



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair)

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into ACT Libraries

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From: Sarah Lewis
To: [LA Committee - ETCS](#)
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I only regularly visit the Gungahlin and Civic libraries, so my observations are only pertinent to those two.

(1) The role of libraries within the ACT community

ACT's libraries play an important role in fostering social inclusion and community wellbeing, and providing services for the ACT community. Free-to-access services, products and advice are an important factor in ensuring equal access to opportunities for those struggling in the community, both financially and emotionally.

(2) Strategic planning for libraries in the ACT including:

- (a) Current practice
- (b) Potential revisions to current practice and the associated benefits
- (c) Opportunities for community involvement

No comment.

(3) The nature and extent of current and future community demand for different library services including:

- (a) Non-digital offerings
- (b) Digital offerings
- (c) Education and training opportunities
- (d) Facilities available for public use
- (e) Spaces for learning, creativity and for achieving social inclusion
- (f) Other government services co-located with libraries, and
- (g) Any other library services sought by the community

I mainly use the library for its non-digital and digital offerings. I appreciate the access to other government services (such as the shop front in Civic library) for convenience when I do need to interact with the government. The ACT Government could explore having similar arrangements with Federal services, such as Centrelink/Medicare, if doing so would help cut costs for both parties while not impacting on services.

Although I do not use the facilities available for public use, I enjoy seeing them being used. In particular, I enjoy seeing the Gungahlin library spaces being used for children's reading time, and for community events like Science Week. It definitely helps to create the sense of community and social inclusion.

In terms of the non-digital and digital offerings made available, I greatly appreciate the regular additions to the library's collection. I am an avid reader of the 'What's New This Month' section of the library website. I have also recently discovered the 'Libby' app that allows the borrowing of digital books and audiobooks. It is a fantastic resource and I would encourage the ACT Government to allow it to continue to grow.

(4) The extent to which ACT Libraries are positioned to respond flexibly to meet current and future community opportunities and demands

No comment

(5) The extent to which ACT Libraries are accessible to the community, including:

- (a) Opening hours
- (b) Locations and
- (c) Disability access

I find the Gungahlin library easily accessible, ideally located and well considered in terms of disability access. Civic library is restricted due to the stairs down to the book section.

In terms of opening hours, I particularly appreciate the extended hours offered by Gungahlin library, as I am not able to get to that library during the week otherwise (working elsewhere Mon-Friday). If changes are being considered, I would strongly recommend keeping one day a week with extended hours at each library.

(6) The cost effectiveness of existing branches

I cannot comment on this but would like to question how 'cost effectiveness' is assessed when talking about a public good. Libraries are not intended to generate a profit, so against what metrics would the ACT Government use to assess whether the current cost delivers the intended outcome in the most optimal way? Please do not use this inquiry simply as an excuse to cut costs.

(7) Comparative analysis of ACT Libraries with library services in other jurisdictions and community take-up of these services

As per above, I would encourage the ACT Government not to use this inquiry simply as an excuse to cut costs. Other jurisdictions may well have less services or take-up, but that does not mean that the ACT should reduce its own. ACT is unique in what it offers, servicing a population of ~400,000. Other jurisdictions' libraries are generally provided by local council and do not have the same resources or coverage as what ACT provides. I happily pay my rates knowing that it goes towards ACT's broader services.

(8) Any legislative considerations that may be relevant

No comment.

(9) Any other relevant matter

The ACT library staff do a fantastic job that should be recognised in some way in this inquiry.