



WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-2026





Shire of Exmouth. Cover images (left to right, top to bottom): City of Stirling, City of Canning, City of Armadale

Libraries are at the heart of our community

Public libraries welcome people of all ages, cultures and beliefs. We offer safe places and are trusted by our community.

Public libraries are important to the Western Australian community and have been for more than 70 years. Every year we welcome more than 11 million West Australians who seek to access library services onsite, online or elsewhere in their community.

Our services offer great opportunities to learn, develop and entertain! With 233 branches across the state, WA public libraries are proud to provide:

- Free access to books, ebooks, audiobooks and other content to entertain and inspire people of all ages and cultures, while boosting reading, recreation and literacy.
- Free access to computers and wifi for those who don't have them at home as well as friendly staff to provide help to those who need assistance or lack confidence in using online services.
- A place for people to come together, connect with one another and with what is happening in their community.
- Opportunities for people of all ages and interests to pursue formal and informal study and lifelong learning.
- Comfortable public spaces where people can study, work, read and relax, with no expectation of buying anything or being sold anything.
- Foster community health and wellbeing, especially for vulnerable people or in times of significant stress, through opportunities to connect and engage.
- Support for the local economy by enabling job seekers, entrepreneurs and micro businesses to access information, wifi services and meeting rooms.

Public libraries aspire to support local community in a way that leaves nobody alone, at a loss or left behind.



City of Cockburn

Where people can connect, learn and grow

The 2020 State and Local Government Partnership Agreement for provision of public library services offers a shared vision for public libraries in WA.

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

Building on the foundation provided by the WA public library system's first statewide strategy in 2017, this new strategy will ensure that we continue to make a real difference for the WA community – large and small, metropolitan, regional and remote.

Guiding principles

In delivering outcomes for our community through this strategy, public libraries and our partners will be guided by these principles:

- **Community comes first.** Everything we do under the strategy will be first and foremost about improving outcomes for the WA community, especially inclusion and empowerment of Aboriginal, culturally diverse and vulnerable communities.
- **We are stronger and smarter when we work together.** We will strengthen existing partnerships and foster new relationships with community organisations, government agencies and other stakeholders to maximise benefit for the WA community.
- **We are accountable.** Local and State Government will be accountable for achievement of the strategy. We will develop plans and measures to ensure we meet community need.
- **We are committed to success.** We will invest in our capability to ensure that we can deliver on the strategy's vision and aspirations.

¹ State and Local Government Partnership Agreement for the provision of public library services, 2020.



City of Fremantle

Three Pillars

Our partners, stakeholders and community have endorsed the following three pillars as the focus for outcomes under the strategy:

1. Libraries strengthening communities

2. Digitally inclusive libraries

3. Public libraries valued as an essential community asset

1. Libraries Strengthening Community

We are vibrant community hubs – open to all, well-used and much-loved. While there are core services the community expect, the particular offering of each library will reflect the unique needs of its community. Our approach is to maximise the benefits to our community by responding to local needs. We will:

- 1.1 Give our community a greater say in the services, collections and programs public libraries provide.
- 1.2 Partner in our community to use our resources more effectively, build skills and celebrate local culture and history.
- 1.3 Help people to access further education, get a job and explore their interests through the delivery of learning experiences.
- 1.4 Bring people together and increase community connection and belonging.
- 1.5 Empower Aboriginal people to preserve their language and culture through local ownership and delivery of cooperative library services in Aboriginal communities.



Shire of Dalwallinu

2. Digitally Inclusive Libraries

Computers and the internet are an essential part of everyday life. They enable people to work, communicate and access health, education, government and community services. People who do not have access to these technologies or the skills and confidence to use them are at risk of being excluded from society.

The *Digital Strategy for the Western Australian Government 2021-2025* aims to remove the barriers to digital inclusion – internet connections, affordability and skills.² We support delivery of the Digital Strategy and will help all Western Australians, especially those in regional, rural and remote areas, to fully participate in a digital society and digital economy. We will:

- 2.1** Provide free and reliable community access to computers, the internet and emerging technologies either in our libraries or through local partners.
- 2.2** Build people's digital skills and confidence through training programs and resources.
- 2.3** Enable people to find, reserve and borrow an item from any WA public library through improved technology and systems.



City of Perth

3. Public Libraries Valued as an Essential Community Asset

Every \$1 invested in our public libraries delivers a return of more than \$4.³ Yet current data does not show:

- the social impact we have on learning, access to technology, personal wellbeing and social connections, or
- the economic value we deliver by supporting children's and adult literacy, job readiness and a stronger community.⁴

Better data and research on our services will help government, business and community to make more informed decisions on investment in public libraries. We will:

- 3.1** Develop and use measures which demonstrate the impacts our services, spaces and collections deliver for the WA community.
- 3.2** Obtain research and data which tells the story of the social impact and economic value of our services.
- 3.3** Ensure that all public libraries have access to sustainable funding to meet the evolving needs of the WA community.

² *Digital Strategy for the Western Australian Government*, WA Office of Digital Government, 2021.

³ *The Value of Public Libraries in Victoria*, SGS Economics and Planning, 2017.

⁴ *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*, Australian Public Library Alliance and Australia Library and Information Association, 2020.

