



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES  
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## Submission Cover Sheet

### Inquiry into ACT Libraries

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Patricia Hepworth

Committee Secretary

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

GPO Box 1020

Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Committee Secretary

### **Inquiry into ACT Libraries**

Thank you for the opportunity to share our experiences with ACT libraries and some aspirations for the future direction.

As an ACT resident with children, the ACT public library system has been an integral part of our lives. From attending story time with young children – at a point when any opportunity to get out of the house and be part of a community was to be grasped with both hands – to the current day when my daughter is old enough to take herself to the library and study for hours, the library has provided a safe and welcoming environment.

We are lucky at the moment to live very close to the Kingston library. We visit frequently, though I have less time to read than I would like. Even though we are close, I really appreciate the option to access materials through the borrow box app – it means that I can always find an audio book or electronically delivered book if I do have a spare hour.

Living so close the library has been a welcoming space for my eldest daughter who walks home from school. As a parent, it is reassuring to know that it is a safe space – I have absolute trust in the library staff and the institution. It is also great that Kingston library is located at the shops – it is handy for transport and makes it a very welcoming environment. Often we will pop in when walking to the shops, and stop for a coffee/hot chocolate nearby making an excellent little local excursion.

Belconnen library, when we lived in Belconnen, was more problematically placed. With a pram and a toddler on public transport it is not actually a simply task to get to the library from the bus stops, and the library itself seems a hidden jewel – you have to know it is there as you'd never walk past otherwise. Civic library's positioning is similarly slightly out of the way.

I would like to support further investigations of whether government services could be co-located (without sacrificing service or library space). I recently had to get a working with vulnerable people card, and being able to wait with the kids at Civic library was much preferable to being stuck in normal government shopfront.

I asked my daughter (12) what she would like to add, and she replied: "I would like there to be more places to sit. Comfortable spaces where my friends and I could talk would be great – at the moment

you have to be quiet so you don't disturb other people. I like that it is free and you don't have to buy anything. Also it has wifi so I can do my homework when I lock myself out of the house."

In closing I would like to pay tribute to the library staff. Over my entire life in Canberra they have been unfailingly helpful, professional and lovely. The librarians at Kingston have assisted my daughter with locating digital resources and explained how to search the catalogue and order books in from other branches. They have been understanding and kind when she needed to pay a fine for late return of a library book, something she was quite nervous about. In an era of "fake news" and reducing trust in our institutions, it is valuable to me that there are professionals that still hold a trusted place in my childrens' wider community.

In closing I thank the committee for the opportunity to contribute my experiences to this inquiry. Obviously these are just the personal reflections of my family – the submission has no strong evidential or theoretical basis. However we were motivated to write because the library system has been, and continues to be, very important in our lives and we would all like to see it continue to be supported and flourish. I, and my eldest daughter, would be happy to provide any further information that would be useful.

Yours sincerely

Trish Hepworth