



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, Mr James Milligan MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into ACT Libraries

Submission Number: 025

Date Authorised for Publication: 26 September 2018

From: [REDACTED]
To: [LA Committee - ETCS](#)
Subject: ACT Library Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 6 September 2018 12:26:11 PM

The Committee Secretary,
Inquiry into ACT Libraries.

Please accept my submission for the Inquiry into ACT Libraries.

Terms of Reference:

1. The role of libraries within the ACT community:

The ACT Library is a resource centre to provide books and electronic material to the people of the ACT. It seems to be doing that reasonably well. The introduction of Branch Managers has been a positive step in helping libraries work more efficiently.

2. Strategic Planning:

a & b) The current practice at ACT library branches needs improving, with better training of library staff. While it is difficult to determine if the problem is one where the staff don't listen to the public or whether they just don't have enough training to assist readers, isn't determined. That is not to say that the staff are not helpful – they are, but they seem to answer a query by interpreting the query to fit their answer.

Another problem is the appalling book ordering system. It seems, in a lot of cases, to be just hit and miss. For example, ordering one copy of the book "A Higher Loyalty," by James Comey was an obvious lack of knowledge by staff. So, ordering one copy of a heavily demanded book but ordering 4 copies of a book that no one wanted to read is a waste of resources.

Also, too many times the library puts in multiple orders for books. Upon requesting the library to merge the orders, they advise that multiple orders of the same book can't be merged! This leaves the reader not knowing where they really are in the reading queue due to there being multiple queues of readers for the same book. This impacts the reader when trying to plan their reading load. Multiple orders for the same book is very inefficient, wasteful, and annoying for readers.

Another aspect of the poor ordering system when both hardback and paperback editions are ordered of the same book. One format is more expensive than the other and the more expensive format doesn't last any longer than the cheaper format. The ordering system is chaotic and needs to be overhauled.

c) ACT Libraries role, and future role, is to provide the public with books and electronic material and also space within a library to view those items. Opportunities exist for community involvement in other locations and services. The library is not a venue for community activities. At Erindale Library, a regular knitting morning is held. This involves participants sitting around the large reading tables chatting and laughing. While that pastime is fine for the participants, the library is not the place to hold such gatherings. The large tables that are utilised for these gatherings are taken from the many readers who normally sit at the tables to either study or read newspapers and books. There are community sites for these types of gatherings and they should not be held at a library where people are trying to study and read. Those types of gatherings impinge on library users time and enjoyment at their library.

3. The nature and extent of current and future community demand for different library services including:
 - a. The ACT Library provides books and electronic forms of material and is covering this area adequately.
 - b. Digital offerings should be limited to a secondary role in ACT Libraries. Experience is that there aren't copies of books at libraries but there are titles of the books available in electronic form. Items need to firstly be provided for the mainstream public, which is regular print books. After regular print books then large print books and electronic format of titles should be provided.
 - c. The role of the Library is not education and training of the public. The Directorate of Education and Training has the role of educating people of the ACT. The role of the library is to provide hard and electronic copies of material. Each directorate has a responsibility of its core provision to the public.
 - d. Libraries are not the venue to provide space for public use. There are other centres and areas for that eg community buildings, outdoor spaces etc. The library should not be over-extending its role. The use of libraries for other public uses would have the added problem of creating the lack of parking and congestion in the area.
 - e. Spaces for learning, creativity and for achieving social inclusion is not the role of a library. Learning is the responsibility of the Directorate of Education and Training. There are other venues in the ACT for social inclusion. Libraries should not deprive readers of space in the library. It defeats the purpose of having a library if readers can't access library areas and services.
 - f. The library should understand its role – and that is to provide reading and electronic material to the public. Other government services are provided elsewhere. Readers need the library area for its designated use. Other government services are fully equipped to handle those services. ACT Libraries shouldn't have their primary role diluted at the expense of its core role.
 - g. No other services are needed at the library – it should concentrate on its core responsibility. The staff at libraries have a demanding enough role as it is and providing other services would over-extend their workload.
4. The extent to which ACT Libraries are positioned to respond flexibly to meet current and future community opportunities and demands:

Current and future needs of library users are the materials the library is currently providing. If these materials are not fully provided then the basic role of the library is defeated.
5. The extent to which ACT Libraries are accessible to the community:
 - a. The opening hours of libraries totally discriminate against certain areas of the ACT. While some libraries open on Sundays, other do not – and that is discrimination. While five libraries open for four hours on a Sunday, four libraries are closed on a Sunday. It is unthinkable that some libraries are open while others are closed. All libraries should be open for a few hours on a Sunday. A suggestion to help finance the Sunday opening of the now closed Sunday libraries would be that instead of the five libraries opening for four hours, those libraries could have their opening time cut by one hour. That would release five hours of time available to open at least some libraries that are currently closed on Sundays. It seems unthinkable that some libraries

are open and some are closed on a Sunday. Items cannot be transferred or accessed when a particular library is closed, which is very discriminatory to the library patrons of the closed library. Due to some libraries being closed, another factor comes into play. Requested items are held at libraries for a limited amount of days. If an item is held at a library that is open on a Sunday, the patrons can access their held item on a Sunday. However, if an item is being held at a library that is closed on a Sunday, the patron has no means of accessing that item – BUT the clock is still ticking down the number of days that the item is held before the hold expires and is taken from the reader. As an example, where an item is held at an open Sunday library, the patron can access the library for the five days of say, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. However, with a library that doesn't open on a Sunday, the patron can't access their held item on a Sunday BUT the clock is still ticking during the closed Sunday. So the patrons of a closed Sunday library in reality only have four days in which to access their held item. Why should it be one rule for Sunday library users and different rules for users of a closed Sunday library? There is no fairness in Sunday library opening hours. Why are some patrons able to access their library on a Sunday but others not? Also, it is very frustrating to check the Library catalogue on a Sunday and find that a required item is only available at a library that is closed on a Sunday. Opening hours on other days are reasonable.

- b. The locations of the libraries should be planned well ahead of population growth and shift. For example, a library should already be in the building stage in the southern area of Canberra around Conder. The Kingston library should have moved location before now. Its patronage seems high and the population in the area is growing rapidly. The library is very small and crowded and urgently needs a different location.
- c. More disabled parking needs to be provided at libraries. This particularly applies to co-located libraries. Parking anywhere near Kingston Library is non-existent, and is almost as bad at some of the other libraries.

6. The cost effectiveness of existing branches:

The cost of providing libraries in the ACT should be a matter of priority. If government waste was eliminated, libraries would be well provided for. For example, sponsoring the, now banned, greyhound racing and interstate sporting teams, the cost of installing a tram that nearly all Canberrans can't and won't use, are just a few examples of government waste.

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

ACT Library does not have any better resources or services than other nearby facilities. Indeed, in some respects, the ACT Library service lags behind other nearby libraries. For example, other libraries, with a much smaller population, stock a wider range of reading material than the ACT Library. The ACT Library should take note of its core responsibility and act accordingly to provide those services. It should NOT be endeavouring to provide esoteric services at the expense of its core responsibility.

8. Any legislative considerations that may be relevant:

-

9. Any other relevant matter:

Library Parking: Parking where library/colleges are co-located is abysmal (Erindale and Gungahlin). College students use the entire parking area of these facilities which means that library users often leave the area because of the lack of any available parking. A suggestion is to put some sort of restriction on the library parking area of say, one hour – and have the area regularly patrolled so that actual library users can access the libraries. College students should be required to use the dedicated college parking area and not impinge on the library users parking area. Some sort of system needs to be put in place to help library users park at their library. I personally know that the libraries that are co-located with colleges have continuous complaints from the public regarding the lack of parking at the libraries due to college students parking in the library users car park. Also, more disability parking needs to be available at libraries. Most of the time the disability parking spaces at the libraries are full. Patronage at libraries is to be encouraged, so available disability parking should be readily available.

[REDACTED]