Submission
to the
Regional Telecommunications Review
Discussion Paper

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Attention:
RTIRC Secretariat
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Submission from:

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)
Australian Law Librarians Association (ALLA)
School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV)
Australian School Library Association (ASLA)

Introduction

We are very pleased to provide the response from the Australian Library and Information Association on behalf of the above organisations to the Regional Telecommunications Review.

Libraries have an increasingly important role in supporting the nation in their support of communities, be they regional, city or educational to enable all Australians to access quality online information and traditional collections.

We are providing this submission to encourage the free flow of information and ideas to support Australians and Australian culture, economy and democracy.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me at Sue.Hutley@alia.org.au or by telephone 02 6215 8215

Yours sincerely,

Sue Hutley
ALIA Executive Director
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Associations providing this submission

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.
Website: http://www.alia.org.au

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) objectives are to promote and advance the provision, awareness and use of library and information services in Australia; provide a consultative forum for state and public library service management in Australia; enable the formulation of common plans, policies and programs for state and public library services; and allow for the common views of state and public libraries to be presented to government, and to other relevant bodies. Membership consists of the head of each State and Territory Library, the National Library of Australia and the National Library of New Zealand.
Website: http://www.nsla.org.au

The Australian Law Librarians' Association Inc. (ALLA) is the national organisation for librarians and information professionals working in courts, government departments, law firms and legal areas of universities and professional associations. The Association acts as a single voice to lobby on a range of issues which will promote the interests of law libraries and provide legal information services in the wider community.
Website: http://www.allg.asn.au

School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV) offers dynamic and inspiring opportunities for teacher librarians and library teams to build their essential role in engaging and developing lifelong learners.
Website: http://www.slav.schools.net.au

Australian School Library Association Inc. (ASLA) is a national authority, a peak forum in the field of teacher librarianship and school library resource services. Its aim is to maximise opportunities for students to obtain independent lifelong learning and decision making skills through ASLA's commitment to high professional standards, awareness of advances and changes in technology and the competence and ability to teach and use it; effective, cooperative use of school resource services by the whole school community; qualified teacher librarians with an image of excellence; and, optimum use of the dual skills of teaching and librarianship.
Website: http://www.asla.org.au

Organisation of this submission

Introduction

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SECTION 1

RESPONSES TO SELECTED QUESTIONS

Question 1.1

What telecommunications services do you consider most significant for regional, rural and remote areas?

NSW:
Internet, voice, wireless WAN and Internet for mobile access, remote access for staff to work from home.

NT:
The Northern Territory Library (NTL) provides library services though 32 public and community libraries across the Territory. Equitable access to robust telecommunication services including high speed broadband Internet connection, adequate mobile phone coverage, telephone and fax service is critical to the effective operation of these library services.

The Northern Territory Library provides access to an array of online resources such as specialised databases, online photographic collections and more. NTL also provides and maintains a Library Management System for the entire library network across the Territory and thus requires all libraries to have access to reliable and effective telecommunication services.

In order to achieve NTL's principle role as a provider of free access to information services across the Territory, it is critical that the majority of Territorians have access to the Internet. For the whole community to actively participate in contemporary society, it is critical that access to telecommunication services such as the Internet, mobile phone networks, telephone and fax services are provided to all Territorians - regional, rural and remote. NTL, along with many remote Community Government Councils play an important part in making telecommunications services freely available to all.

QLD:
High speed, reliable Internet access, at a reasonable cost, is one of the most significant telecommunications services for rural and remote areas. A significant number of Queensland's public libraries, located in rural and remote areas, are still incapable of offering adequate public access Internet facilities to their communities, due to lack of appropriate infrastructure. Basic telephone services are still unreliable in many of these areas.

While 91% of the public libraries (opened 6 hours of more) have Internet access, some still rely on dial up services. This severely impacts on service delivery, the provision of information to our clients and the ability of the community as a whole to access key information and to make choices based on up-to-date and reliable information.

As at 30 June 2007, 67 local government libraries in Queensland were operating public access computers running dial-up connections. 33 of the 67 sites (49%) have the option to

upgrade to an ADSL broadband connection through their local Telstra exchange (see attachment 1).

A further 20 service points have no Internet connection. These include the Banana mobile library; Library Express in Caboolture; Aged Care facilities in Cairns; the Gatton Mobile Library; the Macleay Island Library in the Redland Shire; the Thuringowa mobile library; the Bollon Library in the Balonne Shire; Coen, Laura, and Lakeland Libraries in Cook Shire; the Douglas Mobile Library; the Woodgate Library in Isis; the McKinlay Library; Baffle Creek and Rosedale Libraries in Miriam Vale; Nebine Library in Murweh; Maidenwell Library in Nanango; and Durong Library in Wondai.

The current trend to ensure that the delivery of services generally is cost effective makes it more likely that many government agencies and businesses will continue to rely on electronic resources to supply information that will result in even future disadvantage for remote communities.

WA:
Reliable Internet access, preferably broadband.

ASLA:
Rural and remote areas - Satellite phones/internet/broadcast services Regional areas - broadband/fibre optic cable/ broadcast services Mobile phone coverage; RELIABLE, low to moderate cost broadband. I have a daughter living six kms the Bunbury side of Donnybrook - has no mobile phone coverage and no broadband. To get broadband people in this area need satellite which even with top quality equipment is not reliable during unsettled or stormy weather. Donnybrook township is OK for coverage. I believe people living outside of towns anywhere in the state should have equal if not better access to these communications technologies than those living in Perth and regional townships.

SLAV:
All telecommunications services are important. Landline, mobile phones are important for communication on a day to day basis. Internet access is important for education and social interaction. Many services are offered online for business and need to be accessed.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Broadband Internet connection available to - home/property; business; schools/TAFE; public libraries
- Affordable, subsidised or free access to accredited information via broadband
- Affordable or subsidised computer hardware and software
- Affordable or subsidised technology support and training
- Mobile phone coverage

Question 1.2

Do you consider that your current need for these telecommunications services is adequately met? If not, please explain.

NSW:
Yes, the majority of rural and remote libraries in NSW currently have entry level ADSL services available to them. Coverage is widespread and good providing the organisation is physically located within the town centre.
Although basic ADSL services are readily available, some libraries are already flagging the need for high performance services such as ADSL1+ and ADSL2 to cater for increased upload and download traffic. As access to in-house applications can be provided over internet links through VPN tunnels, affordable higher bandwidth services are very much required.

NT:
Dial up ADSL Internet coverage for Regional areas of the Northern Territory is adequate, but ADSL2 and cable broadband is not adequate in the NT. Internet connections are often slow and unreliable, the infrastructure covers vast distances and links between regional hubs to remote locations is hindered by the geographic isolation of the Territory including distance, weather, remoteness and rugged terrain.

Many remote communities continue to use 2-Way Satellite connections in order to access the internet. Although this is generally effective many of these services suffer from periodic outages or are not properly maintained. Access to the technical skills and support necessary to maintain these systems are often difficult given the remoteness of many communities and the harsh climates/terrain of both tropical (around Darwin and the Top End) and desert Australia (around Alice Springs and Tennant Creek).

QLD:
Despite the rapid advance in new technologies, the “digital divide” is still evident in many remote Queensland communities. Unemployed and low income people are much less likely to have Internet access at home (27%) compared to those in work (57%), and so are dependent on institutions such as public libraries for their access. Indeed, these figures are conservative and in extremely remote areas of Australia it is likely that the actual figures are even lower. The provision of high quality, low cost or free access to Internet for the general public is now an expected and key service offered by public libraries.

In very remote parts of Queensland, particularly the Cape York and Torres Strait region, need for this service is not adequately met. Although fibre optic cable is now laid through to Umagico, on the tip of Cape York, settlements that are not close to this service are underserved and face high costs and unreliable service. Once installed, it is also very hard to have this service maintained or to receive assistance in managing the service.

WA:
No – most sites are still dial-up. A regional broadband audit was conducted in August 2006. The data showed only 58 regional sites that were broadband enabled with a further 17 public

libraries planning broadband installation in the near future. Broadband capacity at these sites ranges from 10mb to 512kps.

It takes 27 minutes to process one request via our ILL system which is internet based. While there are some network issues at the State Library of WA, and constraints with the software, broadband speeds are limiting the service we can deliver to clients. In the South West (within 3 hours drive from Perth) the clients use library services heavily and have high expectations that the level of services will be equivalent to Perth.

At a recent training session in Fitzroy Crossing (in the Kimberley) there were waiting times of 2-3 minutes as staff attempted to use Novelist, Encyclopaedia Britannica and Tumble books. This does not enthuse staff to share the databases with clients when access is so slow. [Note: Federal funding has been obtained to provide broadband Internet to communities in the Kimberley.]

ASLA:
Personally in regional Australia yes, but don't believe that our rural and remote areas are adequately serviced - although service providers cannot all service areas required.

SLAV:
No, some areas of black holes for mobile reception. Internet access is very slow via dial up.

GENERAL COMMENTS:
Not in all cases. Internet services are not consistent across regional and rural Australia. For example, Connectivity resources are being duplicated across the state of NSW via a number of different initiatives and networks. This differentiation and duplication of networks serves no real purpose other than branding services for various target groups.

For example, in NSW the State Government's Internet and Internet connectivity networked services include:

- Connectivity and network for Schools/TAFE - Internet, communication (e.g email, web), hardware and software implementation and upgrade, training of staff;
- Connectivity and network for government departments - Internet, communication; hardware and software implementation and upgrade, training of staff;
- NSW.net and Rural Link. [NSW.net provides subsidised connection to the Internet for local government and their libraries (and thus their library users); Rural Link provides broadband access to selected 'hubs' in a number of small and remote communities across NSW (about 90 communities). NSW.net at the State Library of NSW manages both services.] - this also includes or has included the roll-out of free computers and training in the use of the Internet, databases etc

Connectivity speed/access across these various networks differs from fast broadband down to slow dial-up. Infrastructure also varies, for example the RTA's move away from the IBM type computer to Apple computers.

While it is recognised that there are many and varying needs based around the services etc that those connected require, the common needs are not being managed or met effectively and economies of scale are not being realised. Those common needs include:

- A single fast broadband 'backbone' for the state (or nationally);
- State (or National) consortia on computer, software and peripherals purchase e.g. State Government contract;
- Consortia approach to database subscription in networks of common need i.e. public libraries and schools/TAFE
- Statewide (or National) strategic plan - for all major stakeholders

Question 1.3

What telecommunications services do you consider will be needed to meet your needs in the future? Please explain.

NSW:

All of the above (as in Q1.1) and more. High bandwidth services with scalability for bandwidth intensive applications are needed as more and more applications are ported through the internet.

NT:

As libraries move rapidly into the convergent digital age where a vast amount of information is recorded, stored and accessed in digital format, access to appropriate Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) will become essential. As a result telecommunications infrastructure will need to be capable of meeting the digital storage and access requirements of emergent digital media tools. High speed broadband Internet connections will be required to download digital content stored in growing digital repositories around the globe. NTL are committed to facilitating access to this content Territory-wide and contend that access to these information resources should not be hindered by geographic location.

Library users in remote settings are just as eagerly adopting new social networking tools as those in the main city centres. Web 2.0 technologies, offering greater interactivity and scope for audio-visual communication, are already pushing the capacity of 2-way satellite connections in remote communities. These new forms of information transmission and communication therefore require faster and more reliable download and upload environments. Also as the Territory's population begins to age and the baby boomers begin to retire, they will continue to expect to be able to access high-capacity broadband applications and engage in all forms of emergent communications. Regional telecommunications networks therefore need to be created with the view of regular improvements and upgrading in order to maintain standard information tools for business, education, research and for recreation purposes.

As the web speeds up the processes of online communication demand a different approach to print text. The radically collaborative ICTs emerging on the web create the need for high broadband capacity as the norm. Libraries in regional, rural and remote Northern Territory will need to cater for such telecommunication needs of the population from the cradle to the grave.

QLD:

Demand for high speed Internet will build in these remote areas as more people take up this technology and explore its uses. As there is little home computer ownership in many of the remote Indigenous communities, access to Internet is often provided through the local library, Indigenous Knowledge Centre or "Internet café".

Public libraries are committed to offering free public access to information regardless of the format, however the cost of providing this service via Internet is prohibitive for many local Councils, particularly taking into account current usage allowances. The local public library can offer one of the few places to access Internet in remote communities and it is essential that this service is available at a reasonable cost. This provision of free Internet access ensures that issues surrounding the digital divide can be addressed.

High speed broadband is needed to access large integrated library systems that provide access to 8 million books across Queensland, large repository networks for digitised images, sharing digital content, and for commercial and government transactions.

The expansion of the mining industry, large agricultural businesses, "sea and tree changers" moving to regional areas all expect city equivalent broadband in order to contribute to the local regional economy. Given current demographic changes within Queensland it is likely these trends will continue placing further strain on existing resources.

WA:

Refer to 1.1 - Broadband access is a key requirement for the delivery of information stored in electronic format. The use of information communications technology enables access to databases and websites from home, as licence agreements permit. The current situation of limited broadband access in remote and regional areas is a major issue as it limits the State Library of WA's ability to disseminate information including electronic databases, document delivery services, and enabling technologies such as video conferencing and VOIP as an aide in providing training and support to clients and staff in regional public libraries.

The Aotearoa New Zealand People's Network, currently in development, aims to give people greater access to computers and high-speed broadband Internet through their local public libraries. The project is a collaboration between the National Library of NZ, NZ's public libraries, Sun Microsystems and Telecom New Zealand. A similar project in Australia would be great.

ASLA:

I imagine that from current developments that fibre optic cable will be the next requirement (or whatever is currently being worked on to replace fibre optic cable).

SLAV:
Access to better mobile coverage. Access to Internet at speed and not vast expense.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. Web 2.0 (refers to a second-generation of Internet-based services—such as social networking sites, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies—that emphasise online collaboration and sharing among users.) Social Networking, online collaboration and communication will be of particular importance to regional/rural and remote areas to alleviate some of the issues surrounding remoteness and access (infrastructure, information etc) as these areas don't have the same level of support or choice available to those in metropolitan areas. That is, those that live in metro areas have a wider choice of information agencies and access points; generally better telecommunication access and support.

2. Online video and voip (Voice over internet protocol) communication. Online video and voip for conferencing, training, meetings and other communications is really only viable via broadband and would be an invaluable connection for individuals, communities, business, libraries, schools/teachers etc in regional, rural and remote communities

3. WiFi networks. WiFi networks would allow regional/rural and remote communities and visitors to connect to their Internet provider or to any free or subsidised network. There are many examples of citywide networks in the United States that usually operate via a WiFi mesh of strategically located WiFi (802.11a, b, g) radios. New WiFi technology is emerging that will provide connectivity up to a 30 kilometre radius from one radio transmitter.

Question 1.4
What would you consider to be 'equitable' access to telecommunications services for people in regional, rural and remote Australia?

NSW:
Providing Internet services that are comparable to what is on offer in the metropolitan areas. Providing quality and affordable services to regional, rural and remote areas.

NT:
The dimensions of access, although multifaceted in nature, begin with the provision of access to crucial infrastructure followed by the acquisition of equipment, the enhancement of skills via training and control over content production. Language differences within the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population, varying political perspectives, levels of background knowledge, experience and national identity furnish further sociological complexities outside the functional dimensions of technological access. Equitable access should therefore include the following:

- Access to technical infrastructure comparable to that available in metropolitan Australia

- Ability to maintain and upgrade these systems
- Ability to develop necessary skills

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) promotes the free flow of information and ideas in the interests of all Australians and a thriving culture and democracy through their Free Access to Information policy. ALIA also advocates that,

> 'A thriving national and global culture, economy and democracy will best be advanced by people who are empowered in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion within a range of cultural contexts'. (Alexandria Proclamation 2005)

QLD:

High quality broadband at a reasonable cost would provide equitable access to telecommunications services for people in regional and remote Australia. Although Councils have indicated to SLQ that they are prepared to accept a higher cost than a metropolitan service due to remoteness, it is still prohibitively expensive for a free high speed service to be offered to the public for extended hours each day. In some parts of Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands our findings indicates that it costs between $400 - $600 per month for a capped public access connection.

WA:

There should be a minimum standard, eg minimum of 2 Megabit capacity, or perhaps a standard based on community size. Enabling service points to obtain a minimum 2 Megabit broadband link will ensure they are able to deliver services to their clients in a contemporary online environment. This would include provision of IP based videoconferencing, accessing content rich websites, undertaking transactions and developing their own content.

ASLA:

All Australians, regardless of where they live, should have access to fast, accurate and reliable telecommunications.

SLAV:

Access should be on the same basis as urban areas. The flow of information via the Internet, social and business communication and access to services should be the same no matter where you live in Australia. Students in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia should all be given access to the information learning technologies which are accessed via the telecommunications network.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Equitable access to many regional, rural and remote areas is only possible via a strategy of positive discrimination i.e. merely duplicating the networks and broadband speeds available in metro areas will not enable equitable access without access to the necessary support mechanisms. Planning for the delivery of equitable access must recognise and take into account the different circumstances faced by many regional, rural and remote users e.g. higher incidence of unemployment, lower income, lower levels of education on average than

metro areas, minimal access to technology support services/personnel, fewer training opportunities, less access (as compared to metro areas) to high speed wireless (WiFi), cable DSL and ADSL access to the Internet. Satellite access is more expensive and unreliable.

Equitable costing should also be applied across Australia for all telecommunications. 'One nation, one price'.

Question 4.5

Do you consider access to, and the reliability and quality of, internet and broadband services to be adequate in regional, rural and remote Australia?

If not, please outline the issues and locations you consider need priority attention and why?

NSW:

In most areas, yes but performance and quality of internet and broadband services is dependent upon cost. Consumer versus Business grade Internet and broadband services. Consumer grade costs less, however, the quality of service suffers. NSW.net currently provides subsidised ADSL business grade services to regional, rural and remote libraries. Libraries use these services to access their core software applications (eg. Library Management Systems) so the Internet services must be reliable and offer good performance hence the provision of Business grade services.

NT:

At present access to internet services in remote NT communities is available primarily via 2-way satellite, although some communities do still use dial-up at times. 2-Way satellite is currently providing reasonable access to the internet, but as mentioned elsewhere in this response, is beginning to be challenged by emergent online functionality, like Web 2.0 tools. It is imperative that telecommunication services be upgraded in the not too distant future to accommodate these tools adequately.

QLD:

There are very remote parts of Queensland that still do not have reasonably priced, good quality broadband services. The Torres Strait region and western Cape York are key areas. There is very little competition in the services offered.

Refer to attachment 3 for those public libraries in Queensland without broadband access.

WA:

No - factors which impact on the capacity for rural libraries to expand and develop their services:

- Lack of a common electronic environment for the library network to share capacity-building information; and
- Limitations with accessing suitable broadband to expand and develop their service delivery in the contemporary world.

- Need for more localised and dedicated information about the benefits of broadband to stimulate demand for more broadband enabled services.

Locations needing priority attention: WA Mid West, Pilbara, WA Goldfields - majority of these sites presently have access to a basic ADSL service of 256/64k, which does not support the growing number of applications and web based material to assist with the provision of expanded and contemporary services to their clients. Where ADSL is not available, satellite or ISDN are the next best options.

In the Goldfields two locations typify the problems in rural Western Australia. Grass Patch has a small library sited in the school but is unable to provide free internet access to clients because there are no more lines available into the community. To provide access would require a cable from Esperance (over 700kms south of Perth) and at present there is no budget allocated to provide this service.

In Menzies, 780km from Perth and north of Kalgoorlie, the only way the small library can afford an automated library management system is to link with their regional library (Kalgoorlie). At present the technical infrastructure cannot support this option which means Menzies continues to have a manual circulation system. There are no ADSL lines in Menzies. Telstra has been promising a line for the past three years. Staff are hoping that the alternative may be wireless.

ASLA:
Some areas of regional Tasmania that are within 10-20 minutes of cities cannot access broadband services which seems quite archaic.

SLAV:
No, access to the Internet is not as reliable as the city. Telephone lines are often down. Power is often out. Choice of Internet provider for Broadband and ways of accessing Broadband are limited and are often more expensive to install. That is if you can get Broadband. Look at the areas which are still not on the Broadband grid.

GENERAL COMMENTS:
No**.** General observations:

- Number of publicly available PC's is inadequate - there appears to be no state or national standard in this regard
- Expensive dial-up connections are unreliable and very slow - many public library branches are still connecting via dial-up (this must be the same for others too)
- Affordability of dial-up alternatives
- Support services (Information Technology; Training etc) are scarce

ALIA COMMENTS:

In particular in relation to questions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8, ALIA notes that not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries.

See further comments in Appendix 1.

Question 4.6

Do you consider that the Australian Government programs provided to assist consumers and small businesses to make effective use of higher bandwidth services have been effective and appropriately targeted?

NSW:

Not sure. Depending upon the timing, some organisation can miss the boat on receiving subsidised services as the funding has 'run out'.

ASLA:

The promised service for Devonport that was supposed to be on line in January 2007, never seems to have eventuated.Not sure if it fits in this category, as I didn't note the specifics as it didn't encompass my area of residence, or schools with which I had involvement. But as I haven't seen anything in the media, I presume nothing happened.

SLAV:

Not as yet.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

No. Given that there are over 12 million regular users (and many irregular users) of public library services in Australia it would make sense for the Federal Government to explore opportunities to further resource (an already very under-resourced) public library services in Australia to provide access to for example:

- Telecommunication technology (in particular the Internet);
- Access to training programs e.g. small business; students etc; and
- Access to key government and non-government information and databases

The size of the public library 'audience' and the national public library network arguably offers the Federal and other levels of government the most effective platform on which to roll-out programs, information and assistance to business and the general community. Importantly it also offers a great opportunity to reach CALD and indigenous communities.

Currently public library funding is either handled fully by state/territory governments or jointly between state and local governments. Public libraries are already expected to provide much of the above but without any real recognition of the actual resourcing required to do it properly. The current public library funding situation in NSW is a case in point. The NSW

state government only provides approximately 8.3% of public library funding with the balance being made up by (arguably in many cases under-resourced and rate capped) local governments. While NSW public librarians are having to run funding campaigns to survive an opportunity exists for not just Federal resourcing but importantly, Federal leadership.

ALIA COMMENTS:

In particular in relation to questions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 we note that not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries.

See further comments in Appendix 1.

Question 4.7

Is the availability of computers an issue in rural, regional and remote areas?

NSW:

Some NSW public libraries are still using some desktop PCs that were distributed by NSW.net over 6 years ago, when these PCs should have been retired and replaced 2 to 3 years ago. Whether or not this has been because of funding or technical issues, we do not know.

QLD:

Low home computer ownership is still a key area of concern in remote parts of Queensland, especially Indigenous communities. This means that as people are more able to use ICT technology, demand for computers in public libraries and other public access points will increase.

There is also limited access to mobile devices that increase connectivity such as mobile phones and PDAs with Internet capability due to the lack of coverage in remote Queensland. These devices, that are taken for granted in the city, would be of great benefit to isolated communities.

Keeping the library computers in working order and connected to the Internet is also challenging. Often lack of knowledge in how computers work, or are networked, can see equipment lying idle for months when the repair is a simple matter. Qualified and/or competent technicians are hard to find in remote areas and when located are often brought in specifically from other areas which adds to the cost.

WA:

No. Refer to 6.1, which is the issue.

ASLA:

Yes, this is an issue. As on-line centres and libraries always seem to be have their pc's fully utilised.

ASLA:
Yes. Access in public places can be limited. E.g. we do not have a local Internet café. Computers in the public libraries can be limited also. More computer access at the public libraries would be beneficial. Often the regional public libraries are not funded to allow for more computers or the technical support they need**.**

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Yes.

Issue .1: Availability is an issue especially in the 'public access' sense whether that be via a public library, community hub or some other agency. Exponential technological and information growth means that today's computer and its software's capability date very quickly. For instance, there have been examples where government funding has provided free computers to public libraries with one off funding i.e. via NSW.net but this initiative did not provide for any ongoing upgrades once the technology was passed its 'used by' date. What is needed to alleviate issues such as this is a more holistic, strategic and ongoing resourcing approach to technology.

Issue 2: Affordability of hardware, software and connectivity are also obstacles to true enabling of communities.

Issue .3: There appears to be no real accepted standard for the number of publicly accessible computers per population base.

ALIA COMMENTS:

In particular in relation to questions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 we note that not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries.

See further comments in Appendix 1.

Question 4.8

Do you consider that broadband is an important enabler for the delivery of better health, education, community and emergency services in regional, rural and remote Australia?

NSW: Yes.

NT:

Yes, the Northern Territory provides access to a range of electronic databases and web based resources in the areas of health, education and community information, including access to the Health and Wellness database which provides current information on a range of health topics for the general public. Similarly, Your Tutor provides an online access for

students with homework and study in a range of secondary and undergraduate curriculum areas.

QLD:
High quality broadband is vital for helping very remote communities in Queensland access services and information that is needed on a daily basis. So many services that are considered basic elsewhere (banks, travel services, health services, government services) are not available on the ground in these communities. Banking and accessing travel services were consistently some of the most popular sessions during the *Taking IT On* training.

Public libraries are also in a unique position to create/build digital content which celebrates rural and remote Australia. Public libraries have the skills and infrastructure to give the community the opportunity to make their stories accessible via the web. SLQ has already begun working in this area with its Picture Queensland Outreach and the Queensland Stories project, where content is created and made available online via the public library. These projects focus on skills development, capacity building and ensure that local content is made accessible via the Internet. As such, SLQ believes that broadband is an extremely important enabler for the delivery of better health, education, community and emergency services in regional, rural and remote Australia, particularly as many government services are increasing on line service delivery to clients.

The information contained in SLQ's state-wide databases on subjects such as health, education, and business are very useful for Queenslanders living in regional areas supporting job outcomes and educational development. These databases are only of use where an Internet connection exists.

Another online service provided by SLQ is *Your Tutor*. This links students to a tutor online ensuring their educational needs are met in areas where a dearth of educational services exist. Such Internet enabled services are critical for community cohesion and personal development and can negate the need for families to relocate, or for children to have to attend boarding schools.

WA:
Most definitely. The 2005-2006 statistics for public libraries show that 944,855 reference queries were answered. The number of inter library loans sent and received in the same period totalled 512,600. While the current figures appear impressive, access to broadband for regional and remote public libraries would lead to increased service delivery to rural WA. For example, our electronic document delivery system has the capacity to deliver electronic copies of journal articles directly to the requesting library. In reality, the current limited broadband access means that articles requested for clients in rural areas are delivered by traditional methods – ie posted. An increase in broadband technology would speed up this process considerably, leading to an increase in client satisfaction.

Clients in remote regions have difficultly downloading the highly relevant and peer reviewed information freely available from electronic databases that State Library of WA provides for "at home" use. The speed of downloading frustrates clients and reduces access to this information.

ASLA:
It can certainly help. The anonymity of these services is a definite positive.

SLAV:
Yes Broadband is an important enabler for education. Broadband is really essential. Regional students can really utilise the Internet to keep up to date and make virtual visits to places they cannot visit in person. Many wonderful education websites and learning objects can be exploited in the classroom. Uses of webcam websites live add an engaging dimension to the teaching and learning experience. The speed of dial up for accessing websites, downloading images is too slow. In an educational setting students get pretty impatient if you are waiting for learning objects to download from the Internet if you are using the Internet live. I often download before a class and have the cached site, image etc. I would rather be able to use the Internet live. If I use dial up connection from home to download images etc for class it can take a long time to get one image sent via email. Schools in regional areas do not have easy access to the Internet. Often the infrastructure is not available. Schools can pay large bills to get a mediocre Internet access.

Emergency services need excellent telecommunications in the case of emergency. In the bushfire season the CFA rely on up to date info and communications.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Yes it is an enabler but not without the necessary support services required to make it fully 'enabled'. That is, educating users, consulting users, providing the necessary upgrades, providing access to accredited information and databases etc.

Governments must commit to continued funding not just to one off projects. To achieve this a review of funding sources (formula of funding between governments) and an acceptable CPI to ensure the online delivery of better health, education, community and emergency services in regional, rural and remote Australia is imperative.

To ensure that true 'enabling' takes place, assessment of community needs must be undertaken. A true assessment cannot be made by merely consulting with peak bodies - government must go to the 'coal face' and consult directly with communities. Part of this assessment would include detailing what is already being provided to avoid an unnecessary duplication of services, to see who's doing what and who's doing it the best.

ALIA COMMENTS:

In particular in relation to questions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 we note that not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries.

See further comments in Appendix 1.

Question 5.2

Do you consider that Internet access is adequate for regional, rural and remote Indigenous communities?

If not, which areas need priority attention and how might access be reasonably provided?

NT:

The Northern Territory Library (NTL), in partnership with local Councils, provides public library services to isolated and remote communities in the Northern Territory of Australia. The Northern Territory (NT) is the most sparsely populated region of Australia, representing about 1% of the Australian population[1] in one-sixth of the total land area[2]. By almost every measure available, NT's population differs greatly from that of other Australian jurisdictions as nearly 30% of Territorians are Indigenous (Aboriginal). Two-thirds of the Territory's Indigenous population live in communities run by local Councils with poor infrastructure and staffing. Many communities are only accessible by air and/or four-wheel drive vehicle.

NTL's objectives are to:

- Develop communities through libraries;
- Connect people to information;
- Preserve NT documentary and cultural heritage; and
- Help people learn.

Internet access is either non-existent or only available via community service organisations such as community councils, libraries or schools; where access of the type is often restricted or inhibited in some way[3]. To put issues of the digital divide into further perspective, home ownership of personal computers in the Northern Territory's remote communities is extremely rare and only two years ago was as low as 4 per cent amongst the Aboriginal population outside of Darwin[4]. National figures also support this finding and show that 78.4 per cent of indigenous people in remote areas do not use the Internet[5].

NTL's Libraries and Knowledge Centre program, now operating in 13 remote Indigenous communities aims to improve Indigenous access to telecommunications services such as the internet. Each of these LKCs provides free internet access to library clients and is often a service offering free, relatively unhindered access to Internet applications. Many internet based applications are now becoming popular in remote Indigenous communities, including websites such as You Tube, Lime Wire and Flickr. Google Earth is also extremely popular

[1] Building our Population – Northern Territory Government, 2004.
[2] Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
[3] Radoll, 2006:12
[4] DCIS, 2005:11
[5] Radoll, 2006:15

amongst Indigenous users. With this in mind, demand for broadband services, that feature non-text based audio-visual content and favourable to low literacy users, is on the increase.

Furthermore, better broadband services could improve access to services such as online conferencing between communities, telemedicine and others applications commonly evoke when discussing Indigenous telecommunications needs. (Numerous academic and government reports have pointed towards the utilisation of video-conferencing technologies for example despite its high costs. High-capacity broadband could enable similar forms of communication – web chat and VOIP - via the web). Current telecommunications systems in remote indigenous communities are already being challenged by some of these new online tools and investment should be made in the delivery of high-capacity broadband.

QLD:
Internet access is still inadequate in many very remote Indigenous communities in Queensland. The technological solutions are still complex and the costs are prohibitively high for offering a public access service. There are also many failed examples of trying to offer this service on some kind of cost recovery basis (for example Cape York Digital Network). Paying for this service can also be a deterrent to first-time computer users.

A very positive aspect of the recently announced Backing Indigenous Ability (BIA) funding, is the grant of $10,000 a year for three years to help Councils and other local agencies to keep their public access Internet facilities up and running for a reasonable period of time. SLQ assisted some Councils to apply for BIA funding for new/additional computers for their Indigenous Knowledge Centres and the availability of funding for running costs helped overcome reluctance on the part of Councils to offer this service to their communities.

Internet services to very remote Indigenous communities still need subsidising, especially if one organisation or institution is trying to offer a public access service. Help is also required to manage and maintain these computers as there is typically no-one on the ground capable of doing this and very few technicians that are prepared to travel out to the remote communities. Although technical support training was offered as part of the Taking IT On project, it was very difficult to find suitable people in the communities to undertake this training. Many people had such a low level of knowledge of computers and Internet in general, that it was too big a step to take to then look at technical aspects. Many issues also arise to do with complex networking arrangements in the communities that connect Council computers and those in the public access Internet facilities.

WA:
No. Mobile satellite options need to be trialled and evaluated; there is potential for government departments to share the cost of delivering this technology so that indigenous communities have the same access to resources as clients in city locations. For example the mobile van that visits indigenous communities out from Derby (in the Kimberley) to deliver parenting skills and playgroups could be equipped with satellite to enable community members to access libraries, electronic databases such as Tumblebooks (a database of games and early literacy activities) which could be delivered in conjunction with parenting activities.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

No. Given that the communication traditions of indigenous communities is largely and oral tradition the adequacy or otherwise of Internet access is not the first question to be asked - rather how could Internet access assist meeting the needs of any given indigenous community or those persons, groups or agencies supporting their needs? The remoteness of many indigenous communities, a lack of needs assessment and application creates and raises many issues including education, support/maintenance, connectivity etc.

Question 5.3

Are telecommunications and Internet services adequately available and accessible for people with disabilities living in regional, rural and remote Australia?

SLAV:

There are programs available for students with disabilities which are provided at many schools. There are more services which could be provided via the public library. E.g. Large screens for visually impaired if the local public library had the funding. Public telephones in schools are not often easily accessible to someone in a wheelchair.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

No. Depending on the disability, adaptive third party technology and software may be required to support use (not always readily available or affordable). Publicly accessible telecommunications and Internet would also require an infrastructure accessibility audit to see how accessible current and planned service are or will be.

Many of the issues affecting those without a disability also affect this group e.g affordability, training, technology support etc

Question 6.1

Is access to IT training and technical and customer support adequate in regional, rural and remote areas? If not, how can it be improved?

NSW:

The State Library of NSW through its Skillsnet programme (previously funded by BHP Billiton & Networking the Nation) provides basic internet training to public libraries throughout rural NSW. In addition, Community Technology Centres in NSW provide technical and ICT training.

NSW.net provides IT technical advice and support for Libraries and Councils who use Internet services provided by NSW.net. Technical advice and support in regional, rural and remote libraries and councils is inconsistent in both the quality of service provided and its cost. NSW.net therefore includes in its service offering a technical advice and support

service to ensure optimum performance and manageability of client networks in addition to our connectivity services.

NT:

IT training and technical support is not adequate in many remote NT communities. For example the Pirlangimpi community on the Tiwi Islands was without its Satellite Internet connection for 6 months because there was no technical support and no one was available to follow this up. Designing appropriate forms of ICT training is essential to the success of any infrastructure and/or service delivery program in remote communities. The un-coordinated rollout of technologies, an ad-hoc policy environment and the lack of follow-up training and maintenance have meant that the sustainability of many ICT projects in remote communities is suspect. In 2005 NTL commissioned a comprehensive review of the readiness for the Library and Knowledge Centre model in the West MacDonnell's region of Central Australia. Recommendations were made for an ICT training initiative in remote community settings.

It should be noted that differences in ICT skills and conceptual understanding *do* exist across remote Indigenous communities and training initiatives workshops or awareness projects must be flexible enough to meet these differences in capability and knowledge.

ICT skills in remote areas of the Territory are at their highest amongst the younger generations, and a small number of these people are employed in Libraries and Knowledge centres as well as schools, art centres and community councils. Many Library employees for example have a sound grasp of software applications such as Microsoft Word, File Maker Pro and basic web-searching.

Given the lack of ICT training across the remote areas of the NT any form of computer or digital media training would need to introduce rudimentary I.T., media and telecommunications knowledge and relevant skills. A very basic level of computer and Internet awareness-raising would be the first step, leading on to project based learning designed to compliment community directions and capacities. In order for training to be effective it would need to take into consider:

a. Low level of ESL literacy (in the Indigenous context)

b. Lack of awareness around conceptual ICT knowledge

c. Lack of underpinning practical computer knowledge and skills

Each of the three areas outlined above should inform any approach to ICT training in remote communities. With that said, poor literacy, while certainly a major barrier to the take-up computer an internet related technologies in the remote indigenous context, is not a reason to stall the delivery of ICT services. Literacy and other educational objectives may in fact be improved via the use of engaging, computer-mediated, audio/visual tools made increasingly popular in the last few years by online, social-networking applications.

Additional computer training would certainly assist those already working in local organisations where word processing, file maintenance and web surfing could be used directly on the job. Training people in local community art centres, community councils, health clinics, schools and media organisations – or within a Library and Knowledge Centre -

would be the most appropriate learning environment for individual and community outcomes could be enhanced. Associated training, delivered via Libraries and Knowledge Centres could also attempt to:

a. *Train in the Community/Workplace*: An ICT training and support service could assist with the integration of computers into local organisations and workplaces. Carrying out training in the region would be much more effective than transporting people to Alice Springs or any other city/town. This would build up the relevancy and capability of existing local infrastructures such as the NTEETA computer laboratory

b. *Train Aboriginal People First*: Although the level of ICT knowledge amongst non-indigenous people in this region is not particularly high, computer administration is largely the domain of non-indigenous staff. Skills would be better retained in many remote communities by training local people who are much more likely to remain in these communities and thus increase the likelihood of skills retention.

The experience of many remote organisations is that people who are trained in remote communities often move locations and training is lost from the community or to the region. Staffing constraints and intense workloads within remote community organisations can make skills-transference, within day-day activity incredibly difficult, but ICT services could better support remote community organisations by:

1. Working Broadly Across the Region: Adopting a regionalised model of ICT support, increases effectiveness in an environment where mobility is an integral part of social/cultural life. Working across communities would certainly increase the opportunity of enabling regional ICT skill retention.

2. An Engaging and Inspiring Model: Project oriented training that creates activities or leads to the production of something of community value and relevance. The model of Library and Knowledge Centre operates according this philosophy, where a sense of ownership and pride in local culture can germinate.

3. Training Young People: It is this section of the population that has shown most interest and greater skill with ICT use. It is for these reasons that it young people transfer skills to coming generations. Senior elders in the community must also be made aware of the potential impacts new information resources may bring and be given effective power in decision-making processes.

4. Thinking Long-term: Real skills development – be it conceptual, practical or technical – can only occur if a support service is regular and long-term. Infrequent training sessions and short time-frame training visits have very limited results. Real outcomes for individuals and communities require long-term, project-based training initiatives.

QLD:

There is still inadequate ICT training available for people in very remote Queensland communities. The very high cost of sending people to these communities is a prohibitive factor. It is also necessary for trainers to remain in these communities for a reasonable period of time to build trust and break down barriers to the use of this new technology. There is also often preliminary work to be done in getting existing equipment into working order.

The *Taking IT On* project involved two trainers visiting each of the 24 communities for a period of 2 weeks, but it was only possible to do follow up visits in 7 of the communities. Every effort was made to connect to other organisations (such as Learning Networks Queensland) to promote their training, and make people aware of other opportunities, but these are few and far between and lack continuity. All of the communities would benefit from regular visits where hopefully the same trainers reconnect with people that have already received training.

The recently announced Backing Indigenous Ability funding also offers a training and skills development component, but this training is being outsourced to a training organisation that may not have a great deal of background in the specifics of each community or what training they have already received. Background in training first-time Indigenous computer-users and a flexible attitude is also necessary.

SLQ's Online Public Access in Libraries (OPAL) training project delivered 117 courses to 1,020 public library staff throughout Queensland in 2006-07. Held in Kingaroy, Longreach, Emerald, Townsville, Mt Isa, Pittsworth, Stanthorpe, Normanton, Clifton and Brisbane, these training courses focussed on developing the IT skills of public library staff.

Internet training courses covered both introductory and advanced searching, and specific courses included:

- Blogs, wikis and feeds;
- Communicating instantly with customers;
- Podcasts, vodcasts & MP3s;
- Multicultural Bridge Training;
- Using SLQ Web Conferencing Software;
- Family History Resources on the Internet;
- Train the Internet Trainer;
- Finding Information in the 21st Century;
- Newspaper and Current Event Resources on the Internet; and
- Emerging Technology

These courses continue to be well received with participants provided with workbooks containing information from the courses, websites and training exercises. Fortnightly newsletters containing resources of interest to library staff, information professionals and educators continue to be sent to all Queensland public libraries.

The popularity of these empowering courses highlights the importance the Internet plays in regional areas and the necessity of ensuring communities throughout Queensland have access to high speed broadband Internet to allow them take full advantage of online resources. Continued funding of state and public libraries to provide training in areas where commercial providers do not find it viable to operate is vital.

WA:
No, need more IT backup and support for day-to-day maintenance. Many of the remote libraries have no daily IT support, hardware failure requires service from Perth and staff have

little chance to build up skills in their local communities because of their remote geographic locations. Councils often recruit IT staff, they stay for 3-6 months and are then attracted to higher salaries in the mining industry. More collaboration across government departments may help.

ASLA:
No. Too few people, too little time, and too expensive to access, except through on-line centres (see 4.7). Even things like connecting to a new internet provider, installing a new modem, are fraught with variables beyond most users. It would be great to have some sort of volunteer service to help the lower socio-economic groups, disabled, and elderly (and govt support of such a group would be and incentive).

SLAV:
There is usually a wait for technical assistance. More training for IT staff and more people employed in the regional areas.

GENERAL COMMENTS:
No. This is largely available (at least in NSW) in an ad hoc manner via agencies such as NSW.net/Rural Link; public libraries; Business Enterprise Centres etc. Those living in remote areas have particular difficulty in accessing training, technical and customer support (add to this the frustration of dealing with call centres). Local government has difficulty in resourcing its own needs (e.g. Narrandera Council) with some smaller Councils unable to afford full-time support so what chance do individuals, groups, businesses, schools etc have! [IT Training and technical and customer support] can be improved by the development of a truly consultative national/state-wide strategic approach to telecommunications/Internet networking - especially of cross-government agencies, groups and services.

Question 6.2

Is adequate information available for telecommunications consumers? If not, how can it be improved?

NSW:
By making the information more accessible through the internet, flyers, newspapers, etc.

QLD:
As part of the *Taking IT On* project, SLQ has assisted some very remote Councils to provide public access Internet in their public libraries or Indigenous Knowledge Centres. It is clear that most Councils are struggling to make sense of their connectivity options, the plans on offer and the associated costs (which are considerable). Even though information is available on web sites and via publications, it is still very difficult for many people to understand. New options such as the Next G network are still in their infancy and yet to be proven. Independent face-to-face or telephone support is necessary to explain the options to many Council workers. There are many instances of Councils being over charged for the services, received and real difficulty in checking whether they are in fact receiving the contracted services in terms of speed and reliability of the Internet connection. It is our belief

that adequate information, in easy to understand language, is not available to adequately convey options.

ASLA:
Generally providers of these services and users are so disparate in their knowledge, even of the terminology, that it becomes a frustration trying to negotiate information. Maybe a service like those where mortgage loans are compared by an independent source would be useful. But then again the models and variables are so varied, and change weekly, that it would almost be impossible to maintain.

SLAV:
Telecommunication providers should be encouraged to write plain English contracts and brochures which would be easier for the consumer to compare services and fees.

GENERAL COMMENTS:
Barely adequate and depends on:

- user/community knowledge of information access points
- publicly accessible information services e.g for those without home access and/or those who require assistance to locate the most appropriate information
- marketing and labeling of information - appropriate to target groups
- information literacy levels of the end users
- format of the information - applicability to different groups e.g. CALD
- access mediums - using the right medium to reach the right group

Information for ICT consumers could be improved by:

- the use of basic English and other relevant community languages for written communication
- written information being backed up with education opportunities; Information in print needs to be backed up with telephone, email or face to face support (no overseas call centres)
- the resourcing of local and regional support groups
- better and increased funding of public libraries to ensure equitable access to all

Question 7.1

Bearing in mind the issues raised in this discussion paper, do you consider that people in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia currently have equitable access to telecommunications services?

No.

Question 7.2

Is there any other matter that you would like to raise and which you feel has not been covered by this Discussion Paper? If so, please outline the issue.

QLD:
SLQ has a vital role in providing equitable access to Broadband technology and ensuring that the public can make effective and sustainable use of this technology. However, the inadequacies of the current system and limited broadband access in regional and very remote communities is a major concern, as it risks perpetuating disadvantage. The provision of high quality, low cost or free access to the Internet for the general public is an important element of public library service provision, one that needs the resources spent on infrastructure, including ongoing maintenance, to ensure equity of service provision between regional and urban areas. We are supportive of a review of regional telecommunications.

Appendix 1
The issues of public libraries, quality resources accessible to all and government information services are raised in Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1

ALIA COMMENTS ABOUT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries

There are over 1700 public libraries in Australia (including state and national libraries). While the Commonwealth government only funds one library directly—the National Library of Australia, Australians are provided with information through cooperative relationships between public, state and national libraries. There are approximately 12 million registered users of these libraries, with approximately 100 million visits to libraries each year.

Libraries support education, community activities, children's reading, literacy, research and business. They are an essential part of the services supporting the development of the nation, particularly for rural and remote communities where there is limited access to information and community services. It is critical for libraries to continue to support all Australians by providing access to quality online resources. These resources must to be available to the homes of Australians, noting that currently there are limited broadband services accessible to rural Australians. By providing access to quality content, Australians can benefit from access to the Internet to support their activities. By purchasing these resources libraries can "fill the pipes" and support the National Reform Agenda Human Capital program, improving literacy and community outcomes.

Quality resources accessible to all

The Senate committee report into *Libraries in the online environment* (2003) highlighted the importance of developing government policy to improve access to information for Australians. Through Electronic Resources Australia (ERA), launched in May 2007, libraries of all types including national, state, public, university, TAFE, school and special libraries, can purchase quality online resources in health, news and current affairs and encyclopaedias at a competitive price. Australians, however, will only be able to have broad equitable access to these and other resources when a new funding model is implemented. In particular in relation to questions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 we note that not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries.

The Australian library community has worked together to identify the quality information resources which need to be available to all Australians, wherever these are located, and these form the collection available through Electronic resources Australia (http://era.nla.gov.au/). Electronic Resources Australia (ERA) is a direct result of the work done by a group of Australian library sectoral representatives who have been striving for national licensing since 2003.

This work has been done in response to recommendation 9 of the Senate's October 2003 report on *Libraries in the Online Environment*, and aims to provide Australians with easy access to a variety of trusted subscription information online sources via their library. Thirty six librarians from various library sectors across Australia met for a national forum to launch Electronic Resources Australia.

Unfortunately very few libraries in regional Australia can afford to purchase these resources, leading to inequities in access and reduced capability of those who are not based in our cities. Broadband is significant not just for the infrastructure it provides, but for the rich information resources which can be accessed. Investing $20 million in these quality information resources covering consumer health, Australian newspapers and journals would mean that those in regional Australia could benefit fully from the broadband services available in these areas.

Government information services

Increasingly public libraries are delivering government services, supporting access through internet terminals and support. The Library Council of New South Wales Report NSW *Public Libraries and eGovernment 2006* (http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pls/publications/pdf/egov.pdf) identifies the increasing use of libraries for this purpose, particularly regional libraries, While Broadband is an important mechanism for access to services (Q 4.8), public libraries need funding and support to ensure that those in regional can get access to the Internet and use the services.

The Australian Library and Information Association believes that public libraries have a critical role in providing an information service which will benefit all Australians. Libraries, particularly public libraries, have faced significant reductions in resources with the decrease of revenue during the drought and the pressure of growing costs. They are a vital community resources supporting developments in human capital that will complement work on broadband to truly provide a more successful, literate and informed nation.

Conclusion

We recommend that the Regional Telecommunications Review consider:

a. the importance of funding for quality information resources to support the health, economy, education and society of those in regional Australia (such as through Electronic Resources Australia);

b. the increasing dependence of those in regional Australia on public libraries for access to government information and consider means to ensure that library staff have training, information and terminals to support this role.

APPENDIX 2

Public library services in Queensland

The State Library of Queensland (SLQ) operates as a hub to a network of 334 library service points (including 15 Indigenous Knowledge Centres), in partnership with local government and Indigenous Community Councils. Queenslanders make some 18 million visits to public libraries each year, with 1.8 million people (48%) of Queenslanders registered as members.

Public libraries in Queensland have a vital role to play in bridging the digital divide by providing free or low cost Internet access in regional communities and ensuring that the public are encouraged and trained to make effective, sustainable use of this technology.

SLQ trains over 850 library staff in emerging technology courses each year increasing local skills that are passed on to the community. Public libraries link their communities with services that increase access to banking, health services, online learning and government services, as well as facilitating social connections with family and contacts in other locations.

Ensuring telecommunication standards are equitable across Queensland allows communities to maintain their economic and social base and helps them to remain strong and viable.

SLQ has recently undertaken extensive IT and technical support training in 24 very remote communities, primarily in the Torres Strait and Cape York, as part of its *Taking IT On* project (funded as part of the DCITA, IT Training and Technical Support Program). These communities include: Boulia, Bedourie, Normanton, Boigu Island, Duaun Island, Wujal Wujal, Erub (Darnley Island), Poruma (Coconut Island), Quilpie, Cunnamulla, Badu Island, Weipa, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Mabuiag Island, Lockhart River, Yarrabah, Seisia, Aurukun, Mornington Island, Injinoo, Cherbourg, New Mapoon and Coen.

The *Taking IT On* project made it possible for two SLQ trainers to visit each of the communities with Indigenous Knowledge Centres and other remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with libraries, for a period of 2 to 3 weeks, to offer introductory IT and technical support courses as well as training in library principles.

The majority of training sessions were offered in the library itself, to demonstrate the capability of the Indigenous Knowledge Centres and the kind of information and services that could be accessed. Over 850 people were trained as part of this project, receiving anywhere between 4 to 40 hours of training depending upon their availability and interest levels.

As well as offering training SLQ has also assisted some of these remote communities to either provide or improve the public access Internet available through their public libraries or Indigenous Knowledge Centres. Eleven communities have been assisted. An exciting trial of the Next G technology, involving six Torres Strait Islands, is also underway. Councils are being encouraged to offer this service free of charge to their community members.

SLQ has commented on the parts of the Regional Telecommunications Review that concern public access broadband, particularly in remote Indigenous communities in Queensland.

APPENDIX 3

QUEENSLAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES RUNNING DIAL-UP SERVICES

Summary:

- As at 30 June 2007, 67 service points were operating Public Access computers running dial-up connections
- A further 20 service points have no Internet connection – 3 are mobile services, 1 is a railway platform service that does not require an Internet connection, and the remainder are community or deposit collections (usually staffed by volunteers or open less than 6 hours per week and are not likely to have public access computer facilities available).
- 33 of the 67 sites (49%) have the option to upgrade to an ADSL connection (availability confirmed through Telstra BigPond verification)
- Redland Shire is an anomaly as there seems to be a lack of infrastructure for such large metropolitan areas.

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
IND	**Banana**		4				
		Mobile				**X**	No public access pcs
		Moura		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Theodore		**ADSL**	**X**		
IND	**Caboolture**		9				
		Beachmere			**X**		
		Donnybrook			**X**		
		Torbul			**X**		

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Library Express				**X**	Railway platfrom only - not counted in total
IND	**Cairns**		11				
		Aged Care facilities (X3)				**X (X3)**	No public access pcs
IND	**Gatton**		2				
		Mobile				**X**	No public access pcs
IND	**Gold Coast**		17				
		Mobile			**X**		
		SpringbrooK Internet Kiosk			**X**		
		Upper Coomera State College Collection			**X**		
		Cascade Gardens			**X**		
IND	**Livingstone**		7				
		Community Library Outlets (x3)			**X (X1)**		Cannot identify individual site / No public access pcs
IND	**Maroochy**		5				
		Mobile			**X**		
IND	**Redland**		9				

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Mobile			**X**		
		Macleay Island				**X**	Community Facility
		Amity Point		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Capalaba			**X**		
		Cleveland			**X**		
		Dunwich		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Point Lookout		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Russell Island		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Victoria Point			**X**		
IND	**Thuringowa**		2				
		Mobile				**X**	
IND							
CLS	**Balonne**		5				Based on June 2006 information
		Bollon				**X**	Open 4 hrs per week
		Dirranbandi			**X**		
		St George		**ADSL**	**X**		

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Thallon			**X**		
CLS	**Bendemere**		3				
		Jackson		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Wallumbilla		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Yuleba			**X**		
CLS	**Booringa**						
		Mitchell		**ADSL**	**X**		Based on June 2006 information
		Mungallala			**X**		
CLS	**Bulloo**		1				
		Thargomindah		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Cloncurry**		2				
		Cloncurry		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Dajarra			**X**		
CLS	**Cook**		5				
		Coen, Laura, Lakeland				**X (X3)**	Each Service point opened 4 hrs per week

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Bloomfield			**X**		
CLS	**Croydon**		1				No information
		Croydon		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Diamantina**		2				No information
		Bedourie			**X**		
		Birdsville			**X**		
CLS	**Douglas**		2				
		Mobile				**X**	No public access pcs
CLS	**Duaringa**		4				
		Bluff			**X**		
		Dingo			**X**		
		Duaringa			**X**		
CLS	**Gayndah**		1				No information
		Gayndah		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Herberton**		3				
		Mt Garnett		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Ilfracombe**		1				

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Ilfracombe			**X**		
CLS	**Isis**		2				
		Woodgate				**X**	Open 2hrs per week / No public access pcs
CLS	**Isisford**		1				
		Isisford		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Jericho**		2				
		Alpha		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Jericho			**X**		
CLS	**Kilkivan**		2				No information
		Goomeri		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Kilkivan		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Kolan**		1				No information
		Kolan			**X**		
CLS	**McKinlay**		2				
		McKinlay				**X**	No information - open 4hrs per week

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
CLS	**Millmerran**		2				
		Cecil Plains		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Millmerran		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Miriam Vale**		4				
		Agnes Water			**X**		No information
		Baffle Creek				**X**	Open less than 6hrs per week / No public access pcs
		Rosedale				**X**	Open less than 6hrs per week / No public access pcs
CLS	**Mornington Island**		1				
		Mornington Island		**ADSL**	**X**		No information
CLS	**Mount Morgan**		1				Based on June 2006 information
		Mount Morgan		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Murweh**		4				No information
		Augathella		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Charleville		**ADSL**	**X**		

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Morven		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Nebine				**X**	
CLS	**Nanango**		3				
		Maidenwell				**X**	
CLS	**Paroo**		3				No information
		Wyandra			**X**		
		Yowah			**X**		
CLS	**Pittsworth**		1				
		Pittsworth			**X**		
CLS	**Rosalie**		4				Based on June 2006 information
		Mobile			**X**		No public access pcs
		Goombungee		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Quinalow			**X**		
		Yarraman		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Tara**		3				No information
		Meandarra		**ADSL**	**X**		

Lib Type	Local Government	Library Name:	Total Service - includes depots and mobiles	Broadband service availability	Internet Connection - Dial Up	No Internet Connection	Comments
		Moonie			**X**		
		Tara		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Taroom**		2				
		Taroom		**ADSL**	**X**		
		Wandoan		**ADSL**	**X**		
CLS	**Wondai**		3				
		Durong				**X**	Open 3hrs per week / No public access pcs
		Proston			**X**		
CLS	**Yarrabah**		1				
		Yarrabah		**ADSL**	**X**		No information
				33	**67**	**20**	