

Sensitive: NSW Government

94th Meeting - Public Libraries Consultative Committee MINUTES

DATE	Tuesday 29 June 2021
TIME	2:30 PM to 3:30 PM
LOCATION	Online via Microsoft Teams Meeting
CHAIR	Dr Ursula Dubosarsky (Library Council of NSW)
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	Cameron Morley (State Library)
MEMBERS ATTENDING	Hon George Souris AM (Library Council of NSW) Jody Rodas (Waverley Library) Suzie Gately (Newcastle Region Library) Cr Lesley Furneaux-Cook (LGNSW, Burwood Council) Damian Thomas (LGNSW) Cr Dallas Tout (NSWPLA, Wagga Wagga City Council) Adele Casey (NSWPLA) Dr John Vallance (State Librarian)
APOLOGIES	Pam Kelly (Warren Library – North West Regional Library)
SL NSW STAFF	Philippa Scarf
MINUTES	Samantha Mantakoun
ITEM 1: PRELIMINARY MATTERS	
1.1 Welcome and Apologies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners, the Gadigal.	
1.2 Notification of Other Business	
Nil	

ITEM 2: MINUTES, BUSINESS ARISING

2.1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- The previous minutes of the 93rd Meeting of the PLCC held 1 December 2020 were approved.

2.1.1 Public Library Infrastructure Grants

Cameron Morley informed the committee that 27 councils applied for 2020/21 grants, with 25 projects being approved. This was a low number of applications compared with previous years which regularly attract more than 50 applications. The State Library will be promoting the next round in the new fiscal year, particularly councils that are seeking extensions and encourage applications for funding despite obstacles such as lockdowns.

The Committee noted the report.

2.1.2 Public Library operating and capital expenditure 2017/18 to 2019/20

At the December 2020 meeting the Committee considered a paper which outlined that 47 of the 94 councils that had reported at that date had reduced their expenditure on libraries in the first year of the increased State Government funding.

In discussion it was agreed that the State Library will do further analysis once the more detailed Statements of Library Operations forms are lodged by all councils. This will enable the itemisation of operational and capital funds, which may provide a clearer picture.

Cameron Morley presented a paper highlighting the public library operating and capital expenditure comparisons from the last three financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The paper showed that 26 councils reduced operational expenditure on libraries between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

2019/20 was the first year of State Government increases for public library subsidies. In this year a total of 49 councils out of the 128 that provide library services reduced their operational expenditure on libraries. The operational figures provided include the State Government increase.

Overall however, total operational expenditure on libraries by councils increased by \$9,688,608.

The Committee discussed possible extenuating circumstances behind some councils reducing library expenditure.

Cr Lesley Furneaux-Cook noted that many LGAs were impacted by unusual circumstances such as bushfires, floods, amalgamations, and many council staff were not eligible for job keeper during the COVID-19 shut-down period.

George Souris suggested that out of the 49 councils that were identified as having a decrease in capital expenditure, whether it was possible to examine them more closely to determine whether these were impacted by natural disasters or is there some other reason why library expenditure decreased.

Cr Dallas Tout provided a suggestion to add an additional column showing the increased funding. This would assist with showing the difference.

Adele Casey suggested that libraries could be asked to provide a report outlining the positive work libraries and councils have done with the funding.

These suggestions were noted, and further information will be brought to future meetings once reporting from councils for this financial year is received.

2.1.3 Membership campaign

In 2020 the “My Library Gets Me” campaign was scheduled to be run during the May Library and Information Week. Unfortunately, NSW public libraries were subject to the COVID-19 lockdown over this period, and the campaign was not able to be run as planned.

The latest NSW Public Library Statistics show that registered library membership numbers dropped from 3,182,429 in 2018/19 to 3,139,207 in 2019/20. These figures were possibly influenced by the lockdown, where there were 3 months of library closures, and also because libraries used the lockdown period to tidy up their membership databases.

Public libraries have indicated to the State Library that membership promotion is a priority, and it is noted that some Zones have been conducting membership workshops in recent months.

The State Library proposes that a statewide campaign is developed, and would like to work with the NSW Public Libraries Association and public libraries on a membership drive. The suggestion of a membership drive with a 6-week time limit to be initiated with the recommendation of having a subset of people from PLCC to develop the idea further.

Cr Dallas Tout voiced his support for the renewal of the public library membership campaign and referred to some libraries completing workshops that were facilitated by Jan Richards and Adele Casey.

Suzie Gately suggested it would be beneficial to form a working group. She advised that good practise for database membership maintenance is to contact members that had not used services for a period of time before culling them from the system. This is an opportunity to promote services and update member details.

The Committee noted this approach and agreed that a best practice approach to reach out to lapsed members should be included in the campaign.

Adele Casey suggested that there was no need to hire or use a 3rd party marketing company, and the Committee agreed, noting that a cooperative approach between the State Library, the NSWPLA and public libraries will be the basis for a successful campaign.

Action

Cameron Morley and Adele Casey to convene a sub-committee to progress the concept.

ITEM 3: MEETING BUSINESS

3.1 2021/22 Public Library Funding Strategy

The Committee considered the proposed allocation of the 2021/22 Public Library Funding.

The funding totals \$38.618M, which is an increase of \$1,060,000 over 2020/21. The per capita subsidy allocation increases by 10c to \$2.65.

It was noted that the funding allocation model had been approved for use from 2019/20 until 2022/23, and is to be adjusted as necessary depending on population growth and funds available.

The recommended allocations by component for 2021/22 are outlined in the following table.

Decision

The	Component	Allocation 2021/22
1	Subsidy - \$2.65 per capita <i>Population served: 8,164,742</i>	\$21,636,566
2	Subsidy Adjustment Funding <i>Allocations to councils in addition to \$2.65 per capita (above)</i>	\$7,547,000
1+2	Sub-total – payments to councils <i>(itemised in an attachment)</i>	\$29,183,566
3	NSW.net	\$2,000,000
4	Outback Letterbox Library	\$200,000
5	Strategic Network Projects \$250,272 to be allocated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20k to Interlibrary Loan Courier Service • \$100k to Statewide Projects, Research and Policy • \$60k to Professional Development • \$45k to Public Library Statistics software licences • \$25k collection support 	\$250,272
6	State Library services to public libraries	\$984,162
7	Grant program	\$6,000,000
	Total Public Library Grants and Subsidies	\$38,618,000

Committee endorsed the draft 2021/22 Public Library Funding Strategy and recommended it to the Library Council of NSW for consideration.

3.2 Public Library Statistics and performance measures in the wake of COVID-19

Cameron Morley briefed the Committee on the paper which had been prepared by Mylee Joseph.

It was noted that the State Library collects statistical data from public libraries annually in support of Library Council's duty to make careful inquiry into the administration and management of libraries provided by local authorities that have adopted the *Library Act 1939*.

The 2019/20 Public Library Statistics have been made available online and physical copies have been posted to libraries. This statistical year is unique and shows a marked departure from trends of previous years due to libraries being closed for three months of the year.

This creates an issue regarding the setting of benchmarks based on the 2019/20 results, noting that the NSW Public Library Standards are based on the statistics. The Strategic Network Committee discussed the matter on 21 May 2021, and canvassed a few options including:

- leaving the standards at current levels until there is clarity on trends,
- develop a rolling average across 3-5 years, meaning the standards will not bounce up and down in a reactionary way.
- seasonally adjust the final three months of 2019/20, as trends were fairly normal pre-lockdown.

Feedback from the Committee highlighted that the standards and guidelines are most appreciated by libraries as these are used to compare statistics within their cohort. Therefore, there is a need to be careful with how the statistics and benchmarks are created, and the standards need to be meaningful.

It was noted that a 25% drop in attendance at libraries was to be expected due to libraries being closed for three months of that financial year.

Loans of collection items only dropped by 13%, illustrating that the click and collect services and online collections were successful in making books available to readers despite the building closures.

Expenditure on e-collections increased by 18.5% and loans of e-collections increased by 33%, indicating that libraries adjusted to meet the needs of their communities.

In terms of the standards, it was agreed that the current standards will not be adjusted on the basis of the 2019/20 figures, and that 2020/21 is collected and analysed prior to a decision. In the meantime, the State Library will publish the 2019/20 figures so libraries can use them for benchmarking against their peers.

Jody Rodas voiced her agreement in having a rolling 5-year average as a way to set the standards. As libraries are still delivering their services, they will still need to compare what they are currently doing within their cohort. The 2018/19 benchmarks will not be realistic to achieve as libraries are facing a different reality now. Particularly when libraries have adopted new online services and eBook collections, these are now viewed as a new ongoing service that will need to be maintained.

Suzie Gately commented that Newcastle has now started to include online visits and online services as part of its standard reporting to councils. This is to convey that the current online services are equal and as important as their physical visits to a library branch. With the current trend moving towards a different hybrid service delivery model, it is important to include and capture the changing data.

Adele Casey agreed with both Susie Gately's and Jody Rodas' comments and mentioned that it is also important to note that the statistics might not be 100% accurate as there are some online statistics that have been quite difficult to collect. Therefore, there is a need to consider the anomalies in some of the statistics as well.

It was agreed that the discussion will continue once the next set of annual figures is available.

3.3 NSW.net Annual reporting

The Committee noted the following progress report which had been prepared by Joyce Azzopardi and Ross Balharrie.

1. Internet Connectivity

NBN upgrades:

NBN service upgrades for councils and public libraries are continuing with the availability of NBN services. Thirteen basic grade NBN services were installed and six high grade NBN EE services were installed in Lake Macquarie x 5, Goonellabah and Murwillumbah. Service upgrades are in progress for Wollongong x 5, Miranda and Fairfield, Kings Cross and Pyrmont. Four basic NBN services are being upgraded in Goonellabah and Lismore to high grade NBN EE.

Fibre internet service upgrades:

Installations of 1Gigabit fibre services are in progress for Lane Cove and Kogarah Councils. The installation of a 50M fibre service is in progress for Wilcannia (Ideas Box). NSW.net is assisting Liverpool Plains with the installation of a fibre run into the premises in their new Quirindi Library to connect to their new NBN service.

There has been an ongoing requirement by both metropolitan and regional libraries for faster internet services to meet user needs. Some libraries are requesting the higher grade NBN EE services which offer excellent performance. The cost of these services is substantially more than the basic NBN services.

Working with Richmond Tweed Libraries to install fibre to the premises infrastructure to enhance internet performance in their 9 branch libraries.

Provided proposals for internet services and equipment to Gilgandra Library in preparation for the construction of their new library in May 2022.

Firewall upgrades:

Firewall upgrades were completed for 13 libraries. Upgrades were due to the upgrade of internet services. Provided quotes to Armidale, Walgett and Gunnedah.

WMS Hotspot Controllers: Many wireless hotspot controllers are at least 10 years old and require replacement. The replacement of metropolitan and regional WMS controllers is currently underway. Equipment has been purchased and despatched to all libraries for swap out. Many have already swapped out the units.

Full replacement of controllers should be completed by the end of July.

As the WMS server is approximately five years old, a new server has been purchased to replace it.

2. Wireless Access Point (WAP) EOL Replacement Program

Since 2011, NSW.net has installed a vast number of Wi-Fi hotspots in metropolitan and regional public libraries. At the time, a Wi-Fi hotspot solution known as the Wireless Management System (WMS) was developed by NSW.net's partner, Hitech Support, to specifically meet user needs.

WMS was initially deployed in roughly half of metropolitan and regional public libraries. In 2011/12, the NSW Government's Revitalising Regional Libraries initiative provided the State Library with \$2M over a four-year time frame to support internet connectivity for NSW public

libraries including new technologies like Wi-Fi. During this rollout, NSW.net installed WMS Wi-Fi hotspots in all remaining regional public libraries (126 sites over the 4 years).

The WMS solution is unique in that it offers control and comprehensive reporting. Features can be turned off or on to suit library needs and the system is also compatible with NBN services.

WMS deployment includes the provision and installation of a firewall, wireless access points (WAPs) and a hotspot controller. As many of the WAPs have been in operation for many years now, they have reached their 'end of life'. To address this issue NSW.net has commenced the gradual upgrade of these WAPs.

Stage one of the rollout was completed in 84 libraries. Public libraries targeted for these upgrades were those with NBN services already installed as the new WAPs enhance the performance of high bandwidth services.

Stage two of the rollout commenced in 2019 and is still in progress. In the 2019/20 year, 239 WAPs were replaced in 38 metropolitan and 133 regional libraries. So far in the 2020/21 year, 32 WAPs have been replaced in nine metropolitan and 14 regional libraries. The following libraries were targeted for WAP replacements: Bega Valley x 3, Bourke, Blue Mountains x 2, Camden x 2, Campbelltown x 4, Cowra, Batemans Bay x 3, Fairfield, Forbes, Hurstville x 3, Hay, Boorowa, Hornsby, Gordon x 4, Barradine, Mendooran, Wellington, Narrandera, Oberon, Orange, Kurri Kurri and Burwood.

The remaining WAP replacements have now been completed. These included a number of metropolitan and regional libraries some of which included City of Sydney x 7, Hornsby x 2, The Hills x 2, Coffs Harbour x 2, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Gunning, Goulburn, Eurobodalla x 4, and Lane Cove.

Wi-Fi hotspots have vastly increased internet access for the public in public libraries. Since 2011, there have been 45,932,628 total logins and 13,542,895 total devices using WMS.

3. eResources

indyreads[®]

The rollout of the indyreads eContent management platform to the NSW public library network is almost complete with the final library being configured. The statewide collection currently contains 16,500 eBook and Audio titles sourced from Australian independent publishers, as well as international content including reference, modern literary, classic fiction and non-fiction titles and a curated collection of self-published content. PLS has worked closely with NSWPLN language specialists to create collections in languages other than English (LOTE). The LOTE collection includes 450 Chinese titles, 253 Spanish titles, 100 and Romanian titles. Selectors are currently developing a French and Italian collection.

Preliminary work is underway to investigate the possibility of offering a summer statewide book club. Several books have been identified as possible candidates and license negotiations are underway.

On Wednesday 21 April Michael Adams from PLS held a webinar for NSW public library staff which highlighted some of the recent improvements to the indyreads interface, provided an update on collection development and promotional activities, and previewed upcoming initiatives.

Monthly social media campaigns promoting the collection along with bookmarks and banners have been distributed to the NSWPLN.

The annual statistics are 45,130 loans and 7746 reservations.

Discussions are underway with Corrective Services to explore the possibility of extending access to the indyreads platform to inmates in Corrective Services facilities.

Statewide Databases:

After a thorough comparative review of available options the State Library's NSW.net service and the NSW Public Library Content Working Group (CWG) has recommended a new suite of statewide licensed databases for 2021-2022. These are the databases that are available to the public free of charge from all NSW public libraries.

In making the final decision on the composition of the statewide suite of databases the CWG considered the reference service information requirements of the NSW public library network, subject coverage, content quality, user interface, as well as financial considerations.

The new suite covers a diverse range of subjects including, Australian news sources, business skills, contemporary issues, environment, geography, literature, science, and history.

The new resources will be made available for community use on the 1st of July.

To facilitate the transition to the new suite of eResources NSW.net contacted libraries to acquire barcode range for remote access and IP ranges for each service point for onsite access. The URLs and logos have been forwarded to libraries.

A series of webinars were scheduled in June to provide library staff with an overview of the new resources. An ongoing marketing and training plan is in development.

NSW.net Consortia Opt-in Offer Scheme:

Over 94 Consortia Opt-in offers were negotiated with 25 vendors for digital content products including aggregated collections of subject-specific digital journals, magazines, newspapers, videos, music, eBook and Audio content as well as access and discovery software.

Product trials:

NSW.net is currently trialing the Wriveted AI Chatbot; a children's readers advisory kiosk and software at Blacktown Library. The kiosks have been installed at Max Webber Library, Mt Druitt Library and Stanhope Garden Library. The trial will run from the 1st July 2021 to the end of December 2021. Assuming the evaluation is positive NSW.net will explore the opportunity to make the product available to interested NSW public libraries via a discounted Consortia Opt-in offer.

3.4 Association Reports

Adele Casey briefed the Committee about NSWPLA activities, including:

- the online story time pilot project undertaken with ALIA. There had been a positive take up across Australia with 150 public library services registered, with 45 of these from NSW which equated to 201 branches in NSW.
- The National Backyard Cricket initiative, which will raise funds for local public libraries.
- Promoting public libraries in the lead up to the local government elections.
- NSWPLA Conference update. Exhibition space is sold out, and more than 100 delegates have already committed. It is hoped that COVID-19 will subside and that the conference can go ahead in-person.

- The AGM will be held separately to the conference. This to be held on the 2nd of December at 5:30pm.

ITEM 4: OTHER BUSINESS**4.0 Strategic Network Committee Minutes**

The Minutes were noted.

NEXT MEETING

DATE	Tuesday, 14 December 2021
TIME	3:00 PM – 4:00 PM
LOCATION	State Library of NSW