



Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HOUSING AND SPORT



NORTHERN TERRITORY LIBRARY **Strategic Policy 2008 - 2012**



Minister's Foreword



The Northern Territory Library Strategic Policy 2008-2012 ensures that the major research and reference library for the Northern Territory remains current in the ever changing world of technology and information.

Libraries play a key role in providing access to knowledge resources, entertainment and information technology. In an environment as diverse as the Territory, libraries assist in building communities by connecting people to information and each other.

Differences in literacy and numeracy skills between remote and urban areas are acute and the Library, as a place of learning, provides the opportunity to Territorians to learn for life, building capacity and fostering community engagement.

I am proud of the key role the Northern Territory Library plays in collecting and preserving our heritage here in the Northern Territory. The unique Territory lifestyle is preserved for future generations by the work undertaken throughout the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Library Strategic Policy 2008-2012 defines the way in which the Northern Territory Library will progress into the future, enhancing the social fabric of the Northern Territory and providing the community with an opportunity of learning for life.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Knight". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mr Rob Knight
Minister for Local Government
April 2008

NT Libraries: The Purpose

The Northern Territory is a unique environment, where issues of distance, isolation, and cultural and linguistic diversity play a role like nowhere else in Australia. Access to knowledge resources, places of learning, entertainment and information technology may be limited in many areas. Differences in literacy and numeracy skills between remote and urban areas are acute. The culture of the Territory, with its long, rich heritage of Indigenous tradition, and its more recent pioneering and contemporary history, is truly one-of-a-kind.

These factors all present challenges and opportunities for library services in the Northern Territory and give libraries an especially significant place in the communities they serve. The role of collecting and preserving cultural heritage takes on extra importance. In some areas of the Territory, libraries may serve as a key meeting place that provides a unique learning environment that is not available elsewhere in the community. In areas of low literacy and employment, the crucial role libraries can play in education and self-development becomes more pronounced.

Within this context, the Northern Territory Library aims to work in partnership and cooperation with Australian, Territory and Local Governments, national and local educational and cultural institutions, private industry and other community stakeholders in order to play a key role in:

- Developing communities in partnership with Local Government.
- Positioning libraries as important places for expression, reading and access to information.
- Fostering individual development and learning for life.
- Enhancing social cohesion and economic development.
- Contributing to knowledge growth and literacy.
- Sharing of expertise with the community.
- Overcoming geographic boundaries through existing technologies to optimise equitable access to library services for all Territorians.
- Promoting and maintaining cultural understanding and respect.

Desired Outcomes: Rapid and easy access for our clients NTL will provide -

Better access by:

- Working with Territorians to collect cultural heritage documents.
- Increasing the range and quantity of digitised library collection material.
- Promoting the use of more integrated and effective digital technologies. This includes expanding a Wireless Network within the library sector, and building on confederated search technologies and resources to allow access to the broadest network of online information possible.
- Working with other Northern Territory Government agencies to develop a framework for a consistent approach to digital repositories.
- Developing an integrated Information Technology Plan.
- Promoting and publicising the existence of collections accessible through digital technology.



“

The public library is a profoundly important cultural, economic and social institution. Libraries collect and disseminate information; they provide comfortable and convenient places for people to read and learn; their physical spaces form meeting places for community groups; being free and open for all they help to create a fairer society. They are... uniquely placed to draw a diverse range of people and groups together.

”

Victorian Public Library Network,
“Libraries Building Communities”

More visibility by:

- Showcasing the Northern Territory Library services to clients and stakeholders, in order to engage a wider section of the community.
- Developing a comprehensive Communication Plan.
- 'Marketing' the Northern Territory Library as one of the Territory's iconic cultural institutions to prospective corporate sponsors and Government funding opportunities.
- Supporting learning for creative and intellectual endeavour through the library collections.
- Demonstrating the Territory's cultural, intellectual and social life to enhance understanding and enjoyment of the Northern Territory Library.

More effective integration by:

Improving synergies with other Northern Territory Government agencies such as:

- The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), and other education providers such as Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) to enhance whole of Government programs and services and more effectively contribute to literacy and learning for life.
- The Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) in reducing broader social disadvantages through the use of improved telecommunications infrastructure.
- Engaging the Northern Territory Government, Department of Justice, to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise a 'joined-up' approach across the Government and education sectors.
- Developing a service charter that allows for clear differentiation between Northern Territory Library services provided to the community and to the Government.

What We Do: the Role of the Northern Territory Library

The Northern Territory Library's comprehensive service programs currently comprise:

- Northern Territory documentary heritage collections.
- Territory wide coordination services supporting the network of Public Libraries including the Libraries and Knowledge Centres.
- IT systems infrastructure support for the network.
- Library Management Services.
- Research and Reference Services including family and Indigenous history.
- Specialised library services to Parliament.
- Direct provision of services at Taminmin and Nhulunbuy Community Libraries.

Research and Collections

The Northern Territory Library is the Territory's equivalent of a 'state' library and is one of the Territory's iconic cultural institutions. The Northern Territory Library houses the largest reference library in the Northern Territory offering an extensive range of resources, including the largest collection of 'Northern Territory' documentary history in the world.

A key function of the Northern Territory Library is to collect, protect and make accessible the documentary heritage of the Northern Territory. This function is supported by the *Publications (Legal Deposit) Act 2004* and the Northern Territory Library's Collection Development Policy.



Innovation and Access

The Innovation and Access program facilitates access to information for all Territorians through innovative use of current and emerging technologies.

The program provides, maintains and supports the use of the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS). The ILMS is used to manage library operations and maintain a single quality controlled database for a network across the Territory, including public, school, government and TAFE libraries.

The ILMS further provides access to an extensive selection of quality online resources, information databases and a student tutoring service, provided via networked licensing arrangements with commercial vendors.

Contracted joint purchasing and associated technical services are provided for the network of Public Libraries, providing economies of scale, in the expenditure of the Northern Territory Library's resource allocation.

Through this program, the Northern Territory Library is developing its Digital Repository, Territory Stories, to facilitate developing and managing the exponential growth of the Library's digital collections, including preserving particular collections of Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge.

Literacy and Learning for Life

Another important role for the Northern Territory Library is in the support of the Northern Territory Government's literacy, numeracy and information literacy strategies. The library is establishing an early years literacy program that aims to prepare children for school-based literacy skill development and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the community.

Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres

We provide a range of services directly to Territorians, and act as a hub to a network of 31 local Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres across the Territory. This ensures services offered meet the needs of each community, while facilitating coordinated reporting and auditing of information collections across the Territory.

The Northern Territory is regarded as a leader in the development and implementation of a new model for the delivery of library services in Indigenous communities. Local Indigenous people are trained to develop the 'Our Story' database for use according to community defined protocols. The database and its content are being used by the community, school, and language centre to support literacy programs.

In order to support the sustainable, long term viability of Public Libraries and Knowledge Centres, the Northern Territory Library provides each with funding to assist with operational costs. We also work in partnership with Municipal and Shire Council Governments to provide ongoing advice, support and training to Public Libraries and Knowledge Centre staff and we seek to provide a more effective integration of library services across the Territory.

Partnerships

The Northern Territory Library also pursues partnerships, strategic alliances and multi-levelled collaborative activities with community groups, educators, private and tertiary organisations, Government agencies (across all jurisdictions), museums, cultural arts institutions, historical organisations and collecting agencies (such as the Archival Heritage unit within the Northern Territory Archives Service). This ensures the most effective use of libraries as a primary public information resource.

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)

As an active member of NSLA, we aspire to improve access to information for library clients across the nation. NSLA responds to

the rapidly changing information landscape with collaborative projects such as AskNow!; National Plan for Australian Newspapers (NPLAN); PANDORA, a National initiative to archive selected web sites; Picture Australia and Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts (RAAM).



“

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of individual and social groups... ”

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, "Manifesto of the Public Library"

Supporting NT Government Policy Directions

Opportunities for Innovation and Growth

The development of the Strategic Policy 2008-2012 aims to provide Government with a comprehensive overview of the role of the Northern Territory Library and its strategies, to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness in its operations in the future. It also addresses the absence of library specific legislation and Government policy articulation of the role and responsibility of the Northern Territory Library.

However, there are many other strategic and operative initiatives and legislative reviews currently underway within the NT Government. These offer opportunities for a strengthening and positive innovation of the Northern Territory Library and other Public Libraries in the Territory.



“

each year the British Library generates value around 4.4 times the level of its public funding, ...and that the Library represents value for money for the British taxpayer.... This value benefits not only those who access the Library's collections and services directly, but also benefits members of the public throughout the UK who reap the indirect benefits of the world-class scientific research, creativity and innovation that is underpinned by the British Library.

”

British Library Annual Report 2003-04, Measuring Our Value

Some of these initiatives and reviews include:

Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage – A Generational Plan of Action

Closing the Gap is the Northern Territory's Indigenous Generational Plan, aimed at closing the gap in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians. It contains a vision and objectives for the future socio-economic wellbeing of Indigenous Territorians and sets ambitious but achievable targets for the next five, ten and twenty years. It also identifies priority areas for action in the next five years, based on the best available evidence of which actions have the greatest impact.¹

The Northern Territory Library plays an important role in the Government achieving the objectives listed in the Plan. In particular, the Northern Territory Library policy strives for a collaborative approach across Government to deliver education, jobs, culture and a better way of achieving business objectives.

The Northern Territory Library will also contribute to achieving the five year target under the education objective of all three and four year old Indigenous children having access to the quality learning programs.

Public Library Agreement 2005-2008

This sets out the roles and responsibilities of Local Government and community councils in the Northern Territory for the funding and provision of Public Library Services. A review of the agreement has commenced in 2007 and will closely align with the reforms to the *Local Government Act*.

Local Government Reform

Reforms to the *Local Government Act* will ensure that library services will be a core service requirement for all new Shire Councils across the Territory. It is also intended that future Government funding of Public Library services will be conditional upon membership of and participation in the Territory Library Network. This Network provides centralised library services that are managed by the Northern Territory Library. There is therefore scope for improved coordination, communication and pooling of resources for library services through this reform process.

¹ *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage- A Generational Plan of Action, 2007, accessed from <http://www.action.nt.gov.au/>*

Publications (Legal Deposit) Act 2004

The Northern Territory Library is the legal repository for Territory documentary heritage. The *Publications Act* encourages publishers to deposit documents about the Northern Territory's social life and culture with the Government agency responsible for administering the Northern Territory Library.

The intent of this legislation is to consensually ensure that a complete record of the Northern Territory's documentary heritage is achieved. The legislation ensures best practice standards are met by the Northern Territory Library in its collection development.

However, there is no direct reference to the Northern Territory Library's role as the administrator of the *Publications Act*. In order to optimise and formally define the Northern Territory Library's responsibilities in the collection, preservation and provision of access to the Northern Territory's cultural heritage documentation, a priority action for the Northern Territory Library is to review the *Publications Act*.

Indigenous Education Strategic Plan

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has identified strategies for the delivery of literacy programs specific to Indigenous Territorians. The Northern Territory Library recognises DEET's responsibility in delivering school-based literacy programs. Northern Territory Library can play a complementary role in this strategy through the implementation of a Northern Territory Library Literacy Strategy.

Indigenous Economic Development Strategy

The Indigenous Economic Development Strategy delivers a means for economic progress for Indigenous Territorians and makes reference to the work of the Northern Territory Library's Libraries and Knowledge Centres Programs.

Northern Territory Economic Development Framework

The NT Economic Development Framework recognises community value in libraries in the context of linking business with research and education institutions. This framework envisages that research and education institutions, libraries,

resource centres and business employer organisations can work together to produce graduates who have the required workplace and life skills, and help align research outcomes with industry needs.

Partnership Agreements with Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE)

The Northern Territory Government has cooperative Partnership Agreements with CDU and BIITE. These will be used to better meet industry needs for highly skilled staff. The Government will also continue to ensure its policies match business and community research, skills and training needs. Libraries have a role in supporting these partnership agreements through the provision of

education and training resources and facilities at a community level.

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)

As a member of NSLA, Northern Territory Library works collaboratively on a number of projects that will redefine services and workflows to meet the challenges of the digital era.

Re-imagining Library Services, the Big Bang: Creating the new library universe and Libraries in the Digital Environment are important initiatives of this group.



Northern Territory Remote Telecommunications Strategy

One of the strategies of the policy is to enhance community delivery of Telecommunications Services. Actions of the strategy are to develop, or refine models for shared public access facilities in remote communities; and to examine ways of providing 'in community assistance'.

Department of Corporate and Information Services, recognises the relevance to Indigenous communities of the use of visual and oral traditions. This goes hand-in-hand with the Libraries and Knowledge Centres model which includes the support for shared public computing, access to online resources and preservation of culture using digital technologies.

Enhanced telecommunications services will ensure that all Territorians will have adequate access to the quality information resources that the Northern Territory Library already provides.



“

...there remains the perception that all libraries do is lend books. The reality is far different. Particularly in rural and regional Australia, the library is in some cases the one remaining piece of infrastructure so it takes on the role of technology access centre, meeting place, social support system.

”

2003 Australian Government
Senate Committee Report,
"Libraries in the On-line Environment"

Northern Territory Library
State Square
Parliament House Darwin NT 0800
GPO Box 42, Darwin NT 0801
T: 1800 019 155
W: www.nt.gov.au/ntl

