AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES
SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Australian Library and Information Association

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY ALLIANCE

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Australian libraries support the Sustainable Development Goals

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From the ALIA President

As the peak body for library and information professionals in Australia, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) paid close attention to the international negotiations which resulted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed by the United Nations' 193 member states in September 2015. Library interests at the global level were represented by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), of which ALIA is an active member.

Since 2015, ALIA has been the lead association for discussions with the Australian Government and other stakeholders about the role that libraries play in contributing to the delivery of the 17 goals.

This responsibility is a top priority for the ALIA Board and in 2017 we asked ALIA Members to vote on the inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the ALIA Constitution. Members were highly supportive of the move, and a sixth Object of the Association was confirmed at our May AGM, '*To endorse the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in response to the many challenges faced by the world today and into the future*'.

In 2018, ALIA will be holding an Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Summit (29 July, Gold Coast Convention Centre), bringing together library leaders from across the region to share their experiences and ambitions relating to the SDGs. We will also be working with other stakeholders to maximise the impact libraries can have on Australia's contribution to these global goals.

Libraries have always been a force for good in the world. The SDGs provide us with an opportunity to show how much we can achieve by improving access to information and helping people transform their knowledge into life-enhancing opportunities.

Vicki McDonald
ALIA President 2017-2018

Introduction

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is a participant in IFLA's International Advocacy Programme, which is built around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IFLA (the International Federation for Library Associations and Institutions) lobbied hard at the international level for public access to information to be incorporated into the targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Having successfully achieved this objective, IFLA has set out the role of libraries in the 2030 Agenda and created valuable resources for its members[1].

IFLA stated that libraries and access to information contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs by:

- Promoting universal literacy, including digital, media and information literacy and skills, with the support of dedicated staff.
- Closing gaps in access to information and helping government, civil society and business to understand local information needs better.
- Providing a network of delivery sites for government programs and services.
- Advancing digital inclusion through access to ICT.
- Serving as the heart of the research and academic community.
- Preserving and providing access to the world's culture and heritage.

ALIA has been working to assist Australian library and information professionals and their organisations to be part of this international drive for greater social equality, improved economic prosperity and a more sustainable environmental approach.

Our initiatives are based on three roles for libraries:

- Supporting freedom of access to information outcomes.
- Providing examples of success, which can be used as part of Australia's reporting.
- Helping to communicate the 2030 Agenda to the general population.

[1] https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development

We could list projects and achievements for all 17 goals, but instead have chosen the 10 goals which best relate to the Australian experience and where we have the strongest examples of library contributions nationally and in each of our states and territories to highlight here.

Australia's population at the end of June 2017 was 24.6 million[2]. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare stated that, 'While most Australians are doing well, some groups face disadvantages that can affect aspects of their overall wellbeing, including their mental and physical health, employment opportunities and general feelings of community engagement and belonging[3].' These groups include Indigenous Australians, some homeless people, those with mental illness, victims of domestic and family violence, and people with disability.

The services offered by libraries help address some of the factors of disadvantage.

[2] Australian Demographic Statistics June 2017
http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/D56C4A3E41586764CA2581A70015893E?Opendocument

[3] https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australia-s-welfare-2015-in-brief/contents/not-faring-so-well

How libraries contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1 No poverty

Universal literacy is critical if we are to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and disadvantage.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) has consistently shown that approximately 1 in 7 children arrive at school with developmental vulnerabilities regarding their language and cognitive skills[4]. These difficulties are three times more likely in children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Libraries are well placed to support children and families.

- There are 121,000 storytime and rhymetime sessions in libraries across Australia each year, with more than 3.1 million participants[5].
- These sessions are free for everyone, providing easy access for less advantaged families, migrants and refugees.
- In regional and remote areas, libraries help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families build their literacy skills in both English and first language.

4 Australian Early Development Census https://www.aedc.gov.au/

5 ALIA estimate 2016-2017 based on state and territory public library reports

Better Beginnings, Western Australia

The Better Beginnings family literacy program began in 2004. It encourages and supports parents to be their child's first teacher, talking, singing, reading, writing and playing with their child every day to develop literacy and language skills from birth.

Libraries work in partnership with child health nurses and kindergarten teachers, distributing reading packs to every newborn baby and kindergarten student in the state. These are backed by rhymetime and storytime sessions through public libraries and in the Story Place, the State Library's children's library.

The program reaches 95% of families across Western Australia with new born babies, and 85% of all kindergarten and pre-primary students. A recent return on investment report commissioned by the State Library of Western Australia found that every dollar invested in early literacy development through Better Beginnings yields $5.64 in social value.

In the 14 years of delivering the Better Beginnings program it has been recognised that the program also plays a role in developing adult literacy. The sessions reinforce the notion of a library as a safe place for adults to learn, and the stigma of learning to read can be removed for adults when they are focused on their child or grandchild.

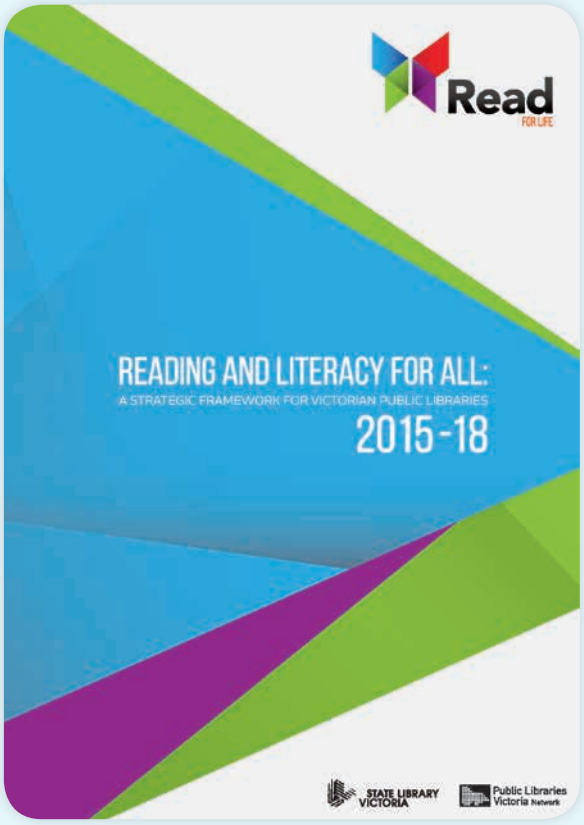
Adult literacy, Victoria

The 2013 Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies results show that 14% of adult Australians have low level literacy. They have difficulty with everyday tasks such as reading lists and labels and understanding instruction manuals. They do not have the most fundamental skill needed to participate in the knowledge-economy, often struggle to find employment and so become trapped in poverty. The State Library Victoria and Victoria's 47 public library services are working together to address this issue.

Some libraries have been active in this space for many years, offering targeted adult literacy and English language collections, English conversation groups and access to online adult literacy learning programs.

Recent initiatives have included the *Reading and Literacy for All* framework (2015), which clearly articulates both the unique role of public libraries in the adult literacy space and strategies for improvement, and the best practice guidelines *Reading and Literacy for all: Adult literacy — Victorian public libraries in action* (2016). Sector-wide training has helped public library staff to work more effectively in partnership with other adult literacy service providers. Seminars and forums have brought together public library and other adult literacy service providers, building relationships and fostering collaborative approaches, a three-year grants program was instigated in 2017 to support individual public library initiatives addressing low literacy amongst adults.

The grants have enabled development of the *Welcome to the library* reader and teacher resource to assist adult literacy service providers in engaging their non-English speaking students with their local library; a family literacy program, helping low-literacy adults learn how to read stories to their pre-school children; and development of apps and face-to-face workshop programs to help low-literacy adults with the functional literacy skills needed to navigate government services and manage their finances.



Goal 3 Good health and well-being

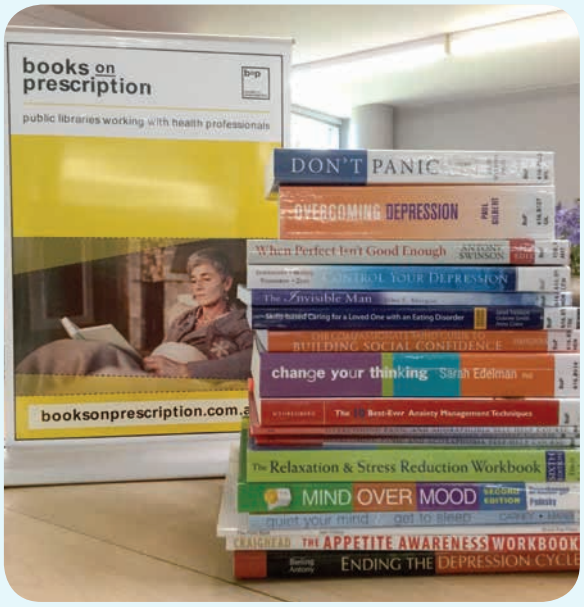
We aim to provide people with the education, information and understanding they need to stay healthy.

- There are estimated to be 328 Australian health libraries and 1250 specialist library and information professionals providing expert support to medical practitioners and researchers in Australia. Many are also involved in supporting consumer health information initiatives.
- Public library collections include books and other resources to help people access health and wellness information. This means there are effectively more than 1600 shop windows for health information in communities.

Books on Prescription, New South Wales

Based on the program of the same name developed in the UK, Books on Prescription[6] has been trialed by 14 public library services (41 service points) across Central and Far Western New South Wales. The program was developed to help people with common mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, phobias and eating disorders. The trial has been developed in partnership with the University of Newcastle Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, GPs and other health providers.

In partnership with libraries, health professionals prescribe books from a list of high quality, self-help manuals selected by experienced mental health practitioners.



Role and value of health libraries, Australia

The 2012 *Questions of life and death* report described the value of health library and information services in Australia. Library and information service users were asked how they believed their use of health libraries had helped them — 76% said it had changed their thinking and improved their diagnosis or treatment plan:

- 95% said it had helped them progress their studies.
- 95% said it helped them discover new and valuable information.
- 86% said it helped keep them abreast of the latest clinical developments.
- 83% said it had helped them improve health outcomes for their patients.
- 82% said it helped them progress their research.
- 76% said it had helped them achieve higher marks in their exams.
- 65% said it had helped them confirm their diagnosis or treatment plan.

Follow up research in 2013[7] found that health libraries gave a return on investment of $9 for every $1 invested.

6 https://booksonprescription.com.au/

7 https://www.alia.org.au/advocacy-and-campaigns/advocacy-campaigns-0/australian-health-libraries-return-investment

The Drug and Alcohol Info Hub, New South Wales

Public libraries in New South Wales offer drug and alcohol information, education and awareness programs. New for 2017 was an interactive travelling display[8] providing people with up to date and accessible information and connecting participants with support networks and agencies within the local community. Lively display material is complemented by activities including a mocktail-making demonstration; beer goggles, which simulate the effect of alcohol and an online quiz.

Goal 4 Quality education

School, vocational and academic libraries support formal teaching and learning, providing additional resources, internet access and study spaces outside the home, school and college environment. Public libraries provide informal, self-directed lifelong learning opportunities, from baby rhymetime through to digital literacy for older Australians classes.

Student library membership, Tasmania

LINC Tasmania (libraries) and the Tasmanian Department of Education are working together to remove barriers that exist for some students and their parents to gain access to library resources. By using student data and parent or carer proof of identification recorded at the time of enrolment in a government school, libraries are able to create a LINC Tasmania membership for every student.

Around one in four Tasmanians are already members of LINC Tasmania, and this number is likely to be higher in school-aged children.

With around 60,000 students attending Tasmanian government schools, this suggests that approximately 20,000 government school students already have a membership card.

If the project is successful, libraries expect to be able to provide a further 40,000 government (and an additional cohort of non-government) school students with LINC Tasmania membership cards, with the aim that every Tasmanian student will have access to LINC Tasmania services and programs right around the state.

[8] http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services-drug-info-public-libraries/drug-alcohol-info-hub

Quality indicators for early years literacy programs, Victoria

The first three years of life are the most vital for developing the foundation literacy skills on which success at school and throughout life are built. State Library Victoria and Victoria's public libraries are working together to ensure that early literacy programs are of the highest quality, delivering the best possible educational outcomes.

An audit conducted in 2014 revealed that all 272 Victorian public libraries offer at least one storytime, or equivalent program, and that every week an estimated 15,000 pre-school children and their parents or carers participated in these programs. The audit also found that there was variation in the quality of these programs. New understandings of best practice in early years literacy programs needed to be embedded across the state. This led to the development of a quality framework that articulates minimum and best practice standards for public library-based early years literacy programs[9]. Using the tool provided in the framework, every Victorian public library service completed an assessment of its early years literacy programs. This process revealed key areas for improvement and a comprehensive statewide professional development program was delivered to library staff to address these areas.

[9] Reading and literacy for all: Quality indicators for early years programs in Victorian public libraries, 2016 https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Reading-and-literacy-for-all-early-years-quality-indicators.pdf

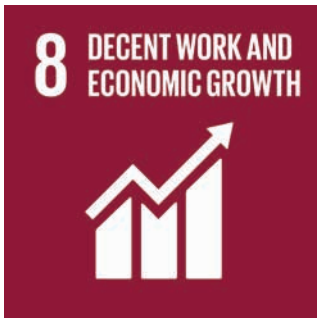
Goal 5 Gender equality

IFLA states, 'Libraries support gender equality by providing safe meeting spaces, programs for women and girls on rights and health, and ICT and literacy programs supporting women to build their entrepreneurial skills.' This is the Australian experience.

Services for migrant and refugee women, Victoria

Libraries across Victoria deliver programs that encourage women to connect and interact socially as well as develop new skills. These programs empower women to gain confidence, feel less isolated, apply for employment and enter education. For example, Stepping Stones and Job Club are programs offered by libraries in partnership with not-for-profit organisations that are tailored to the needs of migrant and refugee women.

In Melbourne's West, Jesuit Social Services delivers a job search program specifically for Sudanese women. In partnership with the local public library, volunteers and staff support women to develop relevant skills that lead to gainful employment. With weekly access to library computers, women in the group are supported to create email addresses, develop basic computers skills and write resumes. Participants learn how to search for employment online, upload their resume, and submit applications. Even after the program is complete, library staff provide ongoing support through library membership, use of computers, and access to printing and online resources[10].



Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth

Unemployed people use public libraries to search and apply for jobs online. They also use library classes to improve their skills.

On a more formal basis, TAFE (Technical and Further Education) colleges deliver vocational education and training, alongside private RTOs (Registered Training Organisations). Courses range from a basic certificate through to an advanced diploma and are open to adults of all ages. Each TAFE institute has a library, often with several branches, and staff work closely with student support offices to ensure every student has equitable access to information.

Supporting micro businesses, Victoria

Goldfields Library Corporation ran a microbusiness expo in 2017, with 35 small businesses displaying their wares to library visitors. It was a low cost opportunity for the companies to reach 2,000 people each day and the chance for business representatives to give talks to library users to encourage entrepreneurship and build employment skills. One of the topics was how to gain the most from free online training, available free via library subscriptions to Lynda.com and other resources.

[10] Case study taken from Share Your Stories With the World
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1f8737_95c73fd560074e7b825fe3e0ff2a0e38.pdf

Living City, Tasmania

The Devonport LINC (library) has long played a part in the social, cultural and economic development of its city – a city that has recently embarked on a bold strategy of urban renewal. Led by the local council, the $250 million *Living City* strategy aims to boost the economy in Devonport and the wider region, create jobs and link the city centre to its best asset, the waterfront.

The first stage will see an inclusive and contemporary space in the heart of the civic centre, incorporating a new library as a unique focal point and central gathering place for the community. In anticipation, the LINC is forging new plans and partnerships with neighbouring services and businesses, including regional arts bodies, local hospitality and agritourism enterprises and the University of Tasmania, to stimulate innovation, creativity, skills development and employment and to help create a more vibrant, cohesive and sustainable city.

It is early days, but the library is contributing to a growing sense of confidence, civic engagement and economic participation within the community. For example, the LINC has created a dedicated space within the library called the Living Room to help inform and engage the community with the *Living City* project. The space includes a permanent display of concept images and design plans and is the venue for regular community conversations relating to the strategy. Students from local high schools participate in sessions relating to preferred career pathways, new and existing businesses share their plans for future development, and community members develop their skills and networks through volunteering.

Goal 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Libraries support the Australian Government Smart Cities agenda, not least through the introduction of digital literacy programs for all ages through public libraries, and coding and robotics classes in public and school libraries.

National, State and Territory Libraries are pushing the boundaries of data collation, use and visualisation.

Academic and research libraries are an essential part of Australia's national research infrastructure, helping authors to publish their work; managing open access scholarly journals; advising on copyright issues; and managing the institution's digital repository.

DX Lab, New South Wales

The DX Lab[11] was established at the State Library of New South Wales in June 2016 as Australia's first innovation lab based in a cultural heritage organisation. The team delivers creative, engaging and new ways to explore the library's collections, data sets and services through a diverse range of digital experiences using existing and emerging technologies for use onsite, online and on tour. It is a place for creative partnerships with digital peers, cultural heritage organisations, students, researchers, artists and creators.

The DX Lab established the DX Lab Fellowship, another first for a cultural institution in Australia and a 'digital drop-in' program that is open to collaborations with staff, researchers, students, artists and digital peers.

Experiments cover a range of subjects and technologies from experimental visualisations of search data from the Library's catalogues and websites in *Unstacked* and *Search Terms*, to collection discovery interfaces which explore access to collections without using search in *Loom* and innovative platforms to showcase and make indigenous languages more accessible to a wide audience in *Mura View*. The team blogs its project journeys and publishes code in public repositories.

Search terms

Loom

Unstacked

Mura View

[11] http://dxlab.sl.nsw.gov.au/

StartSpace, Victoria

While Victoria's successful startup community seeks to grow, more early-stage entrepreneurs are needed to support this ambition. As 66% of those under 30 report wanting to work for themselves, and up to 5 million Australian jobs are set to vanish in the next decade, leading to higher self-employment rates, investment in a robust entrepreneurial culture is essential.

StartSpace, at State Library Victoria, will be for anyone with an idea who wants to start their business journey, wherever they are in Victoria. It will offer a membership network with free access to state-of-the-art StartSpace facilities. Targeted specifically at very early-stage entrepreneurs and startup founders, StartSpace will provide dedicated co-working space, business tools, inspiration, mentoring and practical guidance to address current gaps.

Catherine Martin

Discovering new works of fiction, Australia

Trove is one of the world's largest digital libraries, and its digitised newspaper corpus contains over 211 million articles. Managed and maintained by the National Library of Australia, this massive corpus has helped millions of researchers make new discoveries.

One such researcher, Dr Katherine Bode, has discovered 16,500 fictional works from the serialised fiction published in 250 Australian newspapers between 1865 and 1899. Dr Bode invented a paratextual method to mine Trove's digitised newspapers to automatically identify and harvest fictional content.

A new series of books will be published based on these discoveries. The first book, *How I Pawned my Opals* includes five previously lost stories by Catherine Martin, the South Australian feminist, socialist, world traveller, and one of Australia's most important nineteenth-century authors. In literary criticism of the 1890s, Martin features alongside writers such as Rolf Boldrewood, Ada Cambridge, Henry Kingsley and Catherine Helen Spence as a key figure of the emerging Australian literary tradition.

Dr Bode is working with Trove to load these literary works back into the database as new records linking the serialised stories. This is enriching Trove, and making this content available for any member of the public to find and re-use.

Goal 10 Reduced inequalities

Public libraries provide welcoming places and supportive outreach services that make learning possible for everyone.

Riverina mobile library service, New South Wales

There are 78 mobile libraries operating across Australia, making a significant contribution to rural and remote communities. Riverina Regional Library serves 138,500 residents across an area of 50,000 square kilometres, and its mobile library regularly visits 28 small communities in seven local government areas.

In addition to book lending, the large semi-trailer provides ample space for programs, and is fully air conditioned to deal with extreme heat of 45 degrees in summer.

The mobile library service has been operated for nearly 40 years and has the highest collection turnover rate of all Riverina libraries at 4.9 loans per item compared with the average of 2.3.

Digital inclusion, Australian Capital Territory

Libraries ACT hosted the ACT Digital Hub, funded by the Federal Government program promoting the NBN and offering digital literacy skills development. One-on-one and group sessions in a range of digital literacy topics were offered and during the two year program, 1,270 one-on-one sessions and 506 group sessions were presented.

Digital literacy sessions and technology previously offered through the ACT Digital Hub have since been integrated into the library's services across the city, with one-on-one and group programs being delivered all library locations. This includes a program called Deadly Digital which is a digital skills program for indigenous children.

Training sessions addressed the needs of the broader community focusing on the special needs of young families, indigenous people, migrants, people with disabilities, the aged and youth. Other opportunities included showcasing a virtual classroom experience for the Adult Migrant English Program.

Bilingual baby board books, Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Library bilingual baby board book project began in 2008 with the aim of supporting family literacy in Indigenous communities with a first language other than English. This project has brought local cultural knowledge to life through language, music and artwork, and helped promote and preserve Indigenous languages.

Twenty-five titles of hardcopy bilingual baby board books have been produced by remote Indigenous families, local musicians and artists. Interactive ebooks for some of the collection will soon be released.

Northern Territory Library has partnered with service providers in remote communities, including the Northern Territory Department of Education, Anglicare NT, Walpiri Education and Training Trust, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and regional councils.

The bilingual board books have been distributed to community clinics, playgroups, preschools and families.

Goal 11 Sustainable cities and communities

Libraries collect and preserve the nation's cultural heritage for future generations. Libraries are home to their own institution's documents and to local history collections. At the national level, these collections are aggregated through the National Library of Australia's Trove platform.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres, Queensland

Since 2002, the State Library of Queensland has partnered with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils to support a network of Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) in remote communities of Queensland. IKCs provide library and library-related services and serve as repositories for community knowledge and heritage of the two vibrant and distinct Aboriginal cultures and the Torres Strait Islander cultures of Queensland.

There are 24 IKCs operating in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities without an IKC are trialling an Ideas Box to assist the community. The Ideas Box is a portable mixed-media centre developed by Libraries without Borders, and provides an introduction to library services for the communities currently without infrastructure to house an IKC.

Literacy programs are developed in partnership with local councils through their IKCs. Digital inclusion programs commenced in 2007 through the *Taking IT On* initiative. The *culture love* program commenced in 2009 and ran through to 2012. It promoted 'literacy through the arts.' The digital inclusion focus continued through the *Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access* program which ran from 2009 to 2015.

Deadly Digital Communities commenced in August 2017 as an initiative of the State Library and Telstra. It is being delivered in partnership with local councils through their IKCs. *Deadly Digital* professionally develops local technology leaders to continue regular digital literacy training through their IKC.

Cedric Friday is assisting boys at Wujal Wujal who are training in film-making and interview techniques during a Culture Love arts and cultural program in January 2010.

Uncovering hidden histories, Australia

In the early part of the twentieth century, sick Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were routinely removed from families and country and taken to lock hospitals. Melissa Sweet, a public health journalist, became interested in the history of lock hospitals when approached by members of the Carnarvon and Palm Island communities to investigate the history of this medical incarceration.

Working with local communities, Ms Sweet used Trove to investigate the harsh conditions in the hospitals, the high death rates and the stories of the people who worked in the hospitals. More than 70 people from Malgana/Yawuru communities were involved in the activity, people who are still experiencing the impacts of this period in history.

When the research began, there was no public memorial or information available in Carnarvon about the histories or the people who suffered in these hospitals. Ms Sweet compiled folders of the articles sourced in Trove to give to community members and research participants in Western Australia and Queensland.

Carnarvon Shire Council now has a working group looking to develop memorials to pay respects to those taken to the islands. Ms Sweet says that without Trove 'This research project would not have been anywhere near as extensive, and, most importantly would have been less able to meet the community's needs.'

Lock hospitals — collage of newspaper articles from Trove

Goal 16 Peace and justice strong institutions

Within this goal lies the target for public access to information. Through their print and electronic resources, public access terminals and free Wi-Fi, libraries clearly support this target.

Public and school libraries are also centres for cybersafe training and resources to ensure that people's experiences online are safe and secure.

Legal information, New South Wales

Public libraries in New South Wales have been successfully delivering legal information services to their communities for over 25 years, in partnership with the Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC), located at the State Library of New South Wales.

The focus of the service is on access to information in plain English. LIAC is not only a library service provider, but also a publisher, producing legal information that can be understood by non-lawyers. LIAC also provides training for library staff to help build their confidence in dealing with legal information enquiries – with the emphasis on information rather than opinions or advice.

Other stakeholders in the program include Legal Aid New South Wales, Law Access, Courts and Tribunal Services, the Law and Justice Foundation and community legal centres.

One library card, South Australia

In 2014, the Libraries Board of South Australia, in partnership with the Local Government Association and 68 councils, launched an ambitious project to introduce a state wide library card, embracing digital technologies and delivering a contemporary and innovative service to meet the changing needs of South Australian library customers.

One Card connects more than 130 public libraries across South Australia, providing customers with a greatly expanded choice of items to borrow, as they can request items from all participating libraries and have them delivered free to their local library for collection. As a result of One Card, the South Australian community has ready access to over 3.8 million books, DVDs, CDs and magazines, via a contemporary online platform, all with a single library card.

Goal 17 Partnerships for the goals

Libraries in Australia are working with libraries around the world, through IFLA, to support the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Australia and elsewhere, libraries partner with governments, businesses, civil society, educators, charities and not-for-profit organisations to progress our shared interest in achieving a better future for all humankind.

First Five Forever, Queensland

When the first Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) figures were released for 2009, Queensland fell significantly below the national average, with 60.2% of children on track on four or more domains, compared with 67.5% nationally. This was a driving factor behind the launch of the First 5 Forever family literacy initiative, connecting families with libraries for information, resources and support to build the best foundation for their child's future language and literacy development.

The $20 million initiative, funded by the State Government, commenced in 2015 and runs until 2018. It is coordinated by State Library of Queensland and delivered in partnership with a network of more than 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

The four-year initiative harnesses the collective impact and reach of public libraries and more than 550 partner organisations to bring about long-term, positive change and address Queensland's underperformance in children's literacy.

In 2015 and 2016, $9 million in funding was made available to 72 councils, and over one million attendances at approximately 50,000 free sessions were recorded.

The success of the scheme has been reported in *Investing in Queensland families: A partnership between Local and State Government*[12] and developmental vulnerability has decreased more in Queensland than in any other state or territory since the 2009 report according to the latest AEDC figures[13].

eSmart Libraries, Australia

Launched in 2012 by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, eSmart Libraries is an $8 million, multi-year partnership between the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, Telstra Foundation and Australian public libraries.

The program has been rolled out across Australia, in more than 1,000 locations, ensuring libraries and library users develop the skills everyone needs for smart, safe and responsible use of technology.

12 http://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/children-and-young-people/first-5-forever/reports

13 https://det.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/news/Documents/pdf/queensland-aedc-report-final.pdf

About libraries in Australia

There are **5,000 members** of the Australian Library and Information Association.

13,650 locations in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.

27,500 workers in libraries and information services.

12.9 million users in communities, schools, universities, TAFEs, government departments, research agencies, hospitals, NGOs, law firms, banks, media channels, technology companies and other knowledge-based enterprises across Australia.

$2.8 billion is the estimated annual investment in library and information services in Australia.

School libraries

In 2016 there were 9,414 schools in Australia[14]. Almost all schools have a library of some description, but they vary enormously in terms of staffing, facilities and resources. At the lower end, there are schools with a few shelves of books and a member of staff whose responsibility it is to look after them, as part of a much wider teaching or administration role. At the high end, there are flagship library and IT hubs, with more than a dozen members of staff, including qualified teacher librarians. They will have a growing collection of print and ebooks and provide a range of services to students, including safer online experiences, group discovery-based learning and study spaces, and more electronic resources.

Public libraries

In 2015 to 2016 there were 1,656 public library service points, 113 million customer visits and 9.4 million registered library members. Total expenditure on public libraries was $1.18 billion or the equivalent of $49.11 per Australian[15]. Independent studies have shown that for every dollar invested in public libraries, there is a $2.90 return in terms of community benefits[16]. For example, public libraries contribute to literacy, introducing very young children to books, rhymes and stories through free family sessions. They support Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds, and they are home to local history collections.

University libraries

There are 199 libraries in Australian universities, employing approximately 7,000 staff and providing library and information services to 1.3 million higher education students[17]. The outstanding service provided by Australia's university libraries supports the government's international education agenda.

TAFE libraries

There are 250 libraries in TAFE institutions around Australia. In TAFE libraries, students have help developing their information discovery skills. They have access to electronic resources and to the internet, through library PCs and via Wi-Fi. They have quiet space in which to study, which may be lacking at home. TAFE library teams work alongside learning support officers, disability support officers, social workers and counsellors, to give every TAFE student the best chance of success, supporting their training and helping them develop lifelong learning skills.

Special libraries

We estimate in 2016 to 2017, there were 2,100 special libraries in Australia. Special libraries include government, health, law, corporate and other libraries that serve the public sector, institutions, businesses, arts and heritage, charities and not for profit organisations.

14 ABS Schools Australia, 2016 http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0

15 NSLA, 2015-2016 http://www.nsla.org.au/sites/www.nsla.org.au/files/publications/NSLA.Aust-Pub-Lib-Stats_2015-16.pdf

16 ALIA, 2013 https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/Contribution%20of%20Australian%20Public%20Libraries%20Report.pdf

17 Universities Australia, 2017 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/australias-universities/key-facts-and-data#.WIvVUq6Wa70

Collecting institutions

Many public libraries, special libraries, museums, galleries and historical societies have local history and special collections, but the main collecting institutions are university, national, state and territory libraries.

The National Library of Australia, State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, the Northern Territory Library and ACT Heritage Library collect, manage and make accessible the Australian human record, preserving our culture and history for researchers, historians and future generations. In 2016 to 2017, these libraries had collections valued at $5.3 billion. They welcomed some 12.5 million visitors to their buildings and 74.2 million visits to their websites[18].

It is also important to recognise the role that the National, State and Territory libraries play as part of Australia's research infrastructure. For example Trove is the home of Australian collections on the web – more than 560 million items, including digitised newspapers, pictures, journals, books, maps and other items.

Summary

In total, we estimate there were more than 13,600 libraries and information service points in Australia in 2016-2017.

School libraries	9,414
Public libraries	1,656
University libraries	199
TAFE libraries	250
Special libraries and collecting insitutions (estimate)	2,100
Total (estimate)	**13,619**

[18] NSLA, 2016-2017 http://www.nsla.org.au/about-nsla

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