



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

Inquiry into ACT Libraries

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Accessibility of ACT Libraries

Opening Hours

It is often difficult to access a library during the week for those who are not able to visit one in the normal 10-5.30 timeslot.

The 10am start is too late for some but from the library staff point of view there are several things to attend to before opening.

While I am happy with the hours because I can access branch/s I think it would be helpful if branches could remain open till 6 or 6.30pm (one day per week) during the week

Excellent Services- SO many but of note are:

- Children's Programs
- On-line access to eResources.
- Request system.
- ESL Classes.
- Book Clubs
- Groups such as Art, Scrabble, Mah-jong, Knitting that use the community rooms.

These groups are well booked and there is a waiting list on some –e.g. art.

I would like to see:

More low- cost "hobbies" offered in Libraries where possible. For example- writing groups. The workshops offered on one off dates during the year are excellent but regular or short "courses" would be great.

Broader advertising. To reach into the community and to attract people to be members advertising needs to be broader than pamphlets collected inside the branches and on the Library website. The City News and Canberra Weekly as well as the Chronicle newspaper would reach a higher number of people. I have attended very helpful courses and events through seeing an advertisement in The Canberra Weekly. I have not seen many ads for Libraries in it.

The Donating groceries to cover fines has been an excellent initiative (it hasn't been annual) Could Libraries collaborate with organisations such as Vinnies, Salvation Army and providers of services to refugees, homeless, hungry etc. to be a donation point regularly? It would help those in need and be another link between the service Libraries offer in the community which would be very positive. Volunteers from the services could pick up items regularly.

It is fantastic to be able to request books but often there are VERY long waiting lists for popular books, including prize winning fiction and non-fiction. More copies,

especially of highly popular or award winning books could be purchased.. This may be considered an unwise use of finances but if you are long down the list often it is more appealing for people to just purchase their own copy. This in turn, does not attract people to continue to use Libraries.

More children's author talks and collaborating with schools to share this and other literacy incentives.

Future needs to maintain strong Library Service

It has been common for Library staff to be transferred frequently across branches. More consistency and less movement of staff creates relationships between customers and staff which is a wonderful and significant element of building community.

Self-service is wonderful for those who are in a hurry, those who understand what to do etc., etc. but it does take away connection and conversation. Lonely people, elderly people often use the library as a point of contact with the staff and other people. A brief greeting between a customer and staff member who know each other is important in maintaining sense of community and overall well-being of

It is very easy to walk into a branch now and hardly see a staff member as customers are expected to be able to self-serve. This may vary between branches but verbal connection; even just by way of a greeting is important I feel.

Libraries are MUCH more than housing of literature and resources. In keeping up with continual technological change the **strong** message I would like to offer is to keep the social need of Libraries and staff front and centre in planning. Many people use Libraries who do not have a home computer, access to the internet and who don't have a family or many friends supporting them. Unlike supermarkets and clothing stores that are more and more relying on less staff and more self-service it is **essential** people are able to have human interaction and support or a listening ear if that is necessary for a short while. Customer service of a personal manner is vital.

We have a wonderful Library service in Canberra. Different models of customer service have been tried. The staff, themselves need to be valued & trained adequately to relate to a broad range of customers. It is important to have staff who can provide solid answers to reference and general inquiries. This is lacking when the staff change is frequent and Library qualifications are undervalued.

Services do need to keep up with technology and the style of learning and understanding of those under 35. But many older people use Libraries and so please consider them in planning. It can be seen from the Aged Care Inquiry being called for

that our elderly are often the forgotten ones in society, as are vulnerable groups with mental health issues, homelessness, low literacy skills etc. PLEASE consider these groups in planning or any changes. This is also a big tick for the Home library Service. Accessibility is not just about location. It includes “taking” services to those who for a number of reasons may not be able to travel to a library.

Future Growth

As the population and area grows new Libraries should be considered for Molonglo, Gungahlin and West Belconnen. Ideally these would be connected to a shopping centre.

Where possible it would be excellent if Libraries were not located in pay parking areas. It is hard to estimate how long you will be in a library and it is not inductive to accessibility. Kippax & Gungahlin Libraries works well in this regard. Belconnen does not.

Libraries play an essential role in our community across all age groups