

Public Library Services in Western Australia in 2025

Future Considerations Discussion Paper

March 2015



WALGA

WORKING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Foreword

Why do we need this Discussion Paper?

Public library services in Western Australia facilitate access to resources, knowledge and technology and help build stronger communities by contributing to social inclusion, lifelong learning and literacy. However, it is evident that emerging technologies, changes in media and how it is consumed as well as social and cultural change will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library services in the future.

The intent of this *Discussion Paper* is to generate ideas about how public library services in Western Australia can adapt to rapid social and technological change and evolve to remain relevant, valued and sustainable. This *Discussion Paper* will provide a foundation for discussion among key stakeholders that will inform the development of a vision and strategic direction for public libraries in Western Australia. It is also intended to facilitate discussion around options for the most appropriate governance model.

Supporting information

A *Background Report* has been prepared to provide the context for this process and should be used in conjunction with this *Discussion Paper*. It includes:

- The context for planning public library services in Western Australia.
- Background information on governance and funding of public library services in Western Australia.
- An outline of the existing public library service delivery model in Western Australia.
- A snapshot of the distribution, service offer and performance of public library services in Western Australia in 2015.
- Research on the future of public library services and how these services will need to be positioned in the future.

Public Libraries Western Australia (PLWA) has produced a series of case studies showcasing innovative practice in Western Australian public libraries. PLWA has also conducted a survey with public libraries to identify the spread and depth of service delivery across differing size libraries. These studies will be provided as additional information to further support the discussion process.

The discussion process

This *Background Paper* has been prefaced by a period of valuable consultation with key stakeholders in 2014 facilitated by PLWA and WALGA. It is not intended to duplicate this consultation. Rather, we wish to build on this work through focused discussion on the key questions posed in this *Discussion Paper* as the framework for consultation.

Critical to the success of this project will be strong engagement from Mayors, CEOs, senior council staff and library professionals. Consultation will be conducted during April 2015 and facilitated by AEC. (AEC has extensive experience in developing high level strategies for public library service delivery at the state and local level as well as completing the *Strategic Reform of Public Libraries in Western Australia* in 2007).

To make a submission in relation to this *Discussion Paper*, please email publiclibrary2025@aecgrouppltd.com by **5pm, 1 May 2015**. Submissions will inform the development of the Strategic Vision and Framework for Western Australian Public Library Services, due for completion by June 2015. For further information regarding the *Discussion Paper*, feel free to contact Allison Hailes at WALGA at ahailes@walga.asn.au.



President, Mayor Troy Pickard
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1. Planning within context

Key findings

- Responsibilities of Australian local government have expanded significantly over the past six decades. However, the capacity of councils to fulfil many new roles has not grown to a similar degree. The expansion in local government functions and the range of services provided over recent decades have led to a mismatch between expenditure demands and current levels of revenue.
- There are several examples of high level reform responding to increasing demands in a climate of finite resources across various sectors in Western Australia.
- Planning for public library services cannot be done in isolation. It must sit within the context of state and local government respective policy frameworks and priorities.
- Public library service and infrastructure planning forms part of the integrated planning framework within each council. Each local government area will map their public library service provision in accordance with local needs and priorities and the outcomes they have identified for their local government area.
- New ways of thinking are emerging about how services can be delivered to the community in the future. Policy frameworks such as the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership (DCSP) Policy* need to be taken into consideration when identifying options for delivery. Opportunities to work more closely with other agencies also need to be considered. For example, there may be opportunities for closer integration with other bodies operating in the regions, such as the Regional Development Commissions. Each local government will consider what best suits their operating environment.

Key principles & strategic implications

Principle	Strategic implications
Public library service planning sits within the integrated planning framework to progress council's strategic vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased integrated planning and delivery of library services with other council services where viable• Innovative opportunities for delivery (with or through other agencies)• Library service delivery meets identified community needs as identified in the Strategic Community Plan consultation process• Planning for public library services needs to be set within council's overall financial and asset management considerations
Public library service planning sits within the context of economic reform and state and local government policy frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased collaboration across sectors• Increased drive for cost efficiency (state and local)

Discussion points

- How could the planning and delivery of public library services be better integrated with other council services at the local level?
- What opportunities are there for increased collaboration across sectors of government or other agencies to deliver public library services more effectively?



2. Good Governance

Key findings

- The *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951* and its *Regulations* (1985) need to be amended to support the effective delivery of public library services in Western Australia.
- There is increasing disparity between the level of investment between state and local government for public libraries in Western Australia. Local government is now funding 88% of public library service delivery state-wide, yet under the governing Act the State is deemed to be the controlling body.
- There needs to be a clear understanding of the quantum of the investment from the state in public library service provision. There is an opportunity to consider how state funding could be used more effectively to address diverse needs across the state. Consideration needs to be given to alternative ways that services could be delivered from the state to support local government libraries.
- An appropriate governance model needs to be put in place to provide leadership and direction for public library service development state-wide.
- There is a need to further develop relationships between the key stakeholders in public library service delivery and to provide collaborative forums for planning and effective decision making.
- Agreed strategies from the *Structural Reform of Public Libraries Report* have taken longer than expected to implement. The governance model will need to identify clear responsibilities and mechanisms to implement changes required to deliver a contemporary library service for Western Australians.
- There is a need for a clear vision and identification of strategic priorities for public library service delivery in Western Australia.
- One size does not fit all. Local governments need increased autonomy and flexibility in how they access and use state funding for libraries to meet local needs. It is clear that the delivery model needs to transition to a two-tier or a multi-tier model.
- Local communities need to get the best value for the investment made by local and state government in the provision of public library services. In considering the key principles for good governance, fundamental questions about who delivers what services and why, and the benefits at the local level need to be posed. There is also a need to look at innovative options for how services could potentially be delivered at the local level in the future.



Key principles & strategic implications

The following key principles have been informed by United Nations principles for good governance as well as principles for models of governance identified in other states. The strategic implications and discussion points have been developed from the underpinning principles.

Principle	Strategic implications
Fairness and Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility for local governments to meet the needs of their diverse communities• Governance model supports the 2 tier or multi-tier structure• Governance model continues to support fair funding allocation model• The governance model operates within identified legislative framework• Amendments to the <i>Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951</i> progressed• Governance body operates effectively within good governance guidelines• Decision making and processes promote equity for diverse local governments and communities• Resources to meet needs
Effectiveness and efficiency and performance responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The model supports the achievement of identified strategies in a timely manner• Resources are identified to progress strategies and used in the most cost/effective way• Ability to adapt plans and allocate resources for strategic priorities• Innovation fostered
Strategic vision and direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A shared vision as the framework for collaborative action• Clear strategic direction, objectives, principles, roles and responsibilities• Clear understanding of trends and emerging trends for public libraries• A focus on strategic outcomes
Voice participation and consensus orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A governance framework that is representative and can progress actions• Effective relationship management and communication channels with key players involved in decision making• Policy and procedural discussion includes input from key stakeholders (either through direct representation or through an Advisory Group)• A collaborative approach to developing consensus views• A commitment to mediating and resolving differences• A process for gathering feedback

Principle	Strategic implications
Accountability and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear roles for identified groups • Responsibilities and clear timeframes for strategies and actions to enable the vision • Key stakeholders are informed of progress on actions and timeframes • Issues delaying progress are addressed through joint problem solving • Free flow of information • Accurate record keeping and acquittal of monies expended

Discussion points

- What amendments to the *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951* and its *Regulations* (1985) would be required to support a new model of governance for public libraries in Western Australia to best support public library service provision?
- What changes are required to the state government funding model for public libraries to provide increased flexibility for local government?
- Can the existing level of funding for public libraries from local government be assured in the future?
- Are there alternate ways that library services provided from the state could be delivered?
- Are there alternative ways of delivering public library services to local communities in the future?
- What are the strategic priorities for public libraries in Western Australia over the next 10 years?
- Do we need an agreement for collaborative action between the parties? If so, what should this agreement include?
- What governance structure will provide the best means of progressing the strategic direction? (Refer Appendix A of the Background Paper).



3. Service Delivery

Key findings

- There needs to be greater clarity within the local government sector about the role and purpose of public library services and how this aligns with council's strategic planning processes.
- There needs to be agreement about what constitutes a core or value-added library product or service and what services public libraries will deliver, facilitate or broker in the future.
- The significant differences in the size and scale of local governments will require different service delivery strategies in the future from the state.
 - Small and remote libraries will continue to need support through an Exchange service and other support services, but this service must operate in the most effective way and be responsive as far as possible to very diverse local needs. There is a need for a central clearing house and logistics management for the Exchange service, but it does not necessarily need to be provided directly by SLWA.
 - Many large metropolitan libraries believe that SLWA will play a decreasing role in their support in the future.
- There are existing economies of scale in centralised procurement and the availability of online selection tools through SLWA. However, this does not preclude larger libraries from participating in other forms of consortia to purchase collections funded by local councils if discounts and supply specifications can be matched or bettered.
- Centralised collections for Languages other than English (LOTE) and e-Resources should be maintained.
- A central inter-library loan facility needs to be provided.
- There is a need for a central point for the collection and sharing of public library statistics and service delivery information.
- The existing Regional model needs review. More effective methods and resources need to be identified to support small rural and remote communities.



Key principles & strategic implications

The following key principles have been identified from analysis of delivery and performance of Western Australian public libraries and national trends for public library performance on a range of indicators. The strategic implications and discussion points have been developed from the underpinning principles.

Principle	Strategic implications
Clear specifications for public library service delivery aligned with council strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The future role and purpose of public library services defined with clear links to council outcomes• Public library services and products and the level of service to be delivered clearly defined in accordance with council's overall integrated planning and funding provisions• Free and value-added products and services clearly identified• Specifications for delivery determined in light of financial capability at the local level as well as standards for service delivery• Specifications for services provided from SLWA clearly defined• Delivery on specifications for service delivery and performance monitored (local and state)
Quality collections (print and digital) shared and accessible to meet the needs of diverse communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate database of the state-wide library collection• Online access to shared content• Content provided where and when it is needed in the formats required• Collections mix and content reflects community expectations and needs• Collection development and management model meets the needs of diverse local government areas and large and small communities across the state• An efficient Collections Exchanges service for small and rural communities• Effective logistics management model for the Exchanges system, including outsourcing options within identified specifications• Collection mix (print and non-print) aligned with trends and community expectations and needs• State-wide and local collections are up-to-date, relevant and in good condition• Access to quality collections in Languages other than English (LOTE)• Increased online / ebook access

Principle	Strategic implications
Best value for dollars invested and economies of scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An efficient inter-library loans system • Maximise discounts and efficiencies for materials procurement, using shelf-ready supply and consortium purchasing for print and non-print collections • Economies of scale through collaborative action • Technology investment underpinned by cost/benefit • Partnered delivery of services • Opportunities for revenue raising to offset costs • Small and remote communities supported at best value

Discussion points

- What library services and products will local government be able to deliver in the future? What will be free of charge to the user? What can attract a fee?
- What other opportunities does local government have to raise revenue to offset the costs of public library service delivery?
- What other opportunities are there for local councils to work together to provide more cost-effective library services?
- What will the future role of SLWA be in supporting differing size councils?
- Do all councils participating in the Exchange system get the best value for the money invested? Is there a better way of using the funds available?
- How could small and remote libraries be better supported in a cost effective way?



4. Optimising performance

Key findings

- The map of public library infrastructure in metropolitan Perth identifies some opportunities for collaborative planning or even some rationalisation at the local level in the future. The map also highlights the challenges of delivering services in regional and remote areas.
- On a per capita or % of population basis visitors, loans and resident members have all declined over the period 2003/2004 to 2013/2014. However there are significant differences in the level of decline. Visitors per capita have declined by 14.4%, loans per capita by 23.6% and resident members, as a % of the population by just 2.6%.
- While traditional lending has declined in accordance with national trends, online access to public library services has increased significantly.
- Anecdotal data indicates that not all users of public libraries are registered users and that public libraries are being used increasingly for purposes other than lending, including accessing community and cultural development and learning and literacy programs. Although local data is collected by some councils, statistics are not gathered at the state level on the number of these programs or attendance rates.
- Overall collection size is decreasing in public libraries in Western Australia in accordance with national trends. This may have impacts on space needs for public libraries in the future.
- The percentage of locally owned stock in Western Australian public libraries is growing as a percentage of all stock, as larger local councils provide increased collection funding to meet community needs. However, all councils will require ongoing funding to build adequate collections to meet needs.
- There is a need for research into the changing use of technology in libraries.
- Expenditure on public library staffing per capita across the state has decreased by 22.4% over the period 2003/2004 to 2013/2014. The major change in staffing levels has been at the Library Officer level (down 17.8% over the same period).
- However, staffing costs will continue to be the highest operational cost for libraries. New ways of delivering services need to be considered. Consideration needs to be given to the future roles of Library staff: whether it is to deliver, facilitate, broker or outsource some of the services they deliver. This will require some cultural change.
- The operating cost of delivering library service has increased by 118% over the past ten years. Based on existing expenditure it is projected that by 2025 the total operational cost of providing public libraries across the state will have increased by 47.8% to \$141 million in 2013/2014 dollars. This will equate to \$46.23 per capita.
- Although there is inadequate information relating to the need to refurbish or replace or provide new library infrastructure, based on existing expenditure it is estimated that local government in Western Australia will spend \$270 million on public library infrastructure to 2025.
- Libraries also have the opportunity to partner more effectively across their own councils to meet common outcomes. Opportunities need to be identified for increased co-location and partnerships for public library services with other providers, as well as opportunities for increased revenue or community amenity through value-add partnerships with business or government providers.
- Neighbouring libraries could work more collaboratively to plan, share information and specialised labour resources for service delivery, particularly literacy, technology and community and cultural programs and events.

Key principles & strategic implications

The following key principles have been identified from analysis of delivery and performance of Western Australian public libraries and national trends for public library performance on a range of indicators. The strategic implications and discussion points have been developed from the underpinning principles.

Principle	Strategic implications
Effective workforce planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding what new skill sets will be required into the future• Library staff have the skills to deliver services effectively
Cost efficient allocation of labour resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition to new ways of working, including facilitating, outsourcing, partnering or brokering services• Collaborative planning and delivery and resource sharing at the local level where viable• Focus on delivery of services in accordance with agreed specifications
Sustainable and flexible library infrastructure that meets changing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Integrated Planning Framework should drive planning at the local level• Collaboration at the local and regional level to plan for new and replacement infrastructure• Rationalisation of existing infrastructure in the metro area where viable (now or in the future as infrastructure ages)• An understanding of the real cost of providing or maintaining infrastructure (Infrastructure Audit)• Shared use of infrastructure with identified partners (state, business, and community) where viable to share costs• Innovative use of infrastructure with identified partners
Enabling technology that demonstrates return on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investment in technology based on sound business case with demonstrable return• Opportunities for shared Library Management Systems (local, regional, state) where efficiencies and cost savings are identified

Discussion points

- How do we develop a workforce that will meet future needs for service delivery? What skills and qualifications might we need in the future?
- What library services could be delivered by other agencies in the future?
- How could library staff resources be shared more effectively between LGAs at the local level in the future?
- What opportunities are there to rationalise or plan better for library infrastructure with neighbouring councils?
- What innovative options are there to better use or share library space in the future? Who could we partner with?
- What economies of scale or collaborative action for library service delivery need to be supported?
- What technology options should we pursue to enable library services to be delivered in the most cost-efficient way?





5. Positioning for the future

Key findings

- Population change by 2025 will be a key driver in how public library services will be mapped. Public libraries will need sound data at the local level to plan for infrastructure, collections and services to meet community needs, now and into the future.
- Building cohesive, engaged and informed communities through programming for learning, literacy and creative endeavour will continue to be a key role for libraries. This will require flexible space, effective partnerships, and some re-skilling of staff. Strategies will need to be put in place to transition thinking about the public library from a focus on books on shelves and bricks and mortar to a focus on the outcomes that library services deliver and how these outcomes can be best met.
- There is a need for stronger partnerships at the local and state level as well as with community and commercial providers. Public libraries occupy valuable real estate in the community and could add additional value through a more diverse service offer.
- Public library services in the future will continue to play a key role in providing access to physical and online content and information, as well as developing digital and technical literacies.
- By 2025, the uptake of the ebook and access to content from a range of mobile platforms will mean that libraries will not need as much space for traditional collections.
- Public libraries will need to improve their access to quality ebooks.
- There is a need for a strong and united voice by the public library network (PLWA) and local government (WALGA) to promote the social and economic value of public libraries in Western Australia to state government and local decision makers and funders.

Key principles & strategic implications

Principle	Strategic implications
Responsive to changing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence based forward planning for service delivery• Flexibility to adapt to emerging social and technological trends• Innovative service delivery and shared learning
Supporting community and cultural development and lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued role of the library for community and cultural development and to promote learning and literacy (print-based and digital) with outcome based programs• Consideration of alternative delivery options and partnerships for delivery• Access to flexible spaces and programs across the state to promote learning communities, community and cultural engagement, celebrate diversity and break down social isolation• Co-operative ventures to share programs and events across the state (e.g. touring writers' program)
Recognised value proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint advocacy of the economic and social value of public libraries• Advocacy tools for use at the local level• Alignment at the local level of library services, programs and events with identified council outcomes

Discussion points

- What are the evolving models of service delivery in public libraries to meet changing needs? How can we support innovative models in WA?
- How do we ensure that library service delivery is *customer driven* and not *capacity driven*? How do we provide evidence of needs in planning for services and programs?
- What alternate options are there for delivering library community and cultural development programs and library programs supporting learning and literacy?
- How will public libraries most effectively market their social and economic value to decision makers and funders in the future?





To make a submission to this Discussion Paper please email publiclibrary2025@aecgrouppltd.com by **1 May 2015**.

