



STATE LIBRARY®
NEW SOUTH WALES

INDIGENOUS SPACES IN LIBRARY PLACES

Building a vibrant public library network
inclusive of Indigenous peoples and
communities

4 April 2016

WHY A STRATEGY FOR INDIGENOUS SERVICES?

Indigenous Services in NSW Public Libraries — 2015 Survey

The State Library of NSW conducted a survey of *Indigenous Services in NSW Public Libraries* in 2015, to gather information on library needs in this area. The survey focused on the following key areas:

1. Staffing
2. Cultural competency
3. Events targeted for Indigenous¹ communities
4. Acknowledgement of Indigenous Australian culture in the library space
5. Collaboration with external Indigenous stakeholders
6. Indigenous collections
7. Awareness and use of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN) protocols for libraries, archives and information services
8. Challenges in engaging with Indigenous Australian clients
9. Assistance that could be provided by the State Library of NSW.

The low response rate to the survey shows a need for raising awareness around Indigenous services in public libraries. However, responses show a general interest in developing better services targeted for the Indigenous Australian population, and enthusiasm for promoting library services and programs dedicated to Indigenous Australian peoples and communities. Results also highlight interest in the State Library providing more assistance to develop services targeted for the Indigenous population across the state.

The strategy for public libraries, *Indigenous Spaces in Library Places: Building a Vibrant Public Library Network Inclusive of Indigenous peoples and Communities*, encourages development of library services in this area. It aims to generate interest and support from public libraries across NSW for developing Indigenous services.

In this strategy, *library places* refer to a conceptual arena where libraries engage not only with Australian Indigenous peoples accessing the library building, but also with their history, issues and perceptions across the community.

¹ Throughout this document the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Indigenous Australians' have been used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS SERVICES ACROSS NSW PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Indigenous population of NSW

Indigenous Australian peoples are recognised as having one of the oldest and longest continuing cultures in the world.² There is great diversity of Indigenous peoples and language across Australia, including distinct Aboriginal nations speaking a range of different languages.

New South Wales is home to the largest number of Indigenous peoples in Australia³ and there are many substantial communities of Aboriginal peoples across the state, including those living in suburban areas of Sydney and other cities, those in country towns and those in smaller, often regional and remote predominately Aboriginal communities. The lives and interests of those people vary enormously but all share a core concern that their identity and culture be respected. The most recent population figures are provided in the table below.

State/territory	Population number	Percentage of Indigenous population	Percentage of total state/territory population
New South Wales	208,476	31%	2.9%
Victoria	47,333	7%	0.9%
Queensland	188,954	28%	4.2%
South Australia	37,408	6%	2.3%
Western Australia	88,270	13%	3.8%
Tasmania	24,165	4%	4.7%
Northern Territory	68,850	10%	29.8%
Australian Capital Territory	6160	1%	1.7%
TOTAL	669,881 (includes other territories)	100%	3%

SOURCE: 'DIVERSITY OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE', 2013, FIND LEGAL ANSWERS,⁴ WITH SOURCES FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

In addition:

- most (43.8%) Indigenous peoples live in rural communities
- 34.8% live in cities (with western Sydney having the largest population in Australia)
- 21.4% of Indigenous peoples live in remote areas
- the largest numbers of Indigenous peoples live in NSW and Queensland.

² <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-cultural-heritage>

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census Counts – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2075.0main+features32011>

⁴ http://www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/guides/hot_topics/first_australians/diversity.html

STATEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND LIBRARIES

ATSILIRN Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services

The Library Council of NSW has endorsed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN) protocols as a guideline for best practice for working with Indigenous Australian peoples, content and collections.⁵

The ATSILIRN protocols cover focus areas of:

1. Governance and management
2. Content and perspectives
3. Intellectual property
4. Accessibility and use
5. Description and classification
6. Secret and sacred materials
7. Offensive
8. Staffing
9. Developing professional practice
10. Awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues
11. Copying and repatriation of records
12. The digital environment.

NSLA Indigenous Working Group and publications

The ATSILIRN protocols and other statements of good practice, such as those prepared by the National State Libraries of Australasia (NSLA) Indigenous Group, encourage the inclusion of Indigenous Australian content and perspectives. Some examples of good practices are the *National Position Statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections*⁶ and the *Working with Community: Guidelines for Collaborative Practice between Libraries and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*.⁷

⁵ Information on the ATSILIRN protocols is available at <http://atsilirn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols.php>

⁶ <http://www.nsla.org.au/publication/national-position-statement-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-library-services-and>

⁷ <http://www.nsla.org.au/publication/working-community-guidelines-collaborative-practice-between-libraries-and-aboriginal-and>

OBJECTIVES

The strategy *Indigenous Spaces in Library Places: Building a Vibrant Public Library Network Inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and Communities* has been developed for the timeframe 2016–2021.

The goal is to encourage public libraries across NSW to build greater awareness, support and engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities and to provide guidance for libraries to enhance services to the Indigenous population.

The objectives are to:



WELCOME



**Create
welcoming
and trusted
environments
for Indigenous
peoples in
library spaces**

ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE CENTRE - KATOOMBA LIBRARY (NSW), IMAGE COURTESY OF ROBERT WALSH PHOTOGRAPHY

Targets

- Increase number of visible library spaces acknowledging and connecting with local Indigenous culture and history.
- Gain positive feedback from the local Indigenous population.

Key strategies

- Encourage public libraries to create a visible Indigenous presence in the library spaces – for example, through welcome or acknowledgement signs of the local Indigenous community.
- Encourage public libraries to promote event programs and collections related to Australian Indigenous history and culture.
- Encourage public libraries to acknowledge and share successful stories and feedback from the Indigenous local population accessing the library.



Encourage the public library network to support, share and engage with Indigenous peoples in their local area



KAYLA SANDS AND ZAHLIA GREEN, DURING A VISIT TO THE STATE LIBRARY OF WALGETT'S DHARRIWAA ELDERS GROUP AS PART OF ITS *ELDERS TEACH FAMILY* PROGRAM

Targets

- Libraries develop new approaches to attract key Indigenous community organisations.
- Increase outreach activities to Indigenous communities.
- Develop relationships with key Indigenous community organisations at a local level.

Key strategies

- Encourage public libraries to liaise with the local Indigenous groups and associations regarding shared aspirations and programs — for example, Reconciliation groups and Land Councils.
- Support libraries to explore collaborations with their local council and other organisations involved with Indigenous peoples in the community.
- Work collaboratively with public libraries to promote opportunities for their staff to engage with local community groups to build long lasting relationships.

SHARE



KOORI MAIL MAGAZINE IN THE STATE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Targets

- Increased awareness of Indigenous history and culture.
- Visible collections and services for Indigenous peoples.

Key strategies

- Support public libraries to collect, expose and share local and national resources on Australian Indigenous culture and history.
- Encourage public libraries to collaborate with local Indigenous peoples and communities to create and share stories – for example, collecting local histories relating to experiences of the Indigenous community, collecting ephemera, collaborating with Indigenous artists etc.



INDIGENOUS PRINTED COLLECTIONS, MITCHELL LIBRARY

Targets

- Increased number of Indigenous Australian staff, including librarians and archivists employed by public libraries.
- Increased awareness of career pathways for Indigenous Australian peoples to be employed in the Library and Information profession through the public library network.

Key strategies

- Advocate for government agencies and/or councils to develop Indigenous employment strategies.
- Encourage and promote the development of volunteer and/or other work experience or placement opportunities for Indigenous Australian students in public libraries.
- Provide mentoring and professional networking for Indigenous staff across NSW public libraries, including sharing information on development opportunities and new career pathways.





MARIMIRANG: ELDERS AND LANGUAGE, HOSTED AT THE LIBRARY FOR SENIORS WEEK 2014

Targets

- Collections relating to Australian Indigenous culture and history are developed and are made visible throughout the public library network.
- Events and programs related to Indigenous Australian culture, history and experiences are incorporated into regular planning across the network.
- Collections and services dedicated to Indigenous peoples and communities are developed with respect to the ATSILIRN protocols.

Key strategies

- Provide information to public libraries on the development of Indigenous collections, including key reference titles.
- Support the provision of tools, templates and guides online relating to the development of and access to Indigenous services and collections.
- Share with public libraries staff case studies developed on the ATSILIRN protocols and their application.





Inspire collaborative relationships among the public library network to share information on Indigenous services

ABORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHER MERVYN BISHOP WITH KIRSTEN THORPE AND LOUISE DENOON

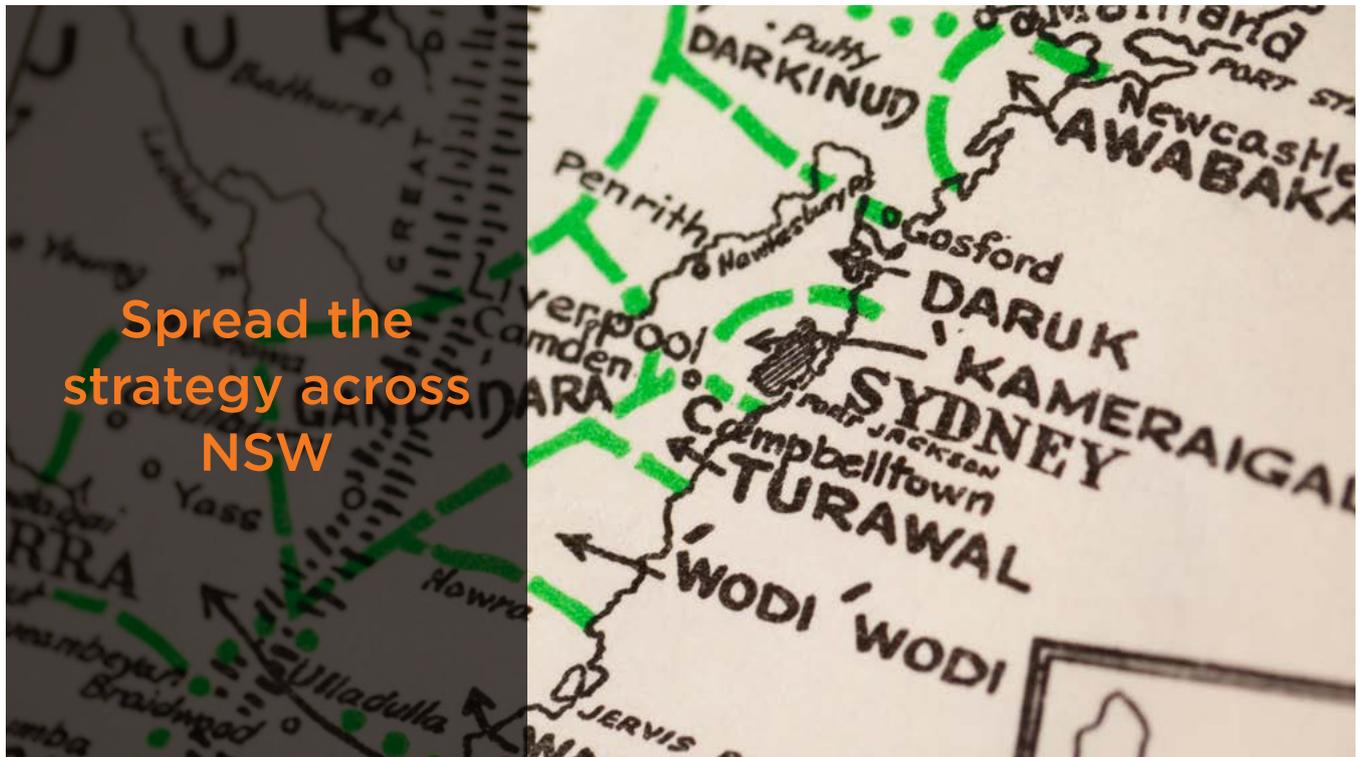
Targets

- Staff across the public library network share information and experiences on how to develop better services for Indigenous peoples.
- Create a network of professionals, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to develop good practice for Indigenous services in public libraries.

Key strategies

- Facilitate connections and conversations across the public library network, through the use of the State Library website, online collaborative tools and social media channels.
- Promote champions in improving and providing services for the local Australian Indigenous population, and celebrate these inspiring stories among the public library network.





MAP SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES OF AUSTRALIA (DETAIL), NORMAN B TINDALE, 1940 MITCHELL LIBRARY, M3 804ECA/1788/1A

Targets

- The public library network is actively aware and engaged with the strategy.
- Public library staff promote the strategy across the network, encouraging collaborations and sharing stories.

Key strategies

- Organise onsite and/or online focus groups with library staff and managers to seek input and feedback on the application of the strategy.
- Investigate the use of online tools to survey priority areas, new ideas etc.

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