

State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia

September 2025

Preface

Since the 1950s, the Library Board of Western Australia (Library Board) has delivered public library services through the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA) in partnership with Local Government. The *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951* provides the governing legislation in which Local Governments operate public libraries in partnership with the State Government.

In 2017, the Minister for Culture and the Arts released the first *WA Public Libraries Strategy* (the Strategy) to establish strategic priorities for public library service development in Western Australia. The current Strategy was released with a focus on outcomes for the Western Australian community. State and Local Government recognise the need for an overarching agreement to define the shared commitment to deliver a responsive and sustainable public library service for all Western Australians as set out in the Strategy.

This Public Library Services Agreement establishes the way in which State and Local Government will work together to deliver improved public library services to our community through the provision of:

- An agreed vision for driving the future direction of Western Australia's public library services.
- A collaborative approach for achieving real outcomes in delivering a relevant and sustainable public library service for all Western Australians.
- A statement of guiding principles to support communication, consistent decision making and collaborative action.
- A definition of the roles and responsibilities of both State and Local Government.

Public Library Services Agreement – guiding a partnered approach to the provision of State and Local Government public library services

The State and the Local Government sector have a shared commitment to delivering responsive and sustainable public library services to all Western Australians, recognising that in a digital age and global knowledge economy, public libraries empower individuals and communities through access to information, technology, lifelong learning and cultural and recreational opportunities.

Western Australia's public libraries are community hubs, bringing people together and facilitating literacy, learning and 21st century skills for growth and success in education, employment and life.

By working together to achieve common goals, State and Local Government will be more effective in providing equitable and accessible public library services for Western Australians. With over 12 million in person and online visits to Western Australia's public libraries every year, State and Local Government are committed to continuing to work together to enhance public library services and use resources effectively to maximise the return on investment that they provide. Working in collaboration will deliver more agile and innovative public library services and programs that respond to the diverse needs of Western Australian communities and are sustainable into the future.

Minister for Creative Industries

President of the Western Australian Local Government Association

Chairman of the Library Board of Western Australia

President of the Local Government Professionals Australia WA

[Date]

Vision

A vibrant and sustainable 21st century public library network at the heart of the Western Australian community where people can connect, learn and grow.

Goals

State and Local Government will work in partnership to provide a statewide public library network where:

- Public libraries are vibrant, inclusive community hubs that connect people with each other, with services and with their community.
- Public libraries provide diverse, accessible, relevant and comprehensive collections that support the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the community.
- Services and programs respond to the diverse needs of local communities, providing accessible experiences that support their information, cultural and recreational needs.
- Western Australians are empowered to prosper in an online world and digital economy through equitable access to technology and lifelong learning.
- Service models, systems and processes continue to evolve to be customer-centric, efficient, effective, sustainable and meet community need, optimising investment through collaboration.
- Goals are aligned with State and Local Government strategic priorities. Services are measured and evaluated to ensure achievement of outcomes and positive impact for the community.

[photo of signatories]

Principles

The following principles will guide the shared provision of public library services by State and Local Government in Western Australia.

1. Partnership
 - State and Local Government work together to provide the best possible library service, through mutual respect and cooperation.
2. Communication
 - Communication and decision making will be open, transparent and timely.
3. Consultation
 - State and Local Government will undertake timely consultation and engagement regarding matters affecting public libraries.
4. Accountability
 - Both parties are accountable for their decisions and decision-making processes.
 - There is a commitment to good governance.
5. Service Delivery
 - State and Local Government are committed to free, universal and equitable access to relevant and contemporary public library services for all Western Australian residents and visitors.
 - Access to information and ideas will be free of censorship and the influence of sectional interests, within legal and regulatory obligations.
 - Services will be flexible and respond to the diverse needs of Western Australian communities as well business requirements of State and Local Government.
 - Service planning, development and delivery will be responsive and sustainable.
 - Policy, strategy, service goals and objectives will have a long-term focus to respond to community needs and expectations.
6. Community Engagement
 - Appropriate community engagement and consultation will inform public library services planning and delivery.
7. Reciprocity
 - State and Local Government are committed to build on their 70-year partnership, each demonstrating respect for the other.

Roles and Responsibilities

To realise the vision and goals in this Public Library Services Agreement, State and Local Government have specific roles and responsibilities as outlined below.

Both State and Local Government, represented by the signatories to this agreement, agree to:

- Support a statewide public library service that provides free access for all residents of Western Australia.
- Operate with the expectation that State and Local Government will make a financial contribution to the provision of public library services, and each acknowledge the other's contribution where appropriate.
- Support the partnership and maintain joint decision-making arrangements and accountability mechanisms through the Public Libraries Working Group.
- Develop policies, plans, guidelines, performance and reporting standards to guide public libraries and be adopted by both parties.
- Ensure that the Library Board of Western Australia enters into an agreement with each Local Government that will uphold the principles of this Agreement and the core products and services to be provided free of charge.
- Recognise that the shared responsibilities for public library services are applicable regardless of any formal or informal arrangements between individual Local Governments and other government or non-government organisations for outsourcing or co-location of public library services.
- Work cooperatively to agreed standards established in the Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, to support the ongoing development of library services in Western Australia to meet community needs.

State Government agrees to:

- Provide a financial contribution to each Local Government that operates a public library in accordance with an agreed public library funding methodology and administer the allocation, reporting and acquittal processes for the funding.
- Provide resources and services, including centralised purchasing and a State-wide online catalogue, to agreed standards.
- Provide strategic advice, consultancy and training on public library services including additional support for regional and remote public library services and provide feedback to Local Government on library services as required.
- Coordinate collaborative statewide and targeted initiatives and programs.

Local Government agrees to:

- Provide physical and technological infrastructure, staffing and operating costs, to agreed standards.
- Be accountable to the State Government for financial contributions as provided by the State.
- Collaborate on statewide initiatives and programs, as specified in relevant documents such as Local Level Agreements and the Public Libraries Strategy.
- Provide strategic input and advice on public library services, including giving feedback to State Government on library services as required.

Governance

State and Local Government have established a Public Libraries Working Group (PLWG) to oversee the implementation of this Public Library Services Agreement. Membership of the PLWG includes representation from the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Library Board of Western Australia and the State Library of Western Australia, Local Government Professionals Australia WA, Office of Digital Government, Public Libraries WA, Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). Other organisations may be invited to join the group with agreement from the current membership.

Review and Modification Process

This Public Library Services Agreement is to apply for a period of five (5) years from the date of signing and may be extended subject to the written consent of all signatories.

A review of this Public Library Services Agreement will be initiated by the PLWG three (3) years after the date of signing and will report with recommendations to the Library Board of Western Australia and the WALGA State Council.

This Public Library Services Agreement may only be modified during the life of the Agreement with the written consent of all parties via PLWG.

Dispute Resolution Process

In relation to any matter that may be in dispute between the parties in relation to this Public Library Services Agreement:

- a. If a dispute or difference arises between the parties in connection with this Public Library Services Agreement, a party may give the other/s a written notice specifying the dispute or difference.
- b. The dispute is to be resolved by the signatories to the Public Library Services Agreement working in good faith with a view to achieve mutually agreeable outcomes.
- c. If further resolution is required, parties are to engage an independent mediator with the cost to be shared between all parties.

Break clause

This Public Library Services Agreement may be terminated at any time by the mutual agreement of the Minister for Creative Industries, Library Board of Western Australia, WALGA State Council, and President of the Local Government Professionals Australia WA.

Prior to terminating this Public Library Services Agreement it is intended that, where possible and appropriate, the parties use mechanisms provided within this Agreement including, but not limited to, the Dispute Resolution clause to address and resolve any issues that may exist between the parties.