



STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
JO CLAY MLA (CHAIR), SUZANNE ORR MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), MARK PARTON MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Nicole Lawder:

In relation to: *Libraires ACT* – Annual Report Page 41.

- 1) 2019-20 saw a decrease in the percentage of Canberrans registered with Libraries ACT, going from 68% reported in 2018-19 to just 41% in 2019-20. This is being attributed to the introduction of a new computer system that didn't migrate borrower data of members who had not accessed library facilities in seven years. What is being done to increase library membership given its steady decline over the years?
- 2) Within its membership, has Libraries ACT identified the key age demographics that are under-represented and are there strategies/targets in place to increase the membership?
- 3) As we navigate through the next stages of the COVID pandemic, what does Libraries ACT consider its key priorities in helping Canberrans access services/information whilst remaining COVID safe?
- 4) Will Libraries ACT consider implementing hands free sanitiser stations at public libraries?

Chris Steel MLA: The answer to the Member's questions are as follows:–

- 1) Libraries ACT has begun a series of membership drive activities. The first, targeting parents and carers of children aged between 0 and 5 years of age, has resulted in more than 1,000 new members registered in this age group since mid-November 2020. The Mystery Box delivery service is also focusing on day care and early childhood facilities. This is being done to effectively market Libraries ACT's services and to raise awareness of the free resources it makes available to the community.
- 2) Libraries ACT focuses on certain age groups, such as children 0-5 years old, in order to raise awareness of services with parents and carers. The main areas of focus in relation to under-representation however, concern members of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities, peoples from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and vulnerable members of our community.

Libraries ACT employs experienced staff to reach out to parts of the community identified as less likely to use the library or understand what is available to them. This includes our culturally and linguistically diverse community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and families who are vulnerable or at risk. A new staff member was also recently brought on board to work with people living with a disability.

Library staff, including the subject matter experts, build relationships with community organisations, and their work includes visits to groups such as those coordinated by Child and Family Centres, where parent support groups and playgroups meet, and with Navitas and MARSS who work with new migrants and refugees.



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Libraries ACT is also developing a new strategic plan, using a co-design process, exploring key shifts in societal needs and expectations, and how libraries can respond and evolve their service delivery.

- 3) Key priorities for the library while remaining COVID Safe are similar to those pre-COVID:
- Free access to a range of resources in a variety of formats;
 - free access to computers and the internet, including free wifi;
 - providing resources for reading, an activity which has strong mental health and wellbeing benefits;
 - providing a safe, welcoming space with opportunities for connection and learning; and
 - providing digital alternatives, such as eBooks, eAudio, digital magazines, and streaming movies and documentaries. The last year has shown increased use of digital resources and the great benefit they have in a situation such as that experienced during the COVID pandemic.

The library has a COVID Safe plan in place and Canberrans must follow health directions and measures that support them. That includes good hand hygiene, maintaining physical distance, and using the Check in CBR app.

- 4) Hand sanitiser is available at all the public libraries and ACT Heritage Library. Supply of hands-free sanitiser stations was an issue in 2020, and when received they were identified as a physical hazard in the library environment. It has not been possible to fix these stations to the floor in library buildings, and they are unstable and easily knocked over. Libraries ACT continues to look for suitable hands-free alternatives.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services

Signature:

Date:

12 / 3 / 21

By the Minister for Transport and City Services, Chris Steel MLA