



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
SUZANNE ORR MLA (CHAIR), CANDICE BURCH MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), JAMES MILLIGAN MLA

Inquiry into Libraries ACT QUESTION ON NOTICE

Mr James Milligan MLA asks the following organisations:

- Australian Library and Information Association;
- Women with Disabilities ACT;
- People with Disabilities ACT;
- ACT Bilingual Education Alliance;
- Canberra Multicultural Community Forum; and
- COTA ACT.

1. Do you have any concerns about the fact that residents of Weston's nearest library is in Woden?
2. Would your organisation support the expansion of shop front style libraries (e.g Kingston library) across Canberra? For example at Colloman court and Erindale.
 - a. Do you see any advantages to this model of libraries if it meant relocating resources away from the regional libraries?
3. Does your organisation support the use of micro libraries – ie old phone boxes, as a way of bringing books and internet access to local suburbs?
 - a. Do you see any advantages or disadvantages of this?
 - b. Do you see any advantages to this model of libraries if it meant relocating resources away from the regional libraries?

Response from the Australian Library and Information Association

Public libraries are highly regarded, valued community services and there is an understandable desire for everyone to have a library within walking distance. However, the reality of limited funding means that there can only be a certain number of libraries within a particular jurisdiction. Decisions have to be made about how many libraries the government can afford to support and where they are best located to be convenient for the greatest number of residents.

The physical size of the point of delivery – shopfront, micro, phone box, pop up – is of less relevance than the staff time and resources needed to service customers. Lots of small locations will need more staff and a bigger collection than several larger libraries.

The “network of smaller locations” model trades off a wide choice of reading materials, other information resources, tech devices, storytimes, digital, health and other programs, community meeting spaces and expert staff, against the convenience of reduced distance. So it’s a question of whether people are happier with a very limited service close at hand, or a comprehensive public library service a short drive, bike or bus ride away.