from the collection, is placing demands on public libraries to commit a higher proportion of their building footprint to uses that do not involve storage and display of the collection. As digital borrowing increases and demand for physical non-fiction items decreases there is an opportunity to reduce the volume of shelf space in the library. Stock rotation, back of house (e.g. compactus) and/or offsite storage are also being deployed where libraries provide discovery of the entire collection and timely recovery of items to ensure that the 'unseen' collection is accessible to the public.

Finally, public libraries have always operated on the principle of sustainability – given the essence of borrowing is re-use of collection items among a large community. Increasingly, 21st century community facilities are now explicitly incorporating environmentally sustainable features and designs. The benefits include reduced operating costs, meeting the expectations and values of environmentally aware community members, and instilling a sense of pride in the library building.

It is also notable that where councils state their commitment to recognising and addressing the impacts of climate change (e.g. through declarations of climate emergency), this has an impact on the design and use of civic buildings, but also in the expectations that community spaces are accessible as forums for co-operative engagement, activism and celebration.

B3. Physical and digital collections and content creation

The Learning Space at The Connection in Rhodes (City of Canada Bay, Sydney) offers digital resources, access to online library collections, creative learning programs and a range of study, working and creative spaces. It is the first major facility provided by an Australian library service that does not have a physical collection. However, the collection continues to be the core and distinctive asset of a contemporary public library.

Just as the role and look of libraries has evolved, the composition, presentation of and access to library collections is also changing.

- **Shift to digital** – The number of ebooks and digital items available and downloaded from public libraries has been growing over the past 10 years. This has been driven by increasing numbers of digital titles, accessibility on most devices and no need for a specialist e-reader, and convenience for commuters and people travelling on holidays. In 2018-19, digital collections represented around 10% of collection items and 10-20% of borrowing in Australian public libraries. With restricted access to physical collections during 2020 and 2021 due to COVID, borrowing of digital items increased to 20-30% of total loans. This upward trend is likely to continue, although the rate of growth is expected to return to pre-COVID levels. Increased use of digital collections will require libraries to reframe their collection expenditure, explore consortium purchasing/licensing agreements with vendors, and offer support for people transitioning to digital borrowing.
- **Less non-fiction** – In response to the ever-increasing amount of documentary and research information available through the internet and online databases, public libraries have for some years been slowly shifting the balance between their fiction and non-fiction collections. While demand for biographies, lifestyle and wellbeing-related titles remains firm, other parts of the catalogue are less well-used. April 2022 data from US publishers showed a decline in sales in

every subcategory in adult non-fiction compared to the first quarter of 2021. Continuation of this trend will see further revision of collection expenditure and fewer items on display.

- **New collections** – The growth of non-traditional borrowing is expected to increase further over the next 5 to 10 years. Beyond expansion of borrowable items to include handheld devices and e-readers, some libraries have already taken the step to introduce new borrowing collection items, especially in inner urban areas where dwellings are smaller. Collections can include tools, cooking utensils, kitchen appliances, ties, formal clothes for job interviews, toys, games, puzzles, sporting equipment and other items where an individual's usage may be one-off or intermittent.
- **Presentation** – Another trend working its way through public libraries is the change to the way in which the collection is presented to library users. For convenience and access libraries are reducing the height of their shelving and avoiding (where possible) having items in adult collections shelved too high (where it is difficult to reach) or too low (where it is visually hard to browse titles, and for some people to bend down). Where high or low shelving remains these may be used for front-facing display as this makes it easier for people to see titles. Front-facing display also aids in engaging user interest and increasing borrowing.
- **Marketplace, hot reads, book bags** – Libraries are adopting more creative ways to present their collections, borrowing ideas from bookshops and other retailers. This includes:
 - presenting recent titles in large numbers at the front of the library
 - presenting 'hot read' or 'express borrowing' options, especially for people quickly ducking into the library to collect a reserved item
 - providing genre-based book bags which offer the borrower the chance to read an author they might not have previously considered in a genre they like (this idea became popular during COVID where librarians selected 'similar titles' for people getting home deliveries)
 - promoting librarian or user recommendations of books to read (online or via coloured slips placed in books).

Public libraries can also play a part in content creation by providing spaces and tools where people can individually or collectively get together to nurture and develop their own ideas, and, for example, through dedicated curation of the library's own social media presence.

B4. Library as place

Privatisation of public space has seen libraries further develop as a 'third place' where people can gather and interact. The 'third place' has a distinctly different purpose and feel from the other two spaces where people spend much of their lives (that is, home and work – and for people who no longer work this is more correctly their 'second place'). The 'third place' is a casual, inclusive place where people can spend time without spending money and be without obligation.

The perception and use of 'library as place' has grown as people discover a place that is safe, welcoming, free to enter, non-judgmental, valued by people who inhabit it and supported by helpful professional staff. There are now cohorts of people who use libraries on a regular basis purely or primarily for the places and spaces it provides. For example:

- people who come to read the newspaper or flick through a magazine
- people who come to study after school (students), during the day (tertiary students and home schoolers) and on weekends (professionals, tutors and other students)
- people who come to work (including those for whom 'work from home' is not productive, microbusinesses, entrepreneurs and people who use the library for work-related meetings)

- people who value the warmth in winter and the cool in summer (homeless, indigent)
- people who are lonely (often older socially isolated people), whose visit to the library may be the only time in the day that they are around other people
- people who come to attend a learning, social or cultural activity at the library
- people who come to browse the internet (with or without purpose, including tourists and travellers)
- people who use the clean library facilities or take a few minutes to rest and break up a busy day.

Many of these people are library members who access the library collection from time to time. Some are not library members and not registered on any library database, but the library is just as important to their everyday life as it is to any regular borrower.

In response to this use, library design and layouts are changing to devote to a greater share of the library footprint to individual and communal spaces to relax, socialise, work and play, rather than to collection shelving or formal programming. New libraries may also provide dedicated activity spaces such as Makerspaces, recording studios, business hubs, gaming areas and meeting rooms of various sizes. In this way public libraries are helping to build community capacity and nurture connections that develop community cohesion and social inclusion – being community focal points for people to gather and meet in both planned and incidental ways.

Libraries are also becoming more adept at analysing community data and library usage data (visits vs loans vs program attendance) to better understand the unique characteristics of their community and the type of library that would best suit their needs. For example, libraries can be typified as:

- a ‘reading’ library – where there are high levels of readership and borrowing from communities that are on average older, well-educated and have high levels of employment and computer access
- an ‘activity’ library – which has lower levels of borrowing but relatively higher levels of participation in library programs and higher use of computers (their populations tend to have more young families, fewer older people and are more fluid).
- a ‘place’ library – where there is a higher proportion of people who use the library as a place to read, study, work, meet and relax.

B5. Digital inclusion

The term ‘digital divide’ was coined in the mid-1990s as a way to describe the gap in equity between those who had access to computers and the internet and those who did not. Nearly 30 years later the digital divide still exists and, with technology now incorporated into almost all aspects of everyday life and functioning in society, the consequences of being on the wrong side of the divide are more severe than ever.

Public libraries continue to play a vital role in helping to bridge the digital divide.

- **Computer access** – In 2020-21 Australian public libraries provided more than 12,600 public access internet devices. Although this number was below the peak in device numbers from 2019-20, usage levels continue to indicate that there is demand for access to computers from people who cannot afford or cannot maintain their own device. In most libraries this typically includes older people, people with low incomes, travellers and backpackers. Borrowable devices

are a way of extending access to people who need it for a specific purpose. As more people come to the library with their own device, demand for computer access is expected to decline.

- **Wifi access** – The demand for access to devices has transitioned into demand for access to reliable wifi services. For many people the cost of an internet plan is prohibitive or limits what they can do on their devices. Free wifi access at the library (during opening hours or 24/7) is valuable for those who otherwise could not afford access or have limits on use. It is notable that free wifi is increasingly available in other civic or commercial precincts (e.g. CBD, shopping centres, sports stadiums, airports).
- **Charging points** – With high device numbers, high use and high mobility in public areas comes demand for power to charge those devices. Many libraries now provide charging points and/or charging stations (free or for a fee).
- **Peripherals** – In addition to those who do not have access to a computer or handheld device, many people cannot afford or cannot justify maintaining peripherals such as printers, copiers or scanners. Building on the principle of ‘one item many users’, most public libraries offer basic printing, charging and scanning services at a fee (equivalent to commercial rates).
- **Skills** – Beyond access and affordability, the third dimension of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index is digital ability. Having access to technology but being unable to use it effectively is little different to not having a device at all. Public libraries have for many years run technology support classes or 1-on-1 sessions to assist people to become familiar with and confident in accessing computers, the internet and apps. This was highlighted through the COVID period when libraries took on a role (in some jurisdictions at the government’s behest and expense) in assisting people to download an app where they could record their movements and display their vaccination status. Ad hoc user requests for support can be demanding on library staff who may themselves not have the confidence or ability to respond to the wide range of questions asked.
- **Online forms** – Many government services and forms are now (and sometimes only) accessible online. Public libraries play an important role in supporting people who do not have access to the internet or lack confidence in accessing these services (some of whom are directed to the library by Centrelink or other government agencies).

Public libraries also support digital inclusion by offering services, programs and facilities that embrace the opportunities offered through new technology. At a very practical level this can include making library services, collections and programs accessible online (where possible), offering remote printing services and cashless payments, and having digital (cardless) library membership.

More broadly, libraries can be a place where people are introduced to, explore and trial new and emerging technologies. This might be through:

- STEAM classes for school age children (both primary and early secondary)
- access to 3D printers
- access to virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) devices.

B6. Emerging service models

Public libraries deliver services to the community through a combination of four basic service models. Each model plays a different role in the library network – reaching out to different audiences, facilitating convenient access and encouraging increased and widespread use of library services across the community.

The library branch network remains the foundation of service delivery, with 90% of library users saying that they visit a library branch at some stage during a year. Online and digital services have been shown through the COVID period to be critical in maintaining service continuity and providing users with new ways to access library collections, programs and services.

LIBRARY BRANCHES

- Local branch library
- Most familiar and most used model
- Located in activity centres
- Vary in size (200-3,000 m²)
- Fully-staffed
- Offer full service range



ONLINE / DIGITAL

- Anywhere anytime access
- Library website and app
- Browse catalogue, reserve/extend items
- Download digital resources
- View online programs



MOBILE / OUTREACH

- Take library to where the people are
- Services delivered in the community, often with partner organisations
- Large mobile vehicles being phased out/replaced by more smaller options



FLEXIBLE / EXPRESS

- Emerging models are often variants of other types
- Library lounge (unstaffed)
- Pop up libraries
- 24/7 open library
- Book vending machines, kiosks



While the network and online models will continue to evolve in coming years, the most significant changes are expected to occur in the growth of outreach services and the introduction of flexible and express service models.

Mobile and outreach models take library services out into the community – beyond the walls of the library to meet people where they are. The most well-known example is the mobile library, typically a large custom-made prime mover and semi-trailer housing up to 15,000 collection items, on-board computers and wifi that stops at select community locations on a weekly or fortnightly schedule. Due to high set-up costs, driver licensing requirements and limited vehicle flexibility some mobile library services are beginning to be replaced with smaller more agile vehicles (carrying a smaller collection and wifi hotspot) that retain connection to the community but can be used by other library staff for a variety of complementary purposes (e.g. attending schools, nursing homes, festivals and fetes). Other outreach models can include pop-up libraries at community events, delivery of literacy and reading programs at kindergartens and childcare centres, and book delivery services for housebound readers and people living in residential facilities (e.g. aged care homes).

Flexible or express library models are innovative approaches to filling the gap between permanent full-service library branches and mobile or outreach services. They deploy community facilities and/or technology-enabled solutions to offer a limited range of library services (especially access to collections) in convenient community settings. Express library models may provide basic services to emerging communities in high growth areas and communities poorly serviced by the network of permanent libraries, or they may enhance access to basic library services in key community nodes. Depending on population catchment, geographical location and the presence of other facilities, express library services may range from staffed or unstaffed shopfront facilities, library lounges or reading rooms with limited boutique collections, wifi and limited programming to self-service options such as vending machines, lockers or wifi beacons facilitating resource downloading.

The concept of 'open libraries' has become increasingly popular in Scandinavian libraries over the past 10 years. These libraries combine staffed or 'fully serviced' opening hours with 'self-serviced' hours, using the self-serviced hours to provide access to the library for longer periods during the day, in the evenings, or over the weekend. People use their nominated library card to access the building which is secured through: i) CCTV; ii) regulated access to some or all of the facility; and iii) regular security checks.

Australia is now seeing this trend in action with 24/7 open libraries having been launched or trialed in both rural and urban communities.

B7. Storytelling

Public libraries are a repository for stories – past and present, real and imagined. Through Story Time sessions for young children, Book Clubs for older readers and author talks for people of all ages they maintain the tradition of storytelling, as both a source of enjoyment and entertainment and as a cultural activity. Leading libraries maintain the storytelling tradition in their community in different ways.

- **Unique cultural identity** – Public libraries can showcase a town’s or region’s unique cultural identity through the use of collections, artefacts, photographs, artwork, maps, displays, exhibitions and the library’s built form. In doing this the library creates a sense of place that connects community and fosters pride in and ownership of a town’s culture and heritage. This is particularly valuable where a town has developed and grown through distinct historical periods and natural phenomena (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, European settlement, post-war migration, settlement of refugees, fire and floods).
- **Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKC)** – The Queensland public library sector (for example) has public information hubs and libraries owned and operated by Indigenous Shire Councils, with assistance provided by the Library Board of Queensland. The IKCs work in their communities to document, record and preserve the local histories, stories and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as part of their local collections (e.g. through recording language, conducting language workshops or culture love programs). Other library services have, or are beginning to establish in partnership with local indigenous people, standing collections and displays that showcase the indigenous community’s history and stories.
- **Historical societies** – Some local historical societies or associations have their own premises where they preserve and present artefacts that tell the story of their community. Some public libraries have local history collections where people can access historical records, images and maps in physical or digital form. In the interests of completeness, efficiency and sustainability, and leveraging the expertise of librarians, these collections are increasingly being brought together as a single point of reference for people wishing to research or learn about their community’s history.

B8. Industry and community partnerships and collaboration

The APLA-ALIA Guidelines for Australian public libraries indicate that libraries should develop partnerships and collaborate with community-based organisations and the wider public library sector in order to: i) raise awareness of and promote library services to targeted population cohorts; ii) expand service offerings and service delivery options; and iii) improve service reach, quality and efficiency. In an environment where there is significant pressure on public resources and expectations of maximizing operating efficiency it is more important than ever that libraries seek out opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

These might include collaboration with:

- other business units within council to complement service provision to the community (e.g. maternal and child health, youth services, family services, aged services, arts and culture, customer service)

- community support organisations (e.g. a number of libraries in inner city areas now employ social workers to provide referral support to customers in need while others have established formal or informal partnerships and referral protocols with local welfare organisations)
- education providers (e.g. schools, vocational providers, universities) to support student access to relevant resources and study spaces
- industry partnerships that support delivery of major library and community programs (e.g. the statewide Better Beginnings family literacy program in WA that connects families with books through free reading packs is financially supported by Rio Tinto)
- local cultural organisations (see Section B7).

Networking and collaborating with other library services also offers opportunities for sharing ideas, innovation, professional development, resource efficiency and aggregated purchasing power.

As more public libraries have moved further down the partnership pathway over the past 10 years the key factors in realising successful outcomes have been:

- having explicit and mutually beneficial outcomes from the relationship
- regularly monitoring the value of the relationship for all parties
- having discussed potential triggers for expansion, continuation or cessation of the relationship
- only committing to collaboration where the return justifies the effort
- not stretching organisation resources beyond capacity.

B9. Library workforce, qualifications and retention

B9.1. Workforce management

The Australian public library workforce is at a major pivot point, and it is likely that the COVID pandemic will bring to a head pressures on the workforce profile that have been felt incrementally over the past 5 to 10 years. The following points are of note.

- **Ageing workforce** – Many Australian public library services have an ageing library workforce. Consequently, there is likely to be a significant loss of experienced and qualified library staff over the next 10 years. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity, in terms of refreshing and re-shaping the composition of the workforce.
- **Workforce profile** – Although it is changing, the public library workforce has for many years had (relative to the Australian population) a high proportion of female employees from an English speaking background. Consistent with economy-wide trends, there are increasing community and industry expectations that the library workforce be both: i) appropriately qualified; and ii) broadly representative of the community in terms of gender, age and cultural background.
- **Casualisation of library jobs** – There is an economy-wide trend toward casualisation of jobs in many industries, in part driven by employers but in part as a response to people not wanting to work full-time or be reliant on a single source of income. Many public libraries have also experienced increased casualisation of positions, or have a workforce with a high number of part-time positions.
- **Regional, rural and remote areas** – Public libraries in regional, rural and remote areas often find it difficult to recruit qualified library staff.
- **Volunteering** – As the Baby Boomer generation aged actively into retirement there was increasing demand for volunteering opportunities across the community. However, COVID put a significant brake on the supply of volunteers, and it is not yet known if or when this will return

to pre-COVID levels. The Australian public library Guidelines indicate that, where relevant, volunteer assistance may be used for specific purposes that complement the day to day operation of the library, but that volunteers are not a substitute for appropriately trained and paid library staff.

The challenge for any individual library service is to acquire, maintain and retain a workforce of the right size, composition and capacity to meet the demands of the local community.

Early indications are that COVID may influence library workforce management in several ways, notably:

- some (mostly older) library employees are opting to retire earlier than originally anticipated
- some workers from high-pressure industries (e.g. health, human services, education) are looking for opportunities to work in people-centred positions that do not involve the high stress demands they experienced during COVID (and might find those jobs in public libraries)
- many employees (including some in public libraries) are feeling exhausted after two years of disruptions and are seeking to renew their physical and mental wellbeing.

B9.2. Workforce skills and qualifications

The evolving role of public libraries and a range of social and technological factors have been pressuring libraries to reconsider the mix of qualifications and skills within the library workforce. The following points are of note.

- **Library qualifications** – The Australian public library standards set minimum expectations of 1.0 library-qualified staff employed per 10,000 population.
- **New skill sets** – Public libraries are, subject to their strategic priorities, expanding the skill profile of their workforce to employ people with qualifications, expertise and experience in:
 - program development and delivery, project management
 - youth services, social work and multicultural services
 - education and training, literacy and digital literacies
 - information technology
 - marketing and communications, community engagement.
- **Customer service** – More than ever before, working in a modern public library is a people job, where customer service skills are central to the work of most (if not all) library staff. All customer-facing staff should have appropriate experience and/or be able to access professional development to support this role.

A more complex challenge for library staff in the current environment is to be a ‘custodian of objective truth’. In the face of fake news and mistrust of established institutions, library staff should in the interests of community cohesion, and as far as possible, endeavour to retain their position as a channel to authoritative, reputable and credible sources of information.

B10. Political and community advocacy

B10.1. Advocacy

Librarians and library users understand the dynamic nature of public libraries and the way that they have evolved to remain relevant to community needs. However, the role and work of a contemporary library is not well understood by some people in the community – many of whom may not have been in or experienced a library since they were at school or university (potentially 10, 20 or 30 years ago) and

believe that a library is a transactional book borrowing service and not a multi-faceted community resource and civic hub. This can include stakeholders in positions of authority and influence (e.g. elected members of council, senior council managers).

Therefore, it is incumbent on public libraries (at the local, state/territory and national level) to educate the community and key stakeholders on the transformative role of modern public libraries and the significant impact they have on individuals and communities. This may include:

- advocating to the community, potential partner organisations and political stakeholders on the value and importance of public libraries
- sharing stories about the impact of public libraries and the many ways they help to change people's lives
- arguing and presenting the case for sustainable funding of and investment in public library services.

Advocacy for public library services is particularly important for those community cohorts who, although they derive significant benefits from accessing library services, might be less able to ensure that their voice is heard. This includes vulnerable communities such as the homeless and unemployed, people who are digitally excluded, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, children and young people, the elderly and socially isolated.

While the core business of libraries includes the sharing of stories, librarians have in the past not seen it as important that they tell their own story – assuming that the good that they do for library users and communities speaks for itself. In a highly competitive environment where government agencies must be, and be seen to be, fiscally responsible and accountable for expenditure of public money, every public service must prove its worth or risk the consequences.

B10.2. Evaluation and measures of success

The effectiveness of advocacy activities is strengthened where the story being told is backed by solid quantitative and qualitative evidence. That is, information on:

- what services are being delivered, to whom and why
- the impact of those services on individuals and communities
- the cost of service delivery and the return on public investment in public libraries.

Historically, Australian public libraries have concentrated their measurement efforts on counting things. For example, the size and profile of the collection, the number of loans and the number of visits to the library. This data is important, but it is not enough. In the future public libraries must get better at:

- measuring use of all types of library service (e.g. collections, programs, technology access, spaces) in both aggregate and per capita terms
- benchmarking service provision and use to demonstrate:
 - that services are being delivered to the standard expected (for a library of a given size in a given location)
 - the way libraries tailor their services to the unique needs of their local community
 - service efficiency
- collecting anecdotes from library users on the contribution of the library to their everyday life and wellbeing
- capturing and sharing information on the outcomes and impact of library services

- reporting to council and the community on the role and value of the library service
- measuring the financial return on investment in library services.

As this is an issue applicable to all Australian public libraries, it is an area of work where progress might best be made through industry-wide collaboration. For example, the *APLA-ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*, December 2020 describe a framework for measuring six key library outcomes for individuals and communities (e.g. literacy and lifelong learning, digital inclusion, personal development and wellbeing).

SUMMARY. A CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

This Strategic Planning Background Paper highlights significant features of the current and emerging operating environment for Australian public libraries and notes some of the possible implications and challenges they may face.

The Paper is not intended to be predictive, in terms of anticipating what will happen in any particular library service's unique operating environment over the next 5 to 10 years. But it is possible to infer from this information some general trends and what might, among the many possibilities, be seen as the most important priorities for public libraries as they plan for their future.

Public library strength	Future opportunity
A great public library reflects on, recognises and responds to the unique characteristics, needs and demands of its local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a deep and intimate understanding of the local community ▪ Strategically plan for and deliver collections, programs, services and experiences that respond to local needs ▪ Create safe welcoming places that engender a sense of belonging and pride in community ▪ Tell local stories
A great public library has an unyielding focus on learning, inclusion and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate reading in the home to and by young children ▪ Support adult and English language literacy development ▪ Facilitate access to learning pathways ▪ Reach out to vulnerable communities so that no-one is left behind ▪ Empower people to participate in a digital society by enhancing user access and ability
A great public library is always of its time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring people back to the library after COVID closures ▪ Support individual health and wellbeing and community resilience ▪ Engage with and support First Nations peoples ▪ Be a place where the community can come together to create a sustainable future
A great public library is always relevant – adapting its core service set and evolving its service delivery models to the ever-changing world in which we live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trial innovative and flexible service models – onsite and online – to increase community access to library collections and services ▪ Foster partnerships that leverage resources, build community capacity and celebrate local culture and heritage ▪ Grow and develop a library workforce and infrastructure to maintain a future-ready library sector ▪ Advocate for sustainable public library funding to enhance community capability and connections

APPENDIX 1. ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

Glossary of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADII	Australian Digital Inclusion Index
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
ALIA	Australian Library and Information Association
APLA	Australian Public Library Alliance
AR	Augmented Reality
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
COVID	Coronavirus disease
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
GLAMR	Galleries, libraries, archives, museums and records
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IKC	Indigenous Knowledge Centre
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
LGA	Local Government Area
LGCI	Local Government Cost Index
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLQ	State Library of Queensland
STEAM	Science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TAFE	Technical and further education
U3A	University of the Third Age
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIMARC	Universal MARC Format
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VR	Virtual Reality
WFH	Work from home

References

2019 NAPLAN National Report, ACARA, <https://nap.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2019-naplan-national-report.pdf?Status=Temp&sfvrsn=2>

2021 Australian Early Development Census National Report, AEDC, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/2021-aedc-national-report>

2022 Australian Federal Election Results, ABC, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/elections/federal-election-2022/>

2022 Victorian Public Library Survey, State Library of Victoria, Not yet published

Advancing Queensland's Public Libraries, Queensland University of Technology, <https://content.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLQ-advancingqldreport-2016.pdf>

AEDC Community Profile 2021 – Chinchilla, AEDC, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/community-profiles>

AEDC Community Profile 2021 – Noosa, AEDC, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/community-profiles>

AEDC Community Profile 2021 – Tara, AEDC, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/community-profiles>

AEDC Community Profile 2021 – Wambo, AEDC, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/community-profiles>

Affordable Housing, University of Melbourne, <https://research.unimelb.edu.au/research-at-melbourne/multidisciplinary-research/hallmark-research-initiatives/affordable-housing>

Annual Council Rate Caps, Victorian Essential Services Commission, <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/local-government/annual-council-rate-caps>

APLA/ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, 2020, APLA/ALIA, <http://read.alia.org.au/apla-alia-standards-and-guidelines-australian-public-libraries-december-2020>

AUSTRALIA – Country Note – Survey of Adult Skills first results, OECD, https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20Australia_final.pdf

Australia Unemployment Rate, Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/australia/unemployment-rate>

Australia's Digital Inclusion Index, Telstra, <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>

Australian libraries support the Sustainable Development Goals: summary, ALIA, <https://read.alia.org.au/australian-libraries-support-sustainable-development-goals-summary>

Australian population data, ABS, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population>

Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2020-21, NSLA, <https://www.nsla.org.au/news/2020-21-annual-public-library-statistics>

Climate change in Australia, CSIRO, <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/environmental-impacts/climate-change/climate-change-information>

Community demographic profiles, .id, <https://profile.id.com.au>

Demographics of living alone, Australian Institute for Family Studies, <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/demographics-living-alone>

Fake news, eSafety Commissioner, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/fake-news>

Libraries for Health and Wellbeing: A Strategic Framework for Victorian Public Libraries towards 2024, SLV and PLV, <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/LFHAWB-vFIN-web.pdf>

Library as Movement, Professor R. David Lankes, <https://davidlankes.org/library-as-movement/>

Local Government Association of Queensland, LGAQ, <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/find-council>

National Agreement on Closing the Gap, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/>

New study finds housing affordability in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane & Adelaide now worse than New York, CanStar, <https://www.canstar.com.au/home-loans/housing-affordability-in-australia-2022/>

Noosa Shire Council area – Community profile, .id, <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-sunshine-coast/about?WebID=100>

Our Future World, CSIRO, <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/data/Our-Future-World>

People Places Library Building Calculator, State Library of NSW, <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/people-places/library-building-calculator>

People Places: A Guide for planning Public Library Buildings, State Library of NSW, <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/people-places>

PISA 2018: Reporting Australia's results. Volume I Student performance, PISA, <https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/34/>

Post-truth, fake news and the liberal 'regime of truth' – The double movement between Lippmann and Hayek, Time Harjuniemi, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02673231211046784>

Professional Pathways Frameworks Project, Consultation paper, August 2022, ALIA, <https://professionalpathways.alia.org.au/resources/pp-pathways-presentation/>

Public Library Grant Funding & Service Level Agreement, State Library Queensland, <https://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/managing-my-library/funding-reporting/public-library-grant-funding-service-level-agreement>

Public Library Manifesto, IFLA, <https://repository.ifla.org/bitstream/123456789/168/1/pl-manifesto-en.pdf>

Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-21, Queensland Government, <https://cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2018/Apr/RAP/Attachments/Plan.PDF>

Queensland Local Government Act 2009, <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2009-017>

Queensland public libraries COVID-19 Survey report, State Library Queensland, <https://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/about/research-best-practice/state-library-research-and-reports>

Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin 2020-21, State Library Queensland, <https://content.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLQ-statistical-bulletin-2021-20220315.pdf>

Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines 2020, State Library Queensland, <https://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/queensland-public-library-standards-and-guidelines>

Reading to children, Y Childcare Newsletter, http://www.aberdeenymca.org/childcare_newsletter/september14.html

Realising our potential: A vision for Queensland public libraries, State Library Queensland, https://content.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLQ_interactive_TK_v14.pdf

Regional Population Growth Australia, 2020-21, 3218.0, ABS, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>

Sustainable Development Goals: Stretch targets baseline report, ALIA, <https://read.alia.org.au/sustainable-development-goals-stretch-targets-baseline-report>

Sustainable Development Goals: Stretch Targets for Australian Libraries 2020-2030, ALIA, <https://read.alia.org.au/sustainable-development-goals-stretch-targets-australian-libraries-2020-2030>

The Book Sales Boom Is Over, Publishers Weekly, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/88981-the-book-sales-boom-has-ended.html>

The Impact of Libraries as Creative Spaces, State Library Queensland, <https://content.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLQ-creativespacesreport-2016.pdf>

The importance of measuring adult literacy and numeracy, Australian Council for Education Research, <https://www.acer.org.au/discover/article/the-importance-of-measuring-adult-literacy-and-numeracy>

The Rate Peg, NSW IPART, <https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local-Government/For-Ratepayers/The-rate-peg>

Think global, act local, ALIA, <https://read.alia.org.au/think-global-act-local>

Using behavioural insights to increase access to public libraries, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/research-projects/using-behavioural-insights>

Western Downs Regional Council area – Community profile, .id, <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-dd-sw/about?WebID=190>

APPENDIX 2A. POPULATION SUMMARY – NOOSA

This paper references a range of population, social and economic statistics – predominantly national and/or state level data. The table below presents the latest available population data for Noosa Shire Council. The major reference is the data from the 2016 and 2021 ABS censuses, as presented in the most recent .id Community Profile for the RDA Sunshine Coast Region – Noosa Shire Council Area.

Population by age, gender and household type

Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2016	2021	Inc/Dec	2021	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
Population	53,922	56,796	↗		
<i>Indigenous status</i>					
ATSI	1.5	1.7	-	6.1	-
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	48.6	48.6	-	49.3	↓
Female	51.4	51.4	-	50.7	↑
<i>Service age groups</i>					
Babies and pre-schoolers (0-4 years)	4.2	3.6	↘	5.4	↓
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	8.2	7.4	↘	8.9	↓
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	7.5	7.5	-	7.8	-
Tertiary education/independence (18 to 24)	5.3	5.2	-	7.9	↓
Young workforce (25 to 34)	7.5	7.3	-	12.4	↓
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	19.1	17.7	↘	19.0	↓
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	16.0	15.2	↘	13.2	↑
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	16.4	16.2	-	12.2	↑
Seniors (70 to 84)	13.2	16.9	↗	11.3	↑
Elderly aged (85 years and over)	2.6	2.9	-	2.1	↑
<i>Household type</i>					
Couple with children	22.8	23.0	-	25.2	↓
Couple without children	31.9	33.7	↗	27.3	↑
One parent family	9.9	9.0	↘	10.8	↓
Lone person	22.4	22.4	-	23.4	↓

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because: a) not all response options are shown in this table (e.g. 'other' household types); and/or b) 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population by birthplace and language

Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Country of birth</i>					
Australia	72.5	71.7	↘	74.3	↓
Overseas	21.9	21.6	↘	17.3	↑
United Kingdom	9.1	8.7	↘	4.4	↑
New Zealand	4.6	4.2	↘	3.9	-
Germany	0.9	0.9	-	0.5	↑
South Africa	0.8	0.9	-	0.7	-
United States of America	0.6	0.6	-	0.3	-
Netherlands	0.7	0.6	-	0.3	-
Other overseas	5.2	5.7	↗	7.2	↓

Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
<i>Language spoken at home</i>					
English only	90.7	88.5	↘	84.3	↑
German	0.9	0.9	-	0.4	↘
French	0.4	0.5	-	0.2	-
Italian	0.4	0.4	-	0.4	-
Spanish	0.2	0.3	-	0.3	-
Dutch	0.4	0.3	-	0.3	-
Portuguese	0.1	0.2	-	0.2	-
<i>English language fluency</i>					
Speaks English only	90.7	88.5	↘	84.3	↑
Speaks another language and English well or very well	4.3	4.9	↗	7.0	↘
Speaks another language and English not well or not at all	0.3	0.4	-	1.1	↑

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because: a) not all response options are shown in this table (e.g. 'other' countries of birth and languages spoken); and/or b) 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population by education, employment and income

Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
<i>Educational qualifications (15+)</i>					
Bachelor's degree or higher	14.9	17.9	↗	14.0	↑
Advanced diploma or diploma	10.2	11.0	↗	8.3	↑
Vocational qualification	21.2	22.8	↗	23.1	-
No post-school qualification	41.7	37.4	↘	42.4	↘
<i>Employment status (15+)</i>					
Employed	92.5	93.3	↗	92.2	↑
Unemployed	7.5	6.7	↘	7.8	↘
Labour force participation	55.6	54.0	↘	58.8	↘
Unemployment rate	4.2	3.6	↘	4.1	↘
Not in labour force	38.9	39.1	-	33.0	↑

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Other population characteristics

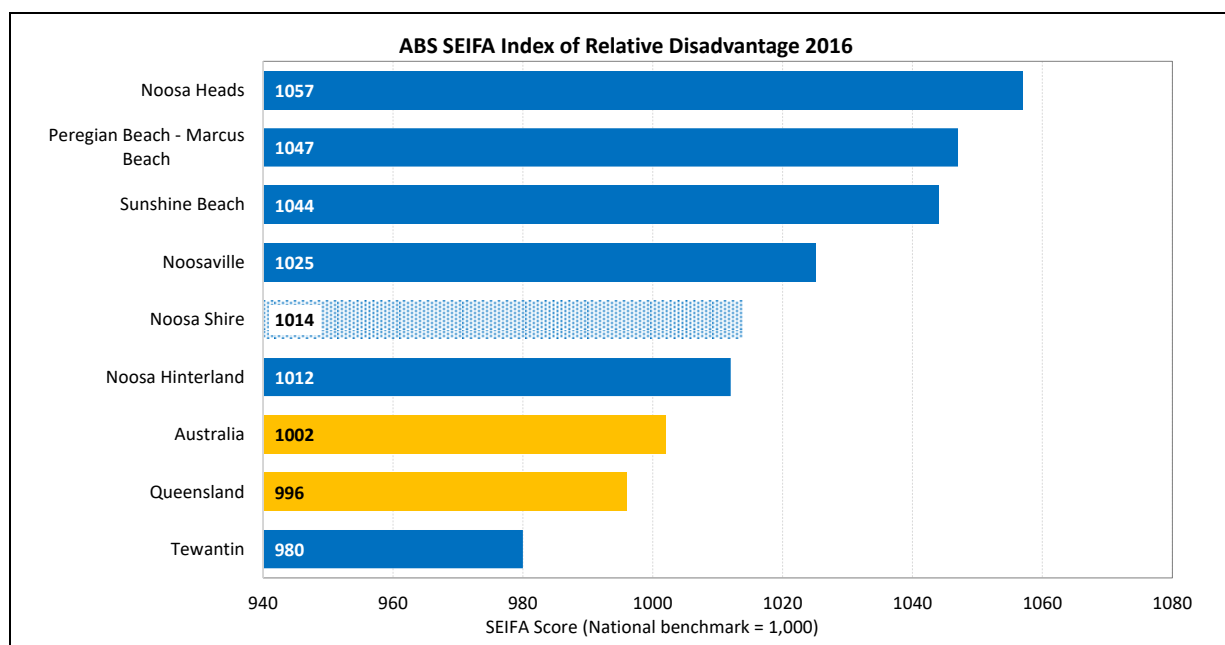
Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
<i>Internet connections</i>					
Household connected	77.2	81.4	↗	75.8	↑
Household not connected	17.0	11.2	↘	15.0	↘
Not stated	5.9	7.4	↗	9.2	↘

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population characteristic*	Noosa Shire Council			Regional Queensland	
	2016	2021	Inc/Dec	2021	High/Low
<i>Motor vehicles per household</i>					
No cars	4.0	3.5	↘	4.9	↘
1 car	34.7	34.7	-	33.9	↑
2 or more cars	53.0	56.7	↗	54.2	↑

Socio-economic disadvantage

The ABS' SEIFA (Socio-Economic Index for Areas) for relative disadvantage measures an area's level of socio-economic disadvantage based on measures related to unemployment, income, education levels, English language literacy and internet access. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage has a national benchmark figure of 1,000. The more advantaged the community the higher the score.

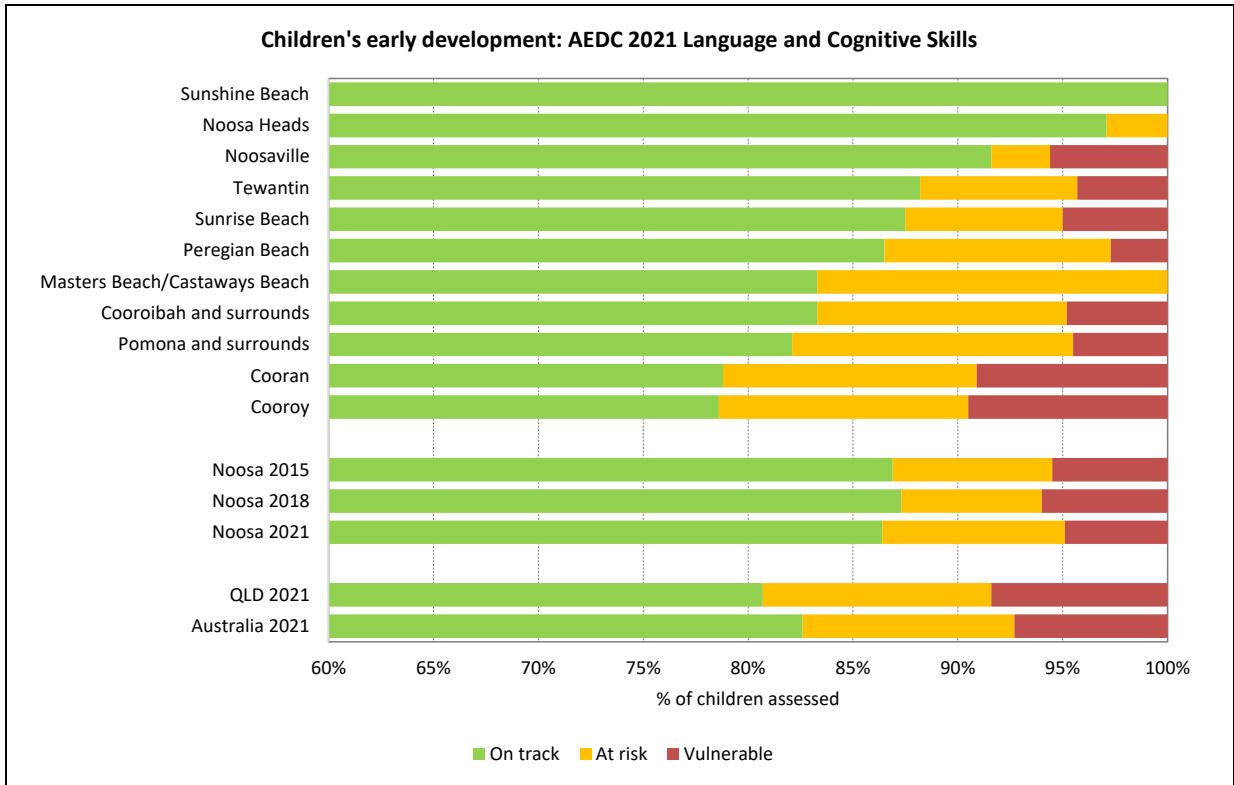


Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures the development of Australian children in their first year of full-time school. AEDC data is collected every three years and assesses children's readiness for school across five key domains closely linked to health, education and social outcomes. Libraries can play a particular role in supporting development in the 'language and cognitive skills' domain.

Against each domain children are assessed as being either developmentally 'on track', 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'. The language and cognitive skills domain assesses children's basic literacy, advanced literacy, basic numeracy, and interest in literacy, numeracy and memory.

AEDC domain ... % of children	Location / Year	On track	At risk	Vulnerable	Trend
Language and cognitive skills in the Noosa Shire Council	Noosa 2015	86.9	7.6	5.5	
	Noosa 2018	87.3	6.7	6.0	↗
	Noosa 2021	86.4	8.7	4.9	↘
	Qld 2018	82.4	9.6	8.0	
	Qld 2021	80.7	10.9	8.4	↘
	Aust 2018	84.4	9.0	6.6	
	Aust 2021	82.6	10.1	7.3	↘



APPENDIX 2B. POPULATION SUMMARY – WESTERN DOWNS

This paper references a range of population, social and economic statistics – predominantly national and/or state level data. The table below presents the latest available population data for Western Downs Regional Council. The major reference is the data from the 2016 and 2021 ABS censuses, as presented in the most recent .id Community Profile for the RDA Darling Downs and South West Region – Western Downs Regional Council Area.

Population by age, gender and household type

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2016	2021	Inc/Dec	2021	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
Population	34,049	34,560	↗		
<i>Indigenous status</i>					
ATSI	5.6	7.6	↗	6.1	↑
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	51.2	50.7	↘	49.3	↑
Female	48.8	49.3	↗	50.7	↘
<i>Service age groups</i>					
Babies and pre-schoolers (0-4 years)	6.5	5.9	↘	5.4	↑
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	9.9	9.3	↘	8.9	↑
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	8.1	8.4	-	7.8	↑
Tertiary education/independence (18 to 24)	8.2	8.0	-	7.9	-
Young workforce (25 to 34)	12.0	12.2	-	12.4	-
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	18.3	17.4	↘	19.0	↘
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	13.0	12.6	↘	13.2	↘
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	11.6	12.1	↗	12.2	-
Seniors (70 to 84)	10.0	11.7	↗	11.3	↑
Elderly aged (85 years and over)	2.3	2.4	-	2.1	-
<i>Household type</i>					
Couple with children	26.3	24.7	↘	25.2	↘
Couple without children	25.9	25.6	-	27.3	↘
One parent family	9.4	10.2	↗	10.8	↘
Lone person	22.4	24.0	↗	23.4	↑

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because: a) not all response options are shown in this table (e.g. 'other' household types); and/or b) 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population by birthplace and language

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Country of birth</i>					
Australia	86.0	80.8	↘	74.3	↑
Overseas	6.3	7.1	↗	17.3	↘
New Zealand	1.4	1.4	-	4.4	↘
United Kingdom	1.5	1.3	-	0.8	↑
Philippines	0.7	1.3	↗	0.7	↑
South Africa	0.5	0.5	-	0.6	-
India	0.1	0.4	↗	0.6	-
Other overseas	1.8	2.0	-	10.0	↘

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Language spoken at home</i>					
English only	90.9	85.7	↓	84.3	↑
Filipino/Tagalog	1.1	0.5	↓	0.5	-
Afrikaans	0.3	0.3	-	0.3	-
Hindi	0.1	0.1	-	0.1	-
Spanish	0.1	0.1	-	0.3	-
German	0.1	0.1	-	0.4	↓
<i>English language fluency</i>					
Speaks English only	90.9	85.7	↓	84.3	↑
Speaks another language and English well or very well	2.2	3.4	↑	7.0	↓
Speaks another language and English not well or not at all	0.3	0.3	-	1.1	↓

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because: a) not all response options are shown in this table (e.g. 'other' countries of birth and languages spoken); and/or b) 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population by education, employment and income

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Educational qualifications (15+)</i>					
Bachelor's degree or higher	8.4	9.2	↑	14.0	↓
Advanced diploma or diploma	5.1	6.5	↑	8.3	↓
Vocational qualification	20.0	21.9	↑	23.1	↓
No post-school qualification	54.6	46.8	↓	42.4	↑
<i>Employment status (15+)</i>					
Employed	96.4	93.7	↓	92.2	↑
Unemployed	3.6	6.3	↑	7.8	↓
Labour force participation	62.3	59.0	↓	58.8	-
Unemployment rate	2.2	3.7	↑	4.1	↓
Not in labour force	30.1	29.5	↓	33.0	↓

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Other population characteristics

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2011	2016	Inc/Dec	2016	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Internet connections</i>					
Household connected	64.2	67.0	↑	75.8	↓
Household not connected	26.9	20.2	↓	15.0	↑
Not stated	8.9	12.8	↑	9.2	↑

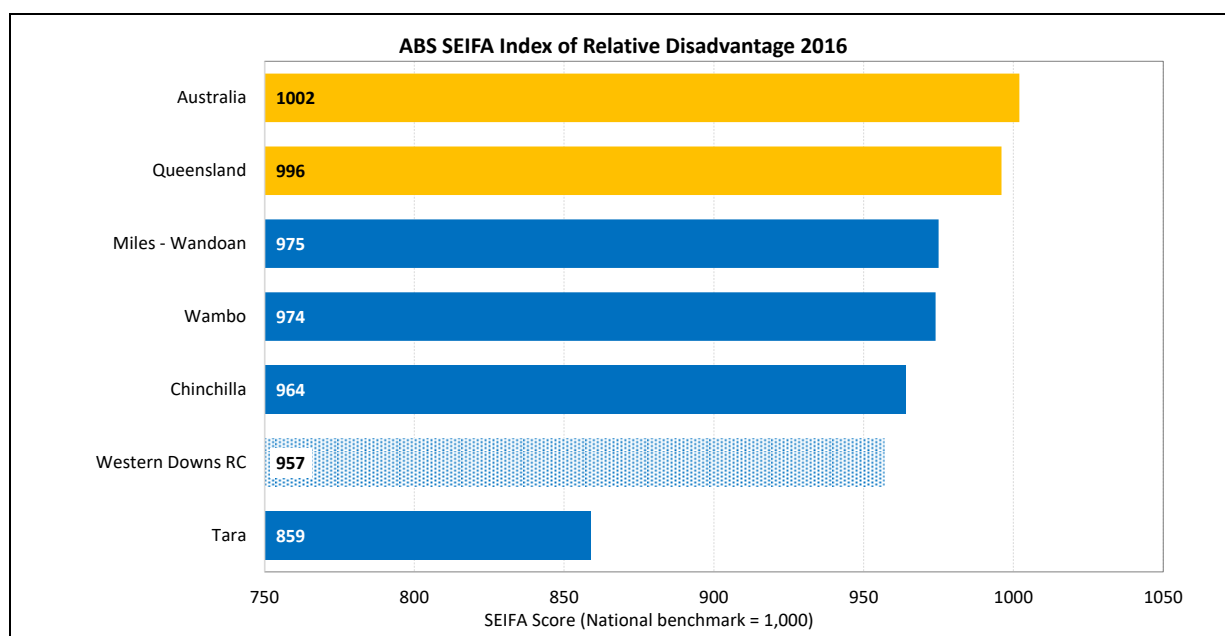
* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Population characteristic*	Western Downs RC			Regional Queensland	
	2016	2021	Inc/Dec	2021	High/Low
All numbers are %s (except total population)					
<i>Motor vehicles per household</i>					
No cars	4.5	4.2	-	4.9	↓
1 car	28.4	30.9	↑	33.9	↓
2 or more cars	53.5	55.8	↑	54.2	↑

* Sub-totals may not add to 100% because 'Not stated' response %s are not shown in this table.

Socio-economic disadvantage

The ABS' SEIFA (Socio-Economic Index for Areas) for relative disadvantage measures an area's level of socio-economic disadvantage based on measures related to unemployment, income, education levels, English language literacy and internet access. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage has a national benchmark figure of 1,000. The more advantaged the community the higher the score.



Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures the development of Australian children in their first year of full-time school. AEDC data is collected every three years and assesses children's readiness for school across five key domains closely linked to health, education and social outcomes. Libraries can play a particular role in supporting development in the 'language and cognitive skills' domain.

Against each domain children are assessed as being either developmentally 'on track', 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'. The language and cognitive skills domain assesses children's basic literacy, advanced literacy, basic numeracy, and interest in literacy, numeracy and memory.

AEDC domain ... % of children	Area / Year	On track	At risk	Vulnerable	Trend
Language and cognitive skills in the Western Downs Regional Council	Aust 2018	84.4	9.0	6.6	
	Aust 2021	82.6	10.1	7.3	↘
	Qld 2018	82.4	9.6	8.0	
	Qld 2021	80.7	10.9	8.4	↘
	Wambo 2018	76.7	10.0	13.2	
	Wambo 2021	82.7	8.0	9.2	↗
	Chinchilla 2018	78.0	13.4	8.7	
	Chinchilla 2021	68.5	18.5	12.9	↘
	Tara 2018	79.0	9.4	11.3	
Tara 2021	83.9	9.7	6.5	↗	

