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1. Foreword

This Stage 2 and final report concludes the landmark review by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries (MAC) and provides final recommendations to the Minister for Local Government. This two-year review of public libraries has been the most extensive undertaken in Victoria. The MAC has undertaken two rounds of consultation.

During the first round, I personally met with representatives from 51 councils and held 12 public consultation sessions that were attended by more than 400 people. As part of Stage 2, I met individually with every library service in Victoria. In each stage submissions were gathered from both the sector and the public. Most library services and councils took the opportunity to lodge a submission for MAC’s consideration. The response from the public was overwhelming with over 3300 submissions received throughout the two rounds.

The MAC began this review with no predetermined outcome, only a desire to see that libraries in Victoria continue to grow and prosper into the future. Throughout the review, I have heard first-hand of the challenges that libraries face. Technological advances and the growing use of ebooks bring both great opportunities and great challenges for public libraries, including the need to provide materials in a wider range of formats than ever. The growth of alternative sources of information and entertainment is starting to affect library membership, which has not only ceased to grow but has actually declined in some areas. Libraries must adopt new strategies to remain relevant.

Work undertaken by libraries is highly valued by the community and delivered efficiently and effectively by passionate and committed staff. Libraries are a prized and important community asset that promote life-long learning, literacy and information discovery. The Stage 1 Report proposed a number of statewide initiatives that were collectively termed the Victorian Library. The concept brings libraries together to achieve improved outcomes for the community and further develop the partnership between the Victorian and local governments. As I noted above, the MAC started this review with no preconceptions. The Victorian Library concept developed from sector and community input during Stage 1, and closely reflects the views expressed to the MAC.

In Stage 2, the concept was tested with library services, councils and the community. The feedback received has led to a fine-tuning of the concept and further development of the proposal. This report details a refined Victorian Library concept and recommends the initiatives the MAC believes should be implemented.

It is important to note that the MAC is an advisory group. It was formed by the Minister for Local Government to provide advice to her on matters that affect public libraries. As a result, the recommendations contained in this report are recommendations to the Minister. The intention of this report, and the recommendations contained herein, is not to commit local governments to the Victorian Library initiative but to provide advice to the Minister on how the Victorian Government may best support libraries into the future.
The Victorian Library will provide the community with enhanced services, better engagement and improved resources. With the implementation of the Victorian Library, the continued success of Victorian libraries will be assured now and into the future. This is why the MAC has recommended the concept to the Minister for her consideration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow MAC members for their hard work and dedication. In particular, I would like to thank my Parliamentary colleagues Joanne Duncan MP and Peter Crisp MP for their support and advice throughout the two years of the review. Joanne Duncan, as Deputy Chair, has devoted significant energy to the consultation process and has contributed greatly to the outcomes. I would also like to thank the library and local government sectors for embracing this review and engaging with it so positively throughout. It has been a pleasure to lead the review. I look forward to the development of a vibrant, effective and cohesive network, ensuring the continued success of our highly valued Victorian public libraries for many years to come.

David Morris MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government
Chair, Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries
2. Executive Summary

Overview

Victoria’s public libraries are operated by local councils, who provide the majority of funding. The Victorian Government provides additional operational funding and grants through the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI).

Public libraries need to continually adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of their local communities. As new technologies emerge, or changes in society occur, public libraries must alter their practices to ensure services remain relevant and valued.

Despite a slight decrease in loans and membership, there has been an increase in the use of other relatively new services developed by public libraries to respond to changing community needs. This is particularly evident in the increased provision of, and community use of, technology in the library. The changes in public library usage reflect new and emerging trends in the wider community.

The review

The Victorian Government is committed to providing support to local government to ensure public libraries remain a vibrant, modern and effective resource for all Victorians. This commitment has been consolidated through the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program, the Premiers’ Reading Challenge Book Fund and the Public Libraries Funding Program.

The Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC) was tasked with comprehensively reviewing the role of Victorian public libraries, including services and funding arrangements. The MAC has committed to the development of a future-focused and forward-thinking strategic plan for Victorian public libraries.

The review has been conducted in two stages over a two-year period. The first stage started in January 2012 and assessed the current use of public libraries in Victoria and their future needs.

Stage 1 illustrated and highlighted the emerging trends and potential challenges facing Victorian libraries. Through this, it became clear that individual library services are adapting to tomorrow’s library landscape at varying rates and levels.

The MAC concluded that the public library sector needs to increase collaboration and take a unified, strategic approach to effectively adapt and remain a relevant community asset in a globalised, digital world.
The MAC believes all Victorians should have access to high-quality public library services, regardless of where they live. As a result, the MAC developed a proposed approach for tomorrow’s library in Victoria – the *Victorian Library*.

The second stage of the Review of Victorian Public Libraries commenced in January 2013 to assess the *Victorian Library* concept and public library funding. As with Stage 1, an extensive consultation process was undertaken with both the library sector and the community.

Two key reports have been produced as a part of Stage 2 and are provided in full in Appendices 1 and 2. The Submissions and Consultation Report provides a general overview of the sector consultation and submission process and a summary of the feedback, key comments and issues received. The *Victorian Library* Community Comments Report outlines the community consultation process and provides an overview of the feedback received.

These reports informed the MAC recommendations contained herein.

**Problem definition**

Three main problems were identified that affect the ability of public libraries to continue to meet the needs of their local communities.

- Inequitable access to educational and recreational information potentially marginalises members of the community

- Libraries are struggling to keep pace with users’ expectations, threatening their continued presence as a valued public space

- Library services have failed to standardise approaches leading to higher levels of duplicated efforts and wastage.

Libraries are moving from being largely transaction-oriented resource borrowing places towards being more activity-focused, engaging and vibrant community spaces. Ebooks and eresources are becoming more popular and people are increasingly using electronic media to access information and content.

These challenges are not particular to Victoria’s public libraries; they are shared by libraries worldwide. The vastly increased portability of information enabled by digital formats and delivery media changes the relationship between the traditional role of the physical library itself and the emerging role of the digital library.

Helping library services address these issues has benefits beyond improved library services. Meeting the challenges public libraries face is essential to maintaining a vibrant and relevant library network that supports the community in learning and leisure and provides a welcoming environment that encourages participation. The *Victorian Library* is the framework for meeting these challenges, now and in the future.
How the Victorian Library will achieve these improvements

**Improved digital content and delivery across the network**
Digital content is the way of the future. As the community embraces digital content, it is vital that libraries provide informative, entertaining and interesting digital material that can be easily accessed by Victorians.

**Improved quality and accessibility of the collection**
The main reason people visit a library is to borrow a book. A quality collection in good condition that appeals to the community will ensure that libraries remain an invaluable public facility.

**Improved and streamlined backroom processes**
Utilising library staff where they are of most value – providing assistance and advice to customers – is important. Improving work practices will also generate efficiencies that can be reinvested into the library service.

**An integrated statewide library service**
When libraries collaborate, all Victorians benefit. A fully integrated statewide service will potentially provide economies of scale in the delivery of services and improve the quality of service to the community.

How improved library services benefit our communities

**More active and inclusive communities**
When people are involved in communities, they become better and more welcoming places to live. Libraries provide a welcoming space that encourages and enables all community members to participate in a range of activities and connect with others.

**Enables Victorians to make life decisions based on reliable and impartial information**
Important decisions need to be made with all the available information. Libraries are a rich resource of free information and librarians are experts in linking people with reliable unbiased information.

**Fosters a sense of cultural identity and belonging**
Victoria is a diverse state of people from all over the world. It is important that people retain a sense of their cultural identity and enjoy the rich Victorian culture. A sense of belonging improves people’s wellbeing. Libraries create a space for people to access information, engage with their community and belong.

**More efficient and effective service delivery**
The state and local governments invest approximately $200 million per year in Victoria’s public libraries. Efficient investment is integral to ensuring the community gains the maximum benefit from available funding.
The Victorian Library

The Victorian Library is a working title of the concept that ensures the ongoing viability and relevance of public libraries. It recognises that the digital shift fundamentally changes how people think of libraries and their role in local communities. It emphasises the collaboration that is needed to ensure libraries deliver best value for money and positive community outcomes. It positions the sector to be responsive and successful into the future.

New issues and challenges will arise relating to service delivery, processes and back-of-house tasks that will require solutions. The Victorian Library will enable the early identification of these emerging issues and challenges at a statewide level and will ensure the sector is positioned to respond quickly and effectively.

The Victorian Library consists of a number of interrelated statewide initiatives that will be implemented collaboratively to deliver efficiencies, consistency and opportunities to Victorian public libraries. The recommended statewide initiatives will remove the back-of-house, process-driven tasks that are replicated at every public library service. They will provide efficiencies in work practices and economies of scale by streamlining systems and procedures across all library services and will remove the burden of mandatory compliance with legislative requirements and procurement regulations.

By implementing the statewide initiatives, the sector will be better placed to respond quickly to challenges, changing technology and demand.

Importantly, undertaking initiatives at a statewide level will not mean public library services give up autonomy or control of their service. The statewide initiatives will enable public libraries to focus on what they do best – responding to the unique needs of their communities and developing new and innovative ways to create informed, connected communities.

Six statewide initiatives are proposed:

- statewide single library card
- statewide movement of collection and interlibrary loans
- statewide Radio-frequency-identification RFID tagging of collection
- statewide Library Management System (LMS)
- statewide platform for digital material
- statewide LOTE collection.

Partnership agreement

Victorian library services are delivered by the state and local governments in partnership. Regardless of the implementation of the Victorian Library, a formal agreement between state and local governments should be established outlining the responsibilities and funding commitment of each level of government.
Implementation

The Victorian Library comprises a major structural and systemic change for public libraries.

A high-level illustration of the proposed staged implementation plan for the Victorian Library has been developed, however a more detailed staged implementation plan will be required.

Future initiatives

A number of additional possible initiatives were identified in the Stage 1 Report and the Stage 2 Discussion Paper. These have not been included in the initial set of recommendations for various reasons. However, this does not mean they will not be implemented, but that the initiatives previously mentioned are a greater priority. They are:

- Procurement
- Information and communication
- Other future projects and initiatives.

MAC recommendations

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries (MAC) believes the Victorian Library will improve library services to all Victorians and provide benefits to local councils, regional library corporations and the Victorian Government.

The MAC commends the initiatives outlined in this report and recommends them to the Minister for Local Government for implementation.

The Living Libraries Infrastructure Program and the Premiers’ Reading Challenge Book Fund are both vital programs for the continued development and provision of library services in Victoria. The MAC encourages the Victorian Government to continue to fund these important programs.
3. Tomorrow’s Library Review

3.1 Context

3.2 The Review
3.1 Context

“The Victorian Library approach is a commendable vision and one that is supported in principle. All Victorians should have access to excellent public library services irrespective of their socioeconomic background and where they live.”

Greater Geelong City Council

“This concept is laudable – it promotes access and equity for all Victorians.”

Knox City Council

“Maroondah City Council is particularly interested in libraries as centres for community, aligned with Third Place concepts – offering innovation and advanced technology; a mixture of business, learning and cultural experiences; a hub of knowledge and education.”

Maroondah City Council

“Public libraries provide a safe public space where everyone is welcome and can participate. They contribute to building a fairer society by providing free services and treating everyone in the same way.”

Victorian Local Governance Association

Background

Victoria’s public libraries are operated by local councils, who provide the majority of funding. The Victorian Government provides additional operational funding and grants through the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI).

In Victoria, there are 38 single-council library services and 12 regional library corporations (comprising two or more councils), delivering services from 180 static branches across the state. In addition, 28 mobile libraries operate across Victoria stopping at 379 sites. Vision Australia also provides a library service for vision impaired Victorians.

There are around 1.1 million active library members in Victoria, including just over 300,000 new members who joined during 2011–12.

Victorian public libraries opened their doors for almost 12,000 hours per week and were visited more than 27 million times last financial year. Metropolitan public libraries serve an average of 34,500 people per year compared with 10,200 people served in non-metropolitan public libraries.

More than 51 million loans occurred in 2011–12 from Victorian public library collections, which comprise around 9.1 million items including print, audio-visual and electronic formats. This is equivalent to around 1.6 collection items per capita. Of these items, just over 500,000 are in languages other than English (LOTE).
More than half a million items were borrowed via interlibrary loans and almost 300,000 ebooks were downloaded, a significant jump from just over 19,000 downloaded the previous year. Just over 2 million searches were conducted on electronic databases and around 900,000 elearning sessions took place.

There are 2218 public PC internet terminals in Victorian public libraries (2011–12), 182 more than were available in 2010–11, and these were booked over 3 million times and used for more than 2 million hours. In addition, around 1.3 million wireless sessions took place, more than double the 515,000 sessions that took place in 2010–11.

Victorian public libraries deliver a diverse range of programs including homework clubs, internet training, iPad training and home library services. Story Time is the most universally delivered program, offered by the majority of public library services. Around 1.7 million individuals attended programs in Victorian public libraries last financial year and volunteers assisted in the delivery of more than 900 programs. In total, more than 120,000 voluntary hours were contributed to public libraries in Victoria in 2011–12.

Public libraries need to continually adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of their local communities. As new technologies emerge, or changes in society occur, public libraries must alter their practices to ensure services remain relevant and valued.

Over the past 10 years, a number of statistics and key indicators point to a change in the way the community is using public libraries.

Loans per capita have decreased from 9.5 to 8.82, which coincides with a fall in visits to public library branches over the same period from 5.11 visits per capita to 4.82 visits per capita.

This change in usage is also reflected in a decrease in public library membership in Victoria, from more than 50 per cent of the population to approximately 44 per cent in 2011–12. Around 1.1 million are active members – those who borrowed an item, used electronic resources or used public library computers or Wi-Fi services during the year.

Despite a slight decrease in loans and membership, there has been an increase in the use of other relatively new services developed by public libraries to respond to changing community needs. This is particularly evident in the increased provision of, and community use of, technology in the library.

The changes in public library usage reflect new and emerging trends in the wider community.

Technology improvements, increased affordability of ereaders and high-speed broadband are rapidly increasing the number of ebooks purchased each year in Australia.

According to the report *Cover to cover: a market analysis of the Australian book industry*, commissioned by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and prepared by PwC, approximately $35 million worth of ebooks were purchased in Australia in 2010. This accounted for 1.5 per cent of the total value of book sales. The growth in this market is high, with estimates that in 2014 ebook sales will have a total value of at least $150 million and possibly up to $700 million.

This is comparable to international trends, with ebook sales in the United States
expected to increase from $2.6 billion in 2010 to $4.8 billion in 2014. In the United Kingdom, ebook sales are expected to increase from $82 million to $500 million over the same period. Driving this demand has been the rapid uptake of smart phones, ereaders and tablet computers. It is estimated that more than 12 million Australians use smart phones, according to research conducted by Telsyte, with that number expected to grow to approximately 20 million by 2016.

Telsyte estimates that the Australian media tablet market grew by 2.4 million units in 2012, with more than 5 million people in Australia now using tablets. It is estimated that this number will grow by 50 per cent in 2013 and be comparable to today’s smartphone user base by 2017.
3.2 The Review

“The opportunity for all Victorians to have access to all library resources across the state and for all Victorians to have access to the same standard of library services should be pursued.”

**High Country Library Corporation**

“...the current review process seems a timely opportunity, both to build on a shared understanding of the crucial role libraries play in supporting and strengthening communities; as well as offering something of a watershed moment to clearly articulate the relationship between the public library sector/local government and the State Government for the long-term benefit of all Victorians.”

**Port Phillip City Council**

“As a unique public library service catering to the needs of all Victorians with a print disability, Vision Australia (VA) supports the principles of seamless service to all Victorians and recognises the efforts of the Victorian Government to create a library service of excellence.”

**Vision Australia Information Services**

*Introduction*

The Victorian Government is committed to providing support to local government to ensure public libraries remain a vibrant, modern and effective resource for all Victorians. This commitment has been consolidated through the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program, the Premiers’ Reading Challenge Book Fund and the Public Libraries Funding Program.

The Minister for Local Government, The Honourable Jeanette Powell MP, re-established the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries (MAC) on 4 August 2011 and, for the first time, made it a bipartisan committee.

The MAC was tasked with comprehensively reviewing the role of Victorian public libraries, including services and funding arrangements. The MAC has committed to the development of a future-focused and forward-thinking strategic plan for Victorian public libraries.
The MAC is chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, Mr David Morris MP.

The MAC comprises:

- a representative of the Liberal Party who is a member of Parliament and will be the Chair
- a representative of the Labor Party who is a member of Parliament and the Deputy Chair
- a representative of the National Party who is a member of Parliament
- a representative of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) who is an elected official
- a representative of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) who is an elected official
- a representative of Local Government Professionals (LGPro)
- two representatives of the Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN), one of whom is a representative of a library that is a member of the Swift Library Consortium
- the State Librarian/CEO of the State Library of Victoria
- a representative of the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI)
- a representative of a metropolitan single-council library service
- a representative of a metropolitan regional library service
- a representative of a regional/rural single-council library service
- a representative of a regional/rural regional library service
- an Executive Officer to the MAC from Local Government Victoria (DTPLI).
MAC Members

David Morris MP (Chair)
Member for Mornington
Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government

Joanne Duncan MP
(Deputy Chair)
Member for Macedon

Peter Crisp MP
Member for Mildura

John Murrell
West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation CEO
Public Libraries Victoria Network representative

Cr David Clark
Pyrenees Shire Councillor

Christine Mackenzie
Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service CEO
Public Libraries Victoria Network representative

Cr Rod Fyffe
City of Greater Bendigo Councillor
Municipal Association of Victoria representative

Sue Roberts
State Library of Victoria CEO

Dennis Hovenden
Frankston City Council CEO
LGPro representative

John Binnie
City of Greater Dandenong CEO

As at November 2013
Cr Sharon Ellis
Whitehorse City Councillor

Cr Lambros Tapinos
Moreland City Councillor
Victorian Local Governance Association representative

Patti Manolis
Geelong Regional Library Corporation CEO

Colin Morrison
Director, Governance and Funding Programs, Local Government Victoria
DTPLI representative

Dan Harper
MAC Executive Officer, Local Government Victoria
DTPLI representative
Review process

The review has been conducted in two stages over a two-year period. The first stage started in January 2012 and assessed the current use of public libraries in Victoria and their future needs.

Stage 1

Stage 1 included an extensive consultation with local government, the public library sector and the community to ensure their contribution to shaping the future of public libraries in Victoria.

Two subsequent key reports were produced. The Consultation Report is a summary of the consultation undertaken by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the MAC with councils, regional library corporations and the public. The Submissions and Contributions Report provides a general overview of the submission process and a summary of the key issues raised in the full submissions (primarily from councils, regional library corporations and peak bodies) and the community contributions (primarily from members of the public).

Three additional reports were produced during Stage 1. They were:

- *Today’s Library Report* – outlining the current state of Victorian public library services
- *Future Trends Public Libraries Report* – providing the future directions and trends that will influence, challenge and provide opportunities for public library services
- *Opportunities – Collaboration and Procurement Report* – exploring potential opportunities for the sector, as identified from the submissions and consultations, to work more collaboratively.

The MAC considered the comprehensive information gathered during Stage 1 of the review, particularly the themes, issues and trends that were identified during the extensive consultation with local government, the public library sector and the community.

Stage 1 illustrated and highlighted the emerging trends and potential challenges facing Victorian libraries. Through this, it became clear that individual library services are adapting to tomorrow’s library landscape at varying rates and levels.

The MAC concluded that the public library sector needs to increase collaboration and take a unified, strategic approach to effectively adapt and remain a relevant community asset in a globalised, digital world.

The MAC believes all Victorians should have access to high-quality public library services, regardless of where they live.

As a result, the MAC developed a proposed approach for tomorrow’s library in Victoria – the *Victorian Library*. 
The MAC envisioned the *Victorian Library* would be a seamless network of public library services that will enable access to information, resources and services to all Victorians, either in person or online and in a variety of formats, regardless of where they live, work, study or relax.

To achieve the *Victorian Library*, the implementation of a number of interrelated initiatives would be required at either a statewide or local level. A number of factors were assessed by the MAC to determine if a statewide approach would deliver improved outcomes to the community and public library services, or if the most effective outcomes would be achieved by these initiatives remaining a local responsibility.

Local initiatives require local decision making to respond to local community needs and priorities and will differ from community to community. Local initiatives will require local knowledge and interaction and should remain a local responsibility. Statewide initiatives are designed to take responsibility for tasks that are replicated across the state, thereby removing the burden of process-driven and back-of-house duties and delivering increased value for money and improved services.


**Stage 2**

The second stage of the Review of *Victorian Public Libraries* commenced in January 2013 to assess the *Victorian Library* concept and public library funding. As with Stage 1, an extensive consultation process was undertaken with both the library sector and the community.

A discussion paper was developed for local councils, regional library corporations, peak bodies and other key stakeholders to respond to during the Stage 2 consultation period. The discussion paper was divided into two parts: Part One considered the *Victorian Library* concept and its components; Part Two considered public library funding.

The MAC considered the findings and information on the first section, the *Victorian Library* concept. The feedback received regarding public library funding will be considered separately by the Victorian Government.

A separate community consultation was also undertaken, involving a survey on the proposed initiatives of the *Victorian Library* concept.

Two key reports have been produced as a part of Stage 2 and are provided in full in Appendices 1 and 2. The Submissions and Consultation Report provides a general overview of the sector consultation and submission process and a summary of the feedback, key comments and issues received. The *Victorian Library* Community Comments Report outlines the community consultation process and provides an overview of the feedback received.

These reports informed the MAC recommendations contained herein.
4. Submissions and Consultations

4.1 Sector comments
4.2 Community comments
4.1 Sector comments

Access to a statewide collection through a common LMS, a single discovery layer, improved courier services and the inter-library loan service is invaluable to East Gippsland.”

**East Gippsland Shire Council**

“The Victorian Library concept communicates an aspirational and forward-thinking strategic vision for Victoria’s public libraries.”

**Hume City Council**

“Hobsons Bay City Council supports the concept of all Victorians being able to easily access high quality library services.”

**Hobsons Bay City Council**

“…the MAV and councils welcome the commitment of the state to work with local government to build a high-quality public library service for the 21st century which meets the needs of the community.”

**The Municipal Association of Victoria**

In February 2013 the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries (MAC) released a discussion paper for local councils, regional library corporations, peak bodies and other key stakeholders to respond to. Sixty-three submissions were received in total, including 54 on the online template and nine provided responses directly to the MAC.

**Stage 2 Respondents**

- Ararat Rural City Council
- Ballarat City Council
- Bayside City Council
- Boroondara City Council
- Brimbank City Council
- Campaspe Shire Council
- Casey Cardinia Library Corporation
- Catalyst IT Australia Pty Ltd
- CAVAL Ltd
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Colac Otway Shire Council
- Corangamite Regional Library Corporation
- Darebin City Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
- Frankston City Council
- Gannawarra Shire Council
Geelong Regional Library Corporation
Glenelg Shire Council
Golden Plains Shire Council
Goldfields Library Corporation
Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation
Greater Dandenong City Council
Greater Geelong City Council
Hepburn Shire Council
High Country Library Corporation
Hobsons Bay City Council
Hume City Council
Insight Informatics
Kingston City Council
Knox City Council
Latrobe City Council
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Maribyrnong City Council
Maroondah City Council
Mildura Rural City Council
Mitchell Shire Council
Monash City Council
Moonee Valley City Council
Mooarbool Shire Council
Moreland City Council
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Moyne Shire Council
Municipal Association of Victoria
Murrindindi Shire Council
Port Phillip City Council
Public Libraries Victoria Network
Pyrenees Shire Council
Southern Grampians Shire Council
Swan Hill Rural City Council
Swift Library Consortium
Victorian Local Governance Association
Vision Australia Information Library Service
Warrnambool City Council
Wellington Shire Council
West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation
Whitehorse Manningham Regional Library Corporation
Wimmera Regional Library Corporation
Wyndham City Council
Yarra City Council
Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service
Yarra Ranges Shire Council
The discussion paper was divided into two parts. Part One outlined the features of the Victorian Library concept and Part Two considered public library funding.

The MAC considered the findings and information on the first section, The Victorian Library concept. The feedback received regarding public library funding will be considered separately.

In the discussion paper, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the Victorian Library and the statewide initiatives articulated in the Stage 1 Report.

The initiatives were grouped into six different categories:
- enabling systems
- collections and accessibility
- collection management
- Victorian Library membership
- procurement
- information and communication.

For each category, respondents were asked to rate their support from 1-5, with 5 indicating the highest support. Respondents were asked to score based on the following:
- Importance of the Victorian Library concept to public library services
- Benefit of Victorian Library statewide initiatives to their organisation.

Room was provided at the end of each category for respondents to provide comments.

Respondents were also asked to rate their support for the Victorian Library concept overall from 1-5 and could provide comments.

In some instances, responses were not provided to all questions. As such, total responses to particular questions vary.

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and the Public Library Victoria Network (PLVN) also provided feedback on the Victorian Library concept. The peak bodies submitted responses outside the discussion paper format which was incompatible for their purposes.

Each peak body indicated support for the Victorian Library concept and its aim of improving community access to libraries and their services. There were, however, concerns about implementation.

The PLVN gave in principle support on the basis that all developments represent best practice, both nationally and internationally, and suggested developing a partnership agreement to ensure optimum advantage for all participants.

The VLGA similarly supported a formal partnership, as well as ongoing consultation with stakeholders.

The MAV indicated support for the Victorian Library by councils and regional libraries, but also highlighted the importance of state funding. There was strong support for a partnership between councils and the Victorian Government in building public library services for the 21st century that meet the needs of local communities.
Enabling systems

“We support having a Victorian Library app as it adds value and brings libraries into the future with how our communities now use electronic devices.”

**Mildura Rural City Council**

“Monash supports a Victorian Library app which would provide access to library resources on mobile devices.”

**Monash City Council**

“Given the wide variety of formats and resources available though public libraries, a one-stop shop discovery layer would benefit the end user where they could locate all resources available in public libraries.”

**Greater Dandenong City Council**

“In the ideal world systems improvement leads to increased efficiency.”

**Macedon Ranges Shire Council**

“Yarra City Council believes that some of the benefits arising from a single state-wide Library Management System, single discovery layer and common cataloguing and processing practices would include reduced costs for resources and staffing efficiencies from these arrangements.”

**Yarra City Council**

Respondents were asked to rate the following initiatives from 1-5:

- establishing a single library management system (LMS)
- developing a single discovery layer and integrated content management system
- developing a *Victorian Library* app
- establishing common processing and cataloguing practices.

Respondents were largely supportive of the initiatives. Establishing a single LMS and developing a single discovery layer and integrated content management system both received an average of 4.4 for importance. Developing a *Victorian Library* app and establishing common processing and cataloguing practices received an average score of 4.3.
The benefit of the initiatives to local library services was similarly rated highly. Establishing a single LMS received an average score of 3.9 and developing a single discovery layer and integrated content management system scored an average of 4.2. Developing a Victorian Library app received an average score of 4, as did establishing common processing and cataloguing practices.

Comments provided support the high scores. Respondents indicated strong support for a common LMS and discovery layer. Some saw this as a critical component of the Victorian Library concept that needs to be set up before the other initiatives. A single discovery layer was also seen as important, but must be tailored to allow for local identity.

Many library services already have a shared LMS under the Swift Consortium. Respondents highlighted positive aspects of Swift that can be adopted and drawbacks that can be avoided.

The development of a Victorian Library app for various platforms would support increased opportunities for customers to engage with library services. Introducing common approaches would improve customer access to materials.

Respondents also indicated the importance of allowing local services to tailor standards according to their needs. The cost of establishing the enabling systems needs to be considered to ensure value for money.

Additional ideas and initiatives were suggested for consideration with the enabling systems. A minority of respondents expressed concerns regarding the enabling systems section and suggested alternative approaches.

Collections and accessibility

“A statewide approach on a new digital platform would assist libraries such as ours to offer a new service to the public.”

West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation

“We believe that Statewide inter library loans are essential for this concept to be successful and should be a seamless system for borrowers to use.”

Ararat Rural City Council

 “[a statewide collection] allows Library services particularly Country services with less access to and provision for Collections to receive benefits of Statewide Local Government investment across the State.”

Kingston City Council

“Making public library collections accessible statewide is also supported.”

Golden Plains Shire Council
Respondents were asked to rate the importance and benefit of the following features from 1-5:

- increased accessibility to a quality statewide collection developed and owned by local government
- improved access to the statewide interlibrary loan service
- expanding the statewide courier system to more efficiently deliver interlibrary loan requests
- establishing a statewide languages other than English (LOTE) collection
- development of a common digital platform for accessing ebooks and eresources and digitised local history.

There was widespread support for improving access to the collection and resources of libraries and an improved interlibrary loan system. Some respondents felt it important that there be restrictions to limit the number of interlibrary loans and ensure appropriate investment by all participating library services is maintained.

It was recognised that improvements to the courier services would be needed to enable a statewide collection and enhanced interlibrary loan accessibility.

Increased accessibility to a quality statewide collection developed and owned by local government and improved access to the statewide interlibrary loan service both scored 4.4 on average for importance. Expanding the statewide courier system for more efficient delivery of interlibrary loan requests was rated an average of 4.5.

Benefit of the initiatives to local library services was also rated highly. Increased accessibility to a quality statewide collection, developed and owned by local government, received an average score of 3.8. Improved access to the statewide interlibrary loan service received 4 on average, and expanding the statewide courier system for more efficient delivery of interlibrary loans rated an average score of 4.1.

A statewide LOTE collection was widely supported, particularly for libraries that service small culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Its importance was rated 4.6 on average and for benefit to local services it received an average score of 3.9.

A common digital platform was also supported by the majority of respondents and is seen as a critical component of the library of the future. It rated 4.7 on average for importance and 4.6 for benefit to local services.

Some respondents expressed concern about collections and accessibility initiatives, particularly how they may affect their own collection.
Collection management

“One of the hidden, yet most powerful benefits of RFID is as a catalyst for change in Library processes, task, culture and philosophy.”

**Brimbank City Council**

“The Statewide tagging of library items is an essential component to ensure that the movement of materials is as efficient as possible.”

**Ballarat City Council**

“We believe that the introduction of RFID technology is the single biggest factor to how we deliver library services in the future and essential in making our libraries shift from lending to learning services.”

**Southern Grampians Shire Council**

Respondents were asked to rate importance and benefit of installing radio-frequency identification (RFID) readers at public library services and tagging all items in the statewide collection from 1-5.

Most respondents supported the implementation of RFID and it is recognised by the sector as a priority for enabling libraries to provide better services to the community.

The average score for the importance of RFID to public library services was 4.5. As a number of libraries have already implemented RFID, the benefit to library services was rated 3.6 on average.

Some respondents expressed concerns regarding the initiative and wanted assurance that it will be compatible with existing systems and future plans for the library service.

A Victorian Library membership

“We fully support the implementation of one library card and consider this to be crucial in making the Victorian Library concept a reality.”

**Moorabool Shire Council**

“It would be extremely beneficial for people to have one card that can be used at any library, instead of having to join up at individual library services.”

**Campaspe Shire Council**

“I love it. The easier it is for people to access the library, the more people will make full use of the facilities at the library.”

**Community contribution**
Respondents were asked to rate the importance and benefit of developing one library card, with local branding, from 1-5.

A statewide library membership was supported by most respondents, with an average score of 4.2 for importance to public library services.

A number of respondents wanted more information on how fee collection, loan periods and policies would be affected by the introduction of a single card. Nonetheless, the benefit of a single membership to local services was rated 4 on average by respondents.

A minority of respondents expressed concerns regarding a single library card or did not support the initiative.

**Procurement**

“Based on our experience, we strongly support the MAC proposal to adopt a centralised supplier-aided approach to the procurement of resources, for both English language and LOTE print and media collections. Significant cost benefits can be achieved through this approach when compared to the existing piecemeal and fragmented practices in place in many Victorian public libraries.”

**CAVAL Ltd**

“Best value, centralised procurement that has the capacity to provide resources for unique community demographics and characteristics is supported by City of Boroondara.”

**Boroondara City Council**

“Collaborative purchasing of e-resources is an obvious way forward.”

**Glenelg Shire Council**

Respondents were asked to rate from 1-5 the importance and benefit of the following:

- investigating best value collection procurement options
- delivering shelf-ready material directly to branches
- exploring central procurement options for hardware (computers, tablets, ereaders) and other services.

Respondents were supportive of the initiatives for improving procurement practices in library services.

The average score for the importance of the initiatives was 4.3 for both the best value collection procurement options and the delivery of shelf-ready material directly to branches. Central procurement options for hardware and other services received an average score of 4.

Respondents also scored the benefit of the initiatives to their library service highly.
Best value collection procurement options scored 4 on average, the delivery of shelf-ready material directly to branches rated 3.9 and central procurement options for hardware and other services received a score of 3.7.

There was general support for collaborative collection purchasing, providing it built upon existing collaboration and preserved marketplace competition. A number of library services have already undertaken collaborative purchasing and believe they are already getting the maximum benefit available. Central procurement options for hardware have the potential to provide savings for some respondents, but it was generally not rated as important or as much of a priority as collection procurement.

Respondents were keen to further explore the delivery of shelf-ready material, although a number of libraries indicated they already receive this service.

**Information and communication**

“A Victorian Library social media presence and a statewide marketing strategy provide great opportunities to increase the profile of libraries whilst minimising the costs.”

*Brimbank City Council*

“Moreland Council supports a statewide marketing strategy which would afford economies of scale with local community benefits.”

*Moreland City Council*

Respondents were asked to rate the importance and benefit of the following from 1-5:

- establishing a *Victorian Library* social media presence
- developing a statewide marketing strategy.

Social media is seen as an important communication tool, with respondents supporting the development of a statewide presence. For importance, it rated an average of 3.9 and for benefit to the sector it received 3.6.

Some respondents indicated concerns about a social media presence, including issues of maintenance and ongoing relevance.

Statewide marketing was comprehensively supported by library services and seen as a way of increasing the visibility of libraries and the services they offer. This initiative scored very highly, with an average importance score of 4.6 and an average benefit score of 4.4.
“I think that all of the suggested developments would help to keep our libraries relevant and active community spaces both in the virtual and real worlds.”

Community comment

“The proposed initiatives are an excellent way of opening up the library system to all people in Victoria, allowing access to information for those who are isolated, disabled, lacking access to transport.”

Community comment

Overview

Input from the community on proposed initiatives of the Victorian Library were sought under Stage 2 of the review of the role of Victorian public libraries.

The survey asked respondents to score the importance of five key initiatives from 1-5, with 5 as highest importance. Respondents could also provide comments if they chose. The final question gave respondents the opportunity to provide general feedback on the Victorian Library concept. The question was:

- How important would the following initiatives be to you in your future public library?
  - a library card that can be used in any public library in Victoria
  - access to all public library books across Victoria, and have the books you want delivered to the library of your choice
  - the ability to borrow a book from any public library in Victoria and return it to the library of your choice
  - easy access to ebooks and other electronic resources
  - an improved, modern public library website and mobile apps to easily find what you want.

- Please provide us with your overall feedback on the proposed initiatives.

More than 1800 people responded to the survey, highlighting the significance of libraries to their local communities.

Overall, respondents were very enthusiastic about the Victorian Library concept. The mean score across all the questions was 4.26. Importantly, the median and mode scores across all questions were 5. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents rated at least one initiative 5, while only 2.1 per cent of respondents did not score at least one question as a 4 or a 5 and just 10 respondents scored all questions at 2 or less.

A library card that can be used at any public library in Victoria
“It would be very useful to have a card that can be used at any public library across Victoria. It would make everything a lot more convenient.”

Community contribution

“It would be wonderful to have access to all of Victoria’s libraries and resources without having to go through the membership sign-up process again and again.”

Community contribution

“I think this is a brilliant idea! For those that travel around a lot, the rigmarole associated with joining a library is daunting, and I would imagine many just don’t bother.”

Community comment

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a library card that could be used at any public library in Victoria to their future library from 1-5.

The average score was 4.2, indicating strong support for the initiative. Nearly 80 per cent of people rated the initiative as a 4 or a 5. Only 7 per cent of respondents rated the initiative 1 or 2.

Respondents could also comment on the initiative and 1040 people chose to do so.

Many felt that one library card was a great idea and very convenient. It is commonsense and a logical step forward. Having one card would be much easier than managing several library memberships. Accessing different libraries would be easier, regardless of where people lived. Also, carrying one library card would be far simpler than carrying many.

Signing up every time to join a new library was seen as a waste of time and effort. It makes sense and would be convenient to sign up just once and then be able to access any public library in Victoria.

Respondents recognised the freedom and flexibility of having one library card, especially for people who studied, worked and lived in different places and for people who travelled around Victoria. Parents with young children particularly liked the idea of being able to borrow from libraries when they were away from home.

Some people indicated that one library card would be nice to have, but not essential, as they would not use it often enough. In some cases this was because they were happy to borrow from their local library or from different branches within their regional library system.

Some people living in rural and regional areas said they did not need one library card because they lived too far from other libraries to make use of it.

A few people wondered what privacy issues might arise from having one library card and how their borrowing data would be used.

Access to all public library books across Victoria and have the books you want delivered to the library of your choice
“The proposal means I would be able to access virtually anything I wish to read, watch, enjoy. The sky is the limit!”

**Community contribution**

“What a boon. Often I see books listed at other libraries within the region but for various reasons I am not able to travel to the particular venue to collect the book. To have access across Victoria would be marvellous.”

**Community contribution**

Respondents were asked to rate from 1-5 how important it was to be able to have access to all public library books across Victoria and to have the books they wanted delivered to the library of their choice.

The average score was 4.5, indicating a high degree of support for the initiative. Nearly 87 per cent of people rated the initiative as a 4 or a 5. Only 4 per cent rated it 1 or 2.

Respondents could also comment on the initiative and 925 people chose to do this.

Many respondents felt that having access to all public library books across Victoria would be fantastic, with access to a wider range of resources well beyond those of their local library. As one library cannot stock everything, especially specialist materials, it is a simple way to access more materials.

It was felt libraries need to make collections easy to access, otherwise people will seek out information on the internet. Borrowing books from other libraries would be great. People liked the convenience of having books delivered to their local library. This service would also assist people who had difficulty travelling to other libraries.

Respondents recognised that sharing collections would give people living in regional and rural areas better access to information. As smaller libraries offer smaller ranges of materials, this would give their members more resources to choose from.

Some people were already accessing collections of other libraries through the Swift Consortium. People supported extending the collection sharing across Victoria.

People asked whether delivery of books would be free and there were a range of views on whether fees should be charged.

People asked if they would have to wait a long time for the books they had requested from other parts of Victoria. There was concern about how much it will cost to move so many books around Victoria, whether it might be too expensive or if it was the best use of funds.

The ability to borrow a book from any public library in Victoria and return it to the library of your choice
"I think in terms of equality and access this is a very important feature of a future library service. I think rural and remote library users should be able to access books from around Victoria."

**Community contribution**

"Very useful when travelling or on holiday so that a supply of reading is assured without fuss and paperwork."

**Community contribution**

Respondents were asked to rate from 1-5 how important it was to be able to borrow a book from any public library in Victoria and return it to the library of their choice.

The average score was 4.3, indicating strong support for the initiative. More than 82 per cent of people rated it 4 or 5. Only 7.5 per cent of respondents rated it 1 or 2.

People could also provide comments on the initiative and 800 people chose to do this.

Respondents felt it would be convenient to be able to borrow and return books to any public library. This is one way libraries can work together to make things easier for users. People would be able to visit other libraries and explore their collections. They would also not have to travel to other libraries to borrow books, saving time and making it easier to return items on time.

People who commute to work would find it easier to borrow and return to any public library. People supported the idea of being able to borrow from any number of libraries as they travel around Victoria. Users could travel throughout Victoria with books that might be due soon and return them whilst away. Regional and rural users and people unable to travel beyond their home library would benefit from this service.

While people believed this service would be helpful, some were concerned about how it would work in practice. It could be complicated to set up and manage. The logistics of moving books around could be challenging or even unmanageable. It might end up creating extra work for library staff and that the cost would prohibitive and possibly cause a reduction in spending in other areas, such as buying books.

Those who thought this service would not be important said that their local library service already met their needs and that visiting other libraries did not appeal to them.
Easy access to ebooks and other electronic resources

“Ebooks and electronic resources are the way of the future. Libraries need to harness them, not hide from them.”

**Community contribution**

“We need access to a much larger ebook collection. It does not replace a book but is used in conjunction with books and enhances the reading experience.”

**Community contribution**

Respondents were asked to rate from 1-5 how important it is to have easy access to ebooks and other electronic resources.

The average score of 4.1 indicates strong support for the initiative. More than 75 per cent of people rated the initiative as a 4 or 5. Only 10 per cent of respondents rated it 1 or 2.

Respondents could also provide comments on the initiative and 782 people chose to do this.

There was widespread support for this initiative. Respondents feel ebooks are convenient and becoming increasingly popular. Libraries needed to keep up with the demand for ebooks to remain dynamic and relevant. People who already enjoy reading ebooks and emagazines from their library would like to see a wider range.

Respondents find it convenient to be able to download materials anywhere, anytime. It may save having to visit the local library, which was especially helpful for rural users. Ebooks are easy to carry around. People can change the font size to suit their needs. They also liked how the file access expired on the due date, so they did not have to physically return the item.

Libraries play a vital role in providing free access to electronic information. This was especially important for people who had little or no internet access at home or who could not afford the technology to access online resources.

A range of different file types and compatibility with all types of ereaders is important. They need to be easy to access and easy to use. There should be one simple, streamlined system for accessing e-materials. It was important to respondents that libraries offered training sessions on how to use the technology.

Some people were not interested in reading ebooks or accessing electronic resources. They said they did not know how to use the technology, they did not want to or they prefer reading physical books. Some people said that electronic resources should not replace physical books while others said that the role of a library is to provide physical books, offer programs and act as a cultural hub for the community. They felt that the market is responsible for providing access to ebooks and electronic resources, not libraries.
An improved modern public library website and mobile apps to easily find what you want

“An easily readable, modern library website is invaluable as many borrowers access their local library online before physically going into the library to collect books and other materials.”

**Community contribution**

“Having a well functioning library website and app would definitely be useful. Some library catalogues just aren’t user friendly, and with people using Google, they expect to search in the same easy way.”

**Community contribution**

Respondents were asked to rate how important an improved, modern public library website and mobile apps are to easily find what they want from 1-5.

The average score was 4.1, indicating strong support for the initiative. More than 76 per cent of respondents rated the initiative 4 or 5; only 7.6 per cent of respondents rated it 1 or 2.

Respondents could also comment on the initiative and 755 people chose to do so.

By offering an improved website and apps, libraries would be providing a better service and may even attract more members. It was important to be able to find resources quickly and easily. Respondents felt it would be convenient to be able to look up resources anywhere, anytime, day or night. Better online access could help people with limited ability to travel, such as people at home looking after children and people with a disability.

An improved and modern website is important because it is the main way many people interact with their library, browsing and reserving titles online. It could also help library users find what they need quickly. Libraries, particularly in small communities, may have limited opening hours. A good website allows people to access their libraries outside opening hours.

The website and apps would need to be easy to use and it should be easy for people to find what they are looking for.

People believed apps are convenient and make it easy to access libraries. People could use an app to see if a book was available before coming in to a branch. It would be great to search, reserve and request items with an app. An app would also be handy for finding out what events are on at the local library. There was little interest expressed in this initiative by people who did not own a smart phone or use mobile apps.

Some people said that visiting a library in person was better than using a website or a mobile app. They believed that accessing resources online meant missing out on browsing the shelves, interacting with people and being surrounded by books. Others said they had no issues with their library’s current website and were happy with the app they were using.
Feedback on the Victorian Library concept

“I believe these initiatives, if carried out, will bring more and more people towards libraries as they become a place not just for learning, but for socialising, brainstorming, inspiration and friendships.”

Community comment

“Instead of falling by the wayside of the information superhighway, libraries should be jumping into the driving seat and investing in ways to actually prove that they are an essential service for the entire community.”

Community contribution

The survey encouraged participants to provide overall feedback on the Victorian Library concept and the proposed initiatives. Responses were in free form, not ratings.

A total of 1659 respondents made comments. Some gave feedback on the concept as a whole, others commented on particular initiatives.

The comments were overwhelmingly positive, with respondents excited about the benefits to local library services.

Respondents acknowledged that the world is changing and technology continually advances. While people still read books, they are increasingly accessing content in new and different ways. Libraries needed to keep up with technology to stay relevant. The rapid changes in technology presented an exciting opportunity for libraries to deliver information to people when and how they want it.

Convenience is a key benefit for respondents. Currently, accessing resources, particularly from other libraries, can be difficult and time-consuming. Improved access to libraries would increase visits and use of services offered. Many respondents felt that these initiatives would also encourage new members to join their local library.

The Victorian Library will increase equity of access across the state. Access would not be limited by the size and location of a library service. This would be particularly helpful for people living in rural and remote parts of Victoria. People who are housebound or were unable to travel would be able to access resources more easily. People at risk of marginalisation, such as people on lower incomes or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, would have access to more resources.

Respondents felt that it is logical for libraries to work together and pool their resources. By linking services, libraries would be more efficient and the workload of individual libraries would decrease. Stronger library services would become easier to use and offer access to more resources.

Respondents appreciate that libraries needed to modernise to remain integral to communities. These initiatives would bring libraries into line with the way people lived now and set up libraries for the future.
While supporting the initiatives in principle, some respondents were concerned about the possibility of having to pay, or pay more, for improved library services. They wondered whether the costs would outweigh the benefits, or if the initiatives would be too expensive to implement.

Some respondents felt that libraries need to maintain their facilities and presence in the community. This was deemed more important than creating a statewide library system. Other respondents felt the initiatives could weaken the ability of libraries to meet local community needs.

There was also concern that councils would lose the incentive to invest in public libraries under a statewide system. If council funding to libraries is reduced, the standards of library services will decline.

Many respondents felt that while the proposed initiatives sound good, it is important to maintain staff numbers. Library staff are considered to be an invaluable resource to users.
5. Issues and Response

5.1 Problem definition

5.2 The Victorian Library
5.1 Problem definition

“It is important for people living in rural Victoria to have the same opportunities and access to library resources and services as people living in metropolitan or larger regional areas.”

Swan Hill Rural City Council

“Our library service is striving to develop “tomorrow’s libraries” in unique, community-responsive ways, such as integration of a range of local government and other services; innovative means of encouraging community cohesion and addressing social isolation; collaboration with other education providers, such as universities and schools; acquiring substantial LOTE collections; and social media initiatives.”

Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation

Background

The Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure has undertaken a comprehensive Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) to ascertain what is driving the need to invest in libraries and to ensure strategic investment.

Three main problems were identified that affect the ability of public libraries to continue to meet the needs of their local communities.

1. Inequitable access to educational and recreational information potentially marginalises members of the community

Libraries are a leading provider of educational and recreational material. Library services are independent and trusted information providers. They play an important role in assisting the community to access, navigate and evaluate information.

It is imperative that regardless of where you live in Victoria that you have access to high-quality public library services. There is disparity between libraries, with some not offering a comparable suite or standard of services to others, for a variety of reasons.

For example, some public library services have developed their own mobile apps and are using discovery layers with integrated content management systems to improve their online presence. Others have not.

Libraries aim to reduce the digital divide between those who can access the latest technology and those who cannot due to cost or availability. There is a possibility that new technologies may, in fact, increase the digital divide.

Rural and regional areas face additional challenges, including declining populations, attracting and retaining staff, and the geographical distance between municipalities.
2. Libraries are struggling to keep pace with users’ expectations, threatening their continued presence as a valued public space

The environment in which public libraries operate is changing rapidly. The pace of the evolution of technology is one of the biggest challenges facing the public library sector. Challenges facing library services include:

- the need to keep abreast of the latest technology
- phasing out of obsolete technology
- the cost of providing access to technology
- the risk of investing in the wrong technology.

Identifying emerging trends and changes can be difficult, as is anticipating the impact on library usage, particularly for smaller library services. There is an ad hoc approach to implementing new services. For example, some public libraries are providing commercially acquired ebooks while others are not.

The exponential growth in the use of new and mobile technology has led to increased use of Wi-Fi and greater costs for broadband.

The community is using a greater range of technology and expects that libraries will be able to support a variety of platforms and devices. The increase in the use of personal IT devices within libraries by patrons has led to an increased need for space with access to power supplies and staff training.

Demand for access to library services and catalogues from new mediums and devices is increasing, as is the expectation of apps for smart phones.

However, developing apps for individual library services is costly and internal technical expertise is limited.

Developing the capacity to foresee changing community needs and emerging trends is a challenge for some library services. Responding to these changes effectively is equally challenging.

3. Library services have failed to standardise approaches leading to higher levels of duplicated efforts and wastage

The public library sector needs to increase collaboration and take a unified, strategic approach to effectively adapt to these challenges and remain a relevant community asset in a globalised, digital world.

Statewide initiatives taking responsibility for tasks that are replicated across the state would remove the burden of process-driven and back-of-house duties, delivering better value for money and improved services. This would enable individual public library services to focus on what they do best – providing library services to meet the unique needs of local communities.

Statewide solutions, from implementation of a universal library management system through to leadership and support are essential to address the various challenges libraries face.
Unless Victoria’s public libraries collectively and collaboratively adapt to the rapidly emerging digital information era, they risk becoming less relevant to Victorians.

Adapting is a complex challenge. It applies to what libraries do, how they present and market themselves to the community, how they collaborate and how they manage and enable access to collections and resources.

Libraries are moving from being largely transaction-oriented resource borrowing places towards being more activity-focused, engaging and vibrant community spaces. Ebooks and eresources are becoming more popular and people are increasingly using electronic media to access information and content.

These challenges are not particular to Victoria’s public libraries; they are shared by libraries worldwide. The vastly increased portability of information enabled by digital formats and delivery media changes the relationship between the traditional role of the physical library itself and the emerging role of the digital library.

Helping library services address these issues has benefits beyond improved library services.

Meeting the challenges public libraries face is essential to maintaining a vibrant and relevant library network that supports the community in learning, literacy and leisure and provides a welcoming environment that encourages participation. The Victorian Library is the framework for meeting these challenges, now and in the future.

How the Victorian Library will achieve these improvements

**Improved digital content and delivery across the network**
Digital content is the way of the future. As the community embraces digital content, it is vital that libraries provide informative, entertaining and interesting digital material that can be easily accessed by Victorians.

**Improved quality and accessibility of the collection**
The main reason people visit a library is to borrow a book. A quality collection in good condition that appeals to the community will ensure that libraries remain an invaluable public facility.

**Improved and streamlined backroom processes**
Utilising library staff where they are of most value – providing assistance and advice to customers – is important. Improving work practices will also generate efficiencies that can be reinvested into the library service.

**An integrated statewide library service**
When libraries collaborate, all Victorians benefit. A fully integrated statewide service will provide economies of scale in the delivery of services and improve the quality of service to the community.
How improved library services benefit our communities

More active and inclusive communities
When people are involved in communities, they become better and more welcoming places to live. Libraries provide a welcoming space that encourages and enables all community members to participate in a range of activities and connect with others.

Enables Victorians to make life decisions based on reliable and impartial information
Important decisions need to be made with all the available information. Libraries are a rich resource of free information and librarians are experts in linking people with reliable unbiased information.

Fosters a sense of cultural identity and belonging
Victoria is a diverse state of people from all over the world. It is important that people retain a sense of their cultural identity and enjoy the rich Victorian culture. A sense of belonging improves people’s wellbeing. Libraries create a space for people to access information, engage with their community and belong.

More efficient and effective service delivery
The state and local governments invest approximately $200 million per year in Victoria’s public libraries. Efficient investment is integral to ensuring the community gains the maximum benefit from available funding.
5.2 The Victorian Library

“The initiatives outlined will provide a solid foundation to bring all Victorian libraries to an equal footing.”

**Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service**

“The Victorian Library, as a seamless network of public library services that reflects the character and the information, entertainment and educational needs of the local community is an excellent concept.”

**Insight Informatics**

“We support the concept as a strong foundation to underpin an equal standard for all Victorian Libraries. It allows for a best practice standardised service. It also provides the opportunity to coordinate services at a local level.”

**Murrindindi Shire Council**

“The proposals sound wonderful! All of them would go such a long way towards facilitating access to the broadest range of resources.”

**Community contribution**

**Background**

The *Victorian Library* is a working title of the concept that ensures the ongoing viability and relevance of public libraries. It recognises that the digital shift fundamentally changes how people think of libraries and their role in local communities. It emphasises the collaboration that is needed to ensure libraries deliver best value for money and positive community outcomes. It positions the sector to be responsive and successful into the future.

New issues and challenges will arise relating to service delivery, processes and back-of-house tasks that will require solutions. The *Victorian Library* will enable the early identification of these emerging issues and challenges at a statewide level and will ensure the sector is positioned to respond quickly and effectively.

The Victorian Library consists of a number of interrelated statewide initiatives that will be implemented collaboratively to deliver efficiencies, consistency and opportunities to Victorian public libraries. The recommended statewide initiatives will remove the back-of-house, process-driven tasks that are replicated at every public library service. They will provide efficiencies in work practices and economies of scale by streamlining systems and procedures across all library services and will remove the burden of mandatory compliance with legislative requirements and procurement regulations.
By implementing the statewide initiatives, the sector will be better placed to respond quickly to challenges, changing technology and demand.

Importantly, undertaking initiatives at a statewide level will not mean public library services give up autonomy or control of their service. The statewide initiatives will enable public libraries to focus on what they do best – responding to the unique needs of their communities and developing new and innovative ways to create informed, connected communities.

Six statewide initiatives are proposed:

• statewide single library card
• statewide movement of collection and interlibrary loans
• statewide Radio-frequency-identification RFID tagging of collection
• statewide Library Management System (LMS)
• statewide platform for digital material
• statewide LOTE collection.

The potential of each of the Victorian Library initiatives will only be fully realised when considered as an interrelated package and, as such, should not be assessed in isolation. It is recommended that the initiatives be implemented as a suite of strategies that, together, will deliver significant, positive outcomes for the community, public libraries, local government and the Victorian Government.
6. Proposed Victorian Library Initiatives

6.1 Single library card
6.2 Statewide movement of collection and interlibrary loans
6.3 Statewide radio-frequency identification tagging of collection
6.4 Statewide library management system
6.5 Statewide platform for digital material
6.6 Statewide language other than English collection
6.1 Single library card

“A great initiative with benefits for users of public libraries and will provide a seamless service across the state for all library users.”

**Greater Dandenong City Council**

“Development of a single library membership card would be a positive step, promoting the Victorian Library concept and strengthening the message to library members that they are welcome to use every library in the state.”

**Swan Hill Rural City Council**

“I have often travelled in Victoria, and thought it would be great to pop into the library where I was staying.”

**Community contribution**

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**Rationale**

A single library card would be the most visible feature for users of the *Victorian Library*. It would enable users to join the library service of their choice and then access all public libraries across Victoria, borrow from and return materials to any library and utilise the facilities of any library.

**Features**

- A single card that can be used at any public library in Victoria
- Fitted with a magnetic strip and a barcode to ensure it functions at all libraries
- The front will be branded with the local library design, with the back having the functionality to allow for the card’s use at all libraries and a space for the patron to sign
- Allows library services to install an RFID or stored value chip in the card at their expense.
Benefits

- Substantially increases user access, convenience and service levels
- Provides vastly increased portability and reciprocity of library membership benefits to all Victorians
- Eliminates the need for membership to multiple libraries
- Libraries retain control over card design and can apply local design and branding
- Creates a more cohesive, seamless and user-friendly public image for public libraries
- Creates an opportunity to market libraries
- Savings due to economies of scale in purchasing cards statewide.

Present

Currently, library users are required to be members of each library service they use. Prospective members are required to accept the terms and conditions of the library service, including borrowing periods, fines, fees and charges.

People can have membership to multiple libraries and do not need to be municipal residents to join a local library service. While many Victorians are members of several library services, many are unaware they can join other library services and the need to rejoin deters others from doing so.

Each library service issues its members a library card for borrowing materials and accessing library services. At present, members of more than one library service are required to obtain multiple membership cards.

Proposed

Universal access to all libraries across Victoria requires a system where any library membership can be used at all libraries. Victorian libraries recognise membership cards via a magnetic strip on the back of the card or by a printed barcode. Therefore, to enable all cards to be used at all locations both a magnetic strip and a barcode must be included on every card. As most cards currently only have one of these two features, new cards will need to be produced for every library member.

The new cards will be designed to ensure local branding is prominent. The entire front of the card would be designed to each library service’s specifications, including the branding, colour and design. The back of the card would have a magnetic strip, a barcode and a signature panel based on an agreed template.

Library services would have the option of enhancing the functionality of the cards, by installing RFID chips as either read only or stored value items. As this not a requirement to facilitate a statewide membership card, however, individual library services would need to cover this cost. Statewide purchasing of the new single library card will, however, facilitate this.
Existing members will receive a letter explaining the changes and will be issued a new card on their next visit. Customers will have to acknowledge new terms and conditions regarding using the card at any library in Victoria. These conditions will be accepted by signing the back of the library card. Customers will only be able to join one library service. People who are already a member of multiple library services will be required to select which service they wish to be a member of. This does not have to be the library service of the municipality where the customer resides.
6.2 Statewide movement of collection and interlibrary loans

“Collectively we are more capable of providing access to materials which reach a broader and more expansive range of recreational, cultural, informational and educational resource pursuits.”

Gannawarra Shire Council

“Having a state-wide network of libraries will only broaden access for all communities across the board to a wider variety and range of information and community services.”

Community contribution

Rationale

Physical collections are, and will continue to be, an integral part of public libraries. A fully integrated interlibrary loan and courier service will provide all Victorians with increased access to the whole collection, utilising the most efficient techniques to do so. The movement of the collection also allows for material borrowed by a customer to be returned to any library and transported quickly and efficiently back to the home library.

Features

- A statewide courier system for moving materials between libraries
- Expansion of the existing state-funded network to include direct delivery to larger branches where needed rather than just one central point per service
- Allows for library materials to be returned to any branch and facilitates interlibrary loans
- Sorting of material to occur offsite, either by the courier company or a third party
- Implementing policies to ensure the number of interlibrary loans is limited to a set percentage of total loans (i.e. limit to the number of items on hold, availability of new items, types of material that can be requested)
- Catalogue search originally limited to home library, expanded to surrounding region, then statewide.

Benefits
• Enables universal access for all Victorians to vast statewide library resources
• Enables libraries to retain local control over collection management policy
• Layered search mechanism to enable access to interlibrary loans under controlled circumstances as part of an overall target
• Search mechanisms to identify local resources first as part of a technology-enabled regionalised interlibrary loan model
• Delivery to approximately 150 larger branches according to thresholds (rather than a single destination in each service) to substantially reduce handling and sorting challenges and interlibrary loan costs incurred by libraries
• Provides the interlibrary communication and delivery necessary for offering an integrated, seamless statewide service (*borrow anywhere, return anywhere*).

**Present**

Material borrowed from a library service must be returned to the same library service by the borrower.

An interlibrary loan is the lending of material from one library service to another. Interlibrary loans have been occurring in Victoria for many years. There are two main systems that facilitate interlibrary loans: LibraryLink Victoria and the Swift Consortium.

**LibraryLink Victoria**

An integrated search function, funded by the Victorian Government, which allows users to search the catalogues of all library services in Victoria and place a request. While some features are automated, both the requesting and lending library need to agree to the request. LibraryLink is not embedded within the LMS and, as such, is not user-friendly. Consequently, the number of interlibrary loans actioned via LibraryLink is very low.

**Swift Consortium**

A consortium formed by a number of public library services. These libraries have jointly procured a single LMS and have a common catalogue. If users find material at another Swift library, they can simply order it on the system for delivery to their local library. Due to the simplicity of the system, substantially more interlibrary loans are handled by the Swift Consortium.

Interlibrary loans are moved via the existing statewide Toll (DX) contract. Each library service has a single DX point, funded by the Victorian Government, with provision for one bag of mail, up to 15kg, to be picked up each day. Although this is adequate for most libraries not part of the Swift Consortium, the Victorian Government has paid for a second bag at selected services that require it. All materials placed in the bag must be individually addressed. Libraries that exceed this capacity, mostly Swift libraries, can have additional boxes sent at approximately $6 per box. This cost of this is covered by library services and all items in the box must go to the same destination. As such, libraries must sort all of the interlibrary loans into separate boxes, requiring considerable staff time and space.

**Example of the current interlibrary loan procedure**
Patron requests an interlibrary loan at Ringwood Library for a book that is held at Caroline Springs Library.

Material borrowed via an interlibrary loan needs to be returned to the same library service at the completion of the loan period, thus reversing the process flow.

**Proposed**

A fully integrated, simple and efficient courier service is required to facilitate borrowing from and returning to any public library, and for patrons to request that a book be sent to the library of their choice.

Due to the volume of material expected to be moved, the courier service would operate at multiple branches within each library service so as not to overwhelm a central collection point. This will improve the efficiency of the service as less staff handling and sorting would be required. Determining which branches will be included will be based on the level of loans, opening hours of the branch and other critical factors.

Material would be sorted centrally. It is inefficient to have library staff sorting materials, requires large amounts of space in the library and is an OH&S risk. This would be further complicated by a branch-to-branch model as is proposed.

The courier service will also facilitate the movement of material back to the home library service where materials are returned to a different library service as part of the *borrow anywhere, return anywhere* philosophy.

An area or regional system is not practical as all courier companies consulted would use a central distribution model.
The demand for interlibrary loans and adoption of returning material to a different library service is difficult to calculate, however policies can be implemented restricting the number of items to a suitable level. Interstate and the Swift experience indicate that a totally unrestricted system would lead to interlibrary loans constituting approximately 7 to 8 per cent of total loans. Policies preventing the movement of new release material and limiting the number of interlibrary loans per patron would allow this to be easily managed at a set level.

Example of the proposed interlibrary loan procedure

Patron requests an interlibrary loan at Ringwood Library for a book that is held at Caroline Springs Library
6.3 Statewide radio-frequency identification tagging of collection

“The Statewide RFID tagging would be essential to ensure the movement of materials is as efficient as possible.”

Central Goldfields Shire Council

“The key benefit for RFID and self-checkout is to enable library staff to assist library users in service and program delivery – essentially adding value to the users’ library experience. In addition it massively reduces waiting times for users, and repetitive manual handing for staff.”

Goldfields Library Corporation

“We would like to see every single Victorian Library item tagged with an RFID tag…”

Hepburn Shire Council

Rationale
Radio-frequency (RFID) identification has become more common in the public library sector in recent years. Placing ISO 28560-compliant tags in all borrowable materials in Victorian public libraries would facilitate the efficient movement of materials around Victoria and enable statewide tracking.

Features
- ISO 28560-compliant RFID tags provided and fitted on all materials
- RFID pads and software provided to every branch that receives interlibrary loans on an agreed formula
- Ensure system compatibility with existing systems of services
- Ensure existing ISO 28560 chips conform to the correct data model and update where required.
**Benefits**

- Is a more efficient and cost-effective method of handling and sorting the collection
- Substantially reduces the level of manual handling and sorting of interlibrary loans by library staff at service and branch level
- Increases ability to monitor movement of the collection and items in transit between libraries
- Increases efficiency in managing collection stock within individual libraries, including electronic stocktake procedures.

**Present**

Radio-frequency-identification (RFID) has been implemented at a number of library services in Victoria, funded by library services. The package implemented generally includes:

- software integrated with the LMS
- RFID tags on all items in the collection
- RFID readers for staff use
- self-checkout RFID readers for customer use
- RFID alarm gates.

Many libraries, particularly in regional areas, have expressed interest in moving to RFID but cannot raise the significant capital investment required.

RFID improves efficiencies in processing checkouts and returns by decreasing the time each transaction takes. Furthermore, self-service checkout machines allow customers to perform their own transactions. RFID also improves the security of the collection with the installation of security gates.

Libraries that have not installed RFID use barcode technology to track, loan and return materials.

**Proposed**

A simple way to process and identify materials is required so they can be moved between branches. Processing loans with limited staff resources is essential to managing increasing volumes of interlibrary loans. A common format is required to enable all libraries to identify and loan materials.

Approximately 55 per cent of public library collections are tagged with ISO 28560-compliant chips. The remaining 45 per cent will be tagged with compliant chips, or in some cases re-tagged, for a uniform method of identification.
RFID readers will be provided to each branch that receives interlibrary loans to enable the efficient check-in of materials from other branches and to reduce the manual handling of stock.

Tagging the entire collection with ISO 28560-compliant RFID tags and providing readers will:

- improve efficiency of the handling, sorting, delivery and return of interlibrary loans statewide
- improve statewide tracking, monitoring and reporting of the collection
- facilitate security of and accountability for a more mobile statewide collection that is owned by numerous library entities
- bring management practices for collections up to a new baseline standard
- self-checkout machines can be implemented and funded locally, based on respective operational decisions.

The project only provides RFID services to libraries that allow for the movement and tracking of materials between library services. Additional components such as security gates and self-checkout machines will need to be funded locally, based on respective operational decisions.
6.4 Statewide library management system

“The end result would see enormous benefits to our library customers given that this model would ensure and enable the sharing of collections throughout Victorian public libraries.”

**Maribyrnong City Council**

“One Library Management System (LMS) will…free the back-of-house staff to use their library skills in other more creative and meaningful ways to benefit the local library users…”

**Wimmera Regional Library Corporation**

“Establishment of a single LMS is central to the Victorian Library Model and is highly supported.”

**Mornington Peninsula Shire Council**

**Rationale**

The library management system (LMS) is the engine room of the library. It provides the core bibliographic database of the collection and the library member database. It offers core functionality upon which other enhanced systems can be anchored. A single LMS enables a single database for all resources held in Victorian libraries and facilitates the sharing and tracking of those resources. It also enables the Single Library Card to be rolled out by providing a common membership database.

**Features**

- A single LMS across Victoria
- Provides the functionality required by staff and extra functions such as SMS notifications
- A high-quality discovery layer, including apps for mobile phones and tablets
- An integrated search function for finding information such as opening hours and nearest library across various formats.
Benefits

- Enables:
  - one statewide library card
  - easier access to statewide collection through interlibrary loans
  - improved quality of, and better access to, the statewide LOTE collection
  - a statewide digital archive
- Creates a shared technological platform from which ebooks and resources can be accessed more seamlessly statewide
- Increases equity of access to library services in Victoria, irrespective of where you live
- Brings all Victorian Library services up to a new and higher minimum level of service
- Improves functionality and presentation of public libraries (through more standardised discovery layer/s), while enabling the retention of distinctive local branding integrated with local service and program-specific information
- Increases the data capture, statistical and performance reporting capability for public libraries. This will better inform decision-making and policy development at both the state and local government levels
- Individual libraries will no longer need to provide their own hosting, server and technical support services
- Creates a strong basis for improving the quality and consistency of collection cataloguing throughout Victoria
- Creates the opportunity for a more integrated approach to statewide collections procurement
- Significant net savings.

Present

Each library service is responsible for the procurement of their LMS. In 2007, a number of library services came together to jointly procure a single LMS known as Swift. The Swift Library Consortium has grown to include 19 library services in Victoria. The Swift system provides a single catalogue, however membership databases are held separately by the individual library services. Swift members must provide access to unlimited interlibrary loans, which has deterred some library services from joining the consortium.

Proposed

A state-of-the-art LMS offering features and functionality at least equal to, or better than, the systems currently in place at library services. It would improve core service levels and functionality by providing services at least as good as those currently provided.
The successful supplier would operate, manage and run the system to an agreed standard. This is in line with best practice in the sector.

The final specification of the system will be developed in close consultation with library services to ensure it meets the needs of all libraries. The common LMS will broadly include:

**Catalogue/bibliographic data**

This is the core of the operating system. It includes a bibliographic and member database and lending systems that are the basis of the modern public library.

**Core capability plus add-ons**

A quality core system capability to meet the basic functional needs of a public library plus a range of optional add-on services provided by the vendor.

**Integrated SMS functionality Smart-phone and tablet apps Discovery and search capability**

The provision of quality integrated discovery layer/s with best-available, multi-source, multi-format and multilingual search capability. This may include discovery capability by the core LMS vendor and/or third-party search engine providers.

**Third-party products**

The LMS will support add-on features such as integrated and flexible management reporting, content reviewing and access to e-resources, genealogy and reporting.

**Project implementation and change management support**

This includes data migration, transition management and extensive training for library staff.

**RFID interface capability**

**Managed services/hosting with secure back-up protocols and services**

Before transitioning to the new LMS, all library services would be required to meet a series of targets such as the de-duplication of catalogue and membership records. System training would be provided to library services as part of implementation. A detailed implementation plan will be developed with the successful supplier.
6.5 Statewide platform for digital material

“All Victorians would have ease of access to digital resources regardless of where they live.”

**Wyndham City Council**

“[A] common digital platform would be welcome and embraced.”

**Darebin City Council**

“I love being able to access ebooks and digital magazines from the library, but a wider range would be great.”

**Community contribution**

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**Rationale**

The ways the community accesses information are continually changing. An increased uptake of internet resources and the proliferation of ereaders and ebooks has led to a shift away from traditional printed materials. To maintain relevance and meet the needs of their local communities, libraries need to facilitate access to digital material.

The complex and changing nature of technology makes it difficult for individual library services to provide eresources. The marketplace is dominated by international publishers and aggregators who dictate policies relating to the loaning of eresources.

Procuring a statewide eresources platform is proposed to create a consistent approach to providing ebooks and other electronic resources throughout Victoria.
### Features

- Access to ebooks provided by aggregators determined by a central tender (i.e. panel of chosen suppliers)
- Libraries grouped together to provide economies of scale, but into regions that are of acceptable size to the marketplace
- Each group procures and selects ebooks from the panel of suppliers
- Ebooks only available to members of that service
- Suppliers must integrate with the single LMS
- Includes emusic and emagazines
- A series of statewide contracts and pricing agreed with database suppliers that can be utilized by library services should they choose
- Allows digitised local content to be stored and made discoverable by the single LMS.

### Benefits

- Significantly improves Victorians’ access to a quality range of ebooks and econtent
- Aggregates library econtent purchasing power with the aggregation benefits focused on the smaller/lower population libraries
- Recognises and addresses what has been a significant econtent supplier obstacle to ebook procurement by public libraries (i.e. large population consortium models)
- Enables continued development of, and investment in, existing larger library ebook collections
- Provides an interim sector-level response to the current ebook access challenges while recognising the essential commercial and licensing-related access barriers that remain
- Recognises and allows for integrations of the ongoing developments in library econtent access worldwide
- Positions Victoria to participate in future national initiatives.

### Present

Currently, library services procure eresources individually, mostly by contracting with and purchasing titles through an aggregator.

The global eresources publishing market is dominated by the so-called ‘Big 5’ group of publishers: Hachette, Harper Collins, Penguin/ Random House, Macmillan and Simon and Schuster. Other key players include Amazon and Apple. An aggregator is a third party that enters into contract and licences for material produced by the multinational publishing companies and then on-sells the content in a variety of user-friendly formats to libraries.

As a result of this incohesive approach there are many different systems operating
with varying degrees of integration with existing library catalogues. Due to the
difficulties and expense involved, many library services have chosen not to provide
eresources.

**Proposed**

The publishing sector sees ebooks and econtent as a market segment. It is a
category of sales and potential sales that shareholders want to see maximised. With
a decline in print media sales and where traditional distribution channels have been
undermined by online sales, the need to maximise sales of potential ebooks and
eresources is paramount in the eyes of publishers.

There are concerns, therefore, within the publishing sector, that allowing libraries to
form statewide consortium will significantly reduce the number of printed copies of
books purchased. As such, any solution implemented for eresources will need to
ameliorate the concerns of publishers or may otherwise potentially obstruct the
supply of eresources to the Victorian public.

It is important that all Victorians have access to digital material regardless of where
they live. The simplest and most cost-effective way of achieving this is for a statewide
contract with one or more aggregators of digital content. However no aggregator
could provide the service as publishers would withdraw their access to content. To
overcome this, the procurement process will specify smaller regionalised blocks or
zones of councils. Aggregators would still tender on a statewide basis, but the
eresources purchased in each zone would only be available to residents of that zone.

The successful provider/s would need to provide full compatibility with existing
catalogues to ensure eresources can be easily located by customers.

Additionally, statewide contracts and pricing will be negotiated with online database
and journal suppliers. Library services will then be able to provide access to these
databases, if they choose to, at discounted rates.

While this method may not be optimal, it is the only realistic way of providing public
access to eresources in the short to medium term. It is proposed that Victoria
continue to work closely with other Australian states and peak bodies to further
develop a national solution to providing eresources.
6.6 Statewide languages other than English collection

“With a state-wide collection, the need for floating LOTE collections would be substantially reduced.”

**Brimbank City Council**

“Bayside strongly supports the development of a statewide collection of languages other than English as we have small, statistically insignificant, CALD communities who require material in their first language to fully engage with the library. Greater resource sharing would provide these users with a much richer and more rewarding library experience.”

**Bayside City Council**

“Access to a statewide collection of LOTE materials would enable GRLC to provide this important service to its communities.”

**Geelong Regional Library Corporation**

“The establishment of a statewide LOTE collection would greatly benefit our community by providing the variety of material we are currently unable to carry due to space and budgetary limitations.”

**Latrobe City Council**

“Statewide LOTE services are essential for areas such as regional Victoria with smaller CALD communities.”

**Pyrenees Shire Council**

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**Rationale**

Non-English speaking communities are a significant part of the Victorian community with 23.1 per cent of Victorians speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home. However, LOTE items comprise only 5.8 per cent of total library collections statewide. A statewide LOTE collection would provide Victorians with better access to more resources in a greater number of community languages.
**Features**

- A collection of specialist LOTE materials in a range of community languages that can be loaned to customers or on bulk to library services
- Selected and housed by various library services but available to all Victorians
- Books procured and catalogued by the third party into the single LMS
- Moved via the courier system
- Existing LOTE materials remain with library services.

**Benefits**

- An increase of approximately 10 per cent in LOTE resources available
- Adds value to and builds on existing quality LOTE collections
- Responds to niche language group needs and fills existing gaps in the quality and breadth of statewide LOTE resources
- Recognises existing LOTE specialisation developed over many years by public libraries throughout the state
- Recognises the leadership role of libraries that have a specialty and interest in continuing to develop quality LOTE programs and collections
- Maximises the user visibility and accessibility of LOTE items.

**Present**

Each library service is responsible for purchasing LOTE material to meet the needs of their local community. This is easier for services with large populations of certain CALD groups (i.e. Greek, Italian, Chinese), however providing a wide range of materials to smaller or transient LOTE communities is challenging. Interlibrary loans are provided for LOTE material but for many smaller community languages there is simply not the breadth of material available. LOTE material is more expensive, difficult to source and catalogue, adding to the complexity and cost of purchasing the material.

**Proposed**

In addition to the current investment by library services, a statewide LOTE collection could be funded and distributed to public libraries to loan to the public. A grants program would be established, with library services invited to apply to purchase, manage and store a collection in a particular community language. Once purchased, the material would move around Victoria on demand. The material would also be available for bulk loan to libraries as required.

To reduce cataloguing costs, a central contract will be offered for third-party providers to undertake all cataloguing, including placing materials onto the common LMS.
7. Implementation

7.1 Policies, fees, fines and procedures
7.2 Statewide partnership agreement
7.3 Implementation of project plan
7.4 Future initiatives
7.1 Policies, fees, fines and procedures

“A statewide collection cannot be implemented without “one library card”. A challenge will be to apply consistent policies, procedures, fees and charges which vary greatly across Victorian Public Libraries.”

**Greater Geelong City Council**

“The main changes to achieve this successfully will be approaches to length of loan periods, overdue charges/fines, reservation fees and added functionality on cards (ie linked to printing and payments).”

**Campaspe Shire Council**

“It is important that a one model fits all practice for common loan policies/fees and charges does not result in local councils relinquishing control over council-funded assets and income generation.”

**Whitehorse Manningham Regional Library Corporation**

The implementation of the *Victorian Library* provides an opportunity for library services to collaborate and streamline the various policies, fees, fines and procedures to create a uniform and simplified structure. Library services would develop common statewide standards, providing customers with a consistent library environment across Victoria. Importantly, successful implementation of the *Victorian Library* does not require library services to commit to common standards in part or in whole.

**Features**

- Sector agreed standards for:
  - loan periods
  - number of items allowed to be loaned at a time
  - overdue fees
  - reservation fees
  - interlibrary loan fees
  - a model for shelf-ready material
  - other policies, fees, fines and procedures as required

- Library services would be encouraged to adopt the common policies, fees, fines and procedures

- It would NOT be mandatory for individual library services to agree to any or all of the common policies, fees, fines and procedures.
Benefits

- Simplifies the borrowing experience for customers who use multiple library services
- Facilitates easier interlibrary loans
- Eliminates the need to accept multiple borrowing terms and conditions when joining a library service
- Statewide marketing of the Victorian Library with single terms and conditions.

Present

Library services and councils determine their individual policies, fees, fines and procedures according to the needs of their communities. As it is currently not possible to use the membership of one service at another library service, this does not pose an additional barrier for customers.

For interlibrary loans, it has been agreed that the borrowing policies of the receiving library will apply.

Future

The introduction of a single library card enabling customers to borrow at any branch and increasing availability of interlibrary loans requires greater consistency across the library network. It is proposed that library services develop a set of common policies, fees, fines and procedures. This would include, but not be limited to:

- loan periods
- number of items allowed to be loaned at a time
- overdue fees
- reservation fees
- interlibrary loan fees.

The final agreed common standards would be circulated to all library services for consideration. Library services would be encouraged to implement as many of the common standards as is practical. Ideally, all library services would implement all the common standards.

Common standards across Victoria would simplify the borderless library concept considerably for customers. Customers would not be required to know multiple borrowing policies, fees and fines; they would be safe in the knowledge that the terms and conditions of whichever branch they use are the same anywhere in Victoria.

Policies, fees, fines and procedures, however, affect more than the customer experience. Some libraries utilise particular protocols to help manage the service or rely on certain levels of fees and fines to operate the service. As such, it may be not possible for all services to accept all of the common conditions. Should this be the case, the Victorian Library would still be fully functional.
The Library Management System will allow for differing borrowing periods, fees and fines and a module will allow the payment of fines to any library. The new single library card will inform users of the differing policies between library services that they will be required to follow.

In general, where there are differing policies the following principles would apply:

**Material borrowed in person** – terms and conditions, including fees and fines, of the branch from which materials are borrowed will apply.

**Material borrowed via interlibrary loan** – terms and conditions of the branch from where the material is picked up will apply.
7.2 Statewide partnership agreement

“The Victorian Library concept provides a watershed opportunity to strengthen and formalise the partnership between local government and the Victorian Government for the delivery of excellent, world quality library services for the whole Victorian community.”

Public Libraries Victoria Network

“The MAC review of Victorian public libraries provides an opportune time to formalise and strengthen the partnership between Local and State Government to the delivery of high quality library services.”

Frankston City Council

“Yarra Ranges Council would welcome a Partnering Agreement with the Victorian Government. Such an agreement is necessary to provide long term surety which is needed for effective planning and delivery of services.”

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Victorian library services are delivered by the state and local governments in partnership. Regardless of the implementation of the Victorian Library, a formal agreement between state and local governments must be established outlining the responsibilities and funding commitment of each level of government.

The agreement should build upon the existing Victorian State-Local Government Agreement and cover a period of four years so all parties have surety moving forward.
7.3 Implementation of project plan

“A comprehensive staging plan needs to be developed, and this should include timeframes for completion of various elements of the Victorian Library. The staging plan should also be capable of flexibility, to allow for changes in technology or other opportunities that may arise.”

Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

“Consideration needs to be given regarding a phased introduction, with some initiatives staged behind others, for example a Library Management System may need to be implemented before any introduction of a single library card.”

Moonee Valley City Council

The Victorian Library comprises a major structural and systemic change for public libraries. Change inevitably brings with it opportunity and challenges for those people who are involved and affected by it. This includes over 1700 staff employed in public libraries throughout the state and over 2.5 million Victorians who are members or users of public libraries.

Many of the proposed changes, such as the statewide LMS and RFID, involve internal library systems and procedures. The main focus in these areas will be on staff training and management of the transition process to assist staff to make the changes that will benefit library users. Other initiatives will involve the introduction of new or expanded services and service improvements, such as enhanced discovery, smart phone apps, a LOTE collection, ebooks and expanded interlibrary loan access. In these cases, staff training and communication will be critical, as will communication with library users in relation to new and expanded services.

The changes proposed will involve choices for library members. Processes and structures will therefore need to be put in place to, firstly, inform library users of the changes and the implications of these and, secondly, to make these choices straightforward. Each library member will need to be communicated with and arrangements put in place for the collection of new library cards through a carefully planned, communicated and phased roll-out.

A key requirement for the implementation of all Victorian Library initiatives is developing the following:

- a detailed staged implementation plan
- a change management strategy
- a communications plan.
The following is a conceptual high-level illustration of the proposed staged implementation plan for the Victorian Library.

This implementation plan is instructive only. The probability that this roll-out period is achievable depends on a range of factors. These include:

- the final model to be implemented
- the scoping and specification process
- the contract terms with the vendor/provider(s)
- the process/requirements established.

Proposed staged implementation plan for the Victorian Library
7.4 Future initiatives

“It is anticipated there would be many financial and staff time benefits from a central procurement system.”

Mitchell Shire Council

“The move to the Victorian Library concept has tremendous marketing potential to raise the profile of all public libraries to the community. Marketing one product across the state, and positioning it as an instantly recognisable brand, would have a significant impact and be a great thing for libraries in encouraging their use, with all the associated social/ educational benefits to the community.”

Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

A number of additional possible initiatives were identified in the Stage 1 Report and the Stage 2 Discussion Paper. These have not been included in the initial set of recommendations for various reasons outlined below. This does not mean they will not be implemented, but that the initiatives previously mentioned are a greater priority.

Procurement

Victorian libraries could make significant savings through collaborative procurement processes for collection materials and other items such as computer hardware and supplies.

Significant procurement aggregation already occurs in the Victorian public library sector. Although it is optional, a large number of libraries participate through the Municipal Association of Victoria and commercially through Procurement Australia.

Whilst there could be more aggregation, and subsequently greater savings, this is not a pressing priority. The key benefit of a more centralised procurement approach is the efficiency savings from standardised processing. Ebooks and eresources are also a priority.

Although further investigation of a statewide procurement model and approach is warranted, this needs to be as part of a wider sector-level response, at a state or national level, in relation to procurement of ebooks and eresources. It also needs to address the related issue of collection processing standardisation where significant savings can likely be achieved.

Given the scale of change proposed in the Victorian Library, it is advised that the investigation of a collaborative procurement model be pursued in the third and fourth years of implementation.
Information and communication

Establishing a Victorian Library social media presence and developing a statewide marketing strategy are important, however, they will not be necessary until the Victorian Library is fully operational in several years.

It is recommended that this future initiative be investigated at the appropriate time.

Other future projects and initiatives

The issues public libraries in Victoria face are constantly changing. As new technologies emerge and change consumer trends, libraries need to change to meet these challenges. The Victorian Library will ideally position library services to review additional projects and provide strategic responses to issues as they arise.
8. MAC recommendations

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries (MAC) believes the Victorian Library will improve library services to all Victorians and provide benefits to local councils, regional library corporations and the Victorian Government.

The MAC commends the initiatives outlined in this report and recommends them to the Minister for Local Government for implementation.

The Living Libraries Infrastructure Program and the Premiers’ Reading Challenge Book Fund are both vital programs for the continued development and provision of library services in Victoria. The MAC encourages the Victorian Government to continue to fund these important programs.