PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM: REGIONAL POLICY CONSULTATION

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National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Pacific Islands Regional Policy Consultation process.

NSLA brings together the expert knowledge and innovative capacity of the National Library of Australia, the National Library of New Zealand, and Australia's eight state and territory libraries.

Through collaboration, we deliver better collections, solutions and customer experiences than each library can do individually. We also contribute to more informed public policy, and share our knowledge and expertise to increase the professional capability of our staff and to build a workforce for the future.

NSLA libraries recognise the challenges and critical importance of developing and improving library services in the Pacific. NSLA, and its members individually, are partners in INELI Oceania to foster new library leaders in the Pacific, and the National Library of New Zealand works on a range of initatives with national libraries of Pacific nations, including the development of the *Shaping Sustainable National Library Services in the South Pacific* Report released in May 2017.

In May 2018, representatives of NSLA will attend the INELI Oceania Summit in Fiji; and in July 2018, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) will be holding an Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Summit, bringing together library leaders, including NSLA representatives, from across the region to share their experiences and ambitions relating to these global goals.

Libraries and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Libraries can be a vital part of delivering the Pacific Regionalism vision *'for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives.'*

Libraries can contribute to the delivery of this vision and the objectives of the Framework through:

- Developing digital literacy and general literacy capability across all ages groups and levels of education;
- Providing access to computers and connectivity (in Australia there are more than 1600 sites across the country providing free access to the internet);
- Enabling learning outside, or in partnership with, the formal education sector through specialised and general services;
- Managing and improving connected research infrastructure and tools; and
- Collecting and preserving cultural heritage.

Good literacy, which is increasingly in the digital context, improves quality of life. A person is more likely to have a job, to earn an income, to be in good health, and to be involved with the local and

global economy if they have functional literacy skills. Businesses of all sizes are more productive with a more literate workforce and greater digital capability. Digital literacy is vital to using online government services and to navigating regulatory and commercial environments.

Libraries can provide practical and flexible literacy services to allow the whole community to access services and improve their skills. They are a place for learning about cyber-safety and an essential part of early childhood literacy initiatives. Better Beginnings in Western Australia, First Five Forever in Queensland, the State Library of Victoria's partnership in the 1000 Books Before School Program, and equivalent programs in other Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions are bedrock services in the development of a literate community in this country.

There are many parallels between the sparse distribution of communities in the Pacific and the isolation in regional and remote areas of Australia. People in country areas in Austraia experience more digital disadvantage than those living in larger cities, and people living with disability, low income earners, seniors, unemployed and school-leavers have the most barriers to digital services.

Libraries provide internet connectivity and access to computers for those who are not connected, or only partially connected; they offer literacy skills programs; one-to-one help to use digital government services; and they are increasingly providing specialised business hubs for entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

Libraries strengthen engagement with cultural identity, providing onsite and online services that connect people to their heritage and history. For example, since 2002, the State Library of Queensland has partnered with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils to support a network of 24 Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) in remote communities of Queensland as well as a central hub at the State Library of Queensland in Brisbane, called kuril dhagun. IKCs provide library and literacy services and they are repositories for community knowledge and heritage for the many distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Queensland. Communities without an IKC are trialling an Ideas Box, a portable mixed-media centre developed by Libraries without Borders that provides an introduction to library services for communities currently without infrastructure to house an IKC. Similar programs and services are provided in other larger states.

Digital platforms and applications are expanding the opportunities for deep engagement with culture and heritage. The State Library of New South Wales has preserved and revitalised some of the oldest languages in the world by locating, digitising and providing access to Indigenous word lists and language records through Rediscovering Indigenous Languages. Several Australian states are also working actively in the collection and preservation of Indigenous cultures in remote areas using Keeping Culture: Community Knowledge Management System and similar tools.

These engagement services sit alongside the legislated role of national and state libraries in Australia and New Zealand to collect, preserve and provide access to the publications, research and documentary record of their jurisdiction. During 2018, Australian NSLA libraries are collaborating to develop a shared portal and repository for the collection of digital publications.

Libraries preserve physical and digital collecitons for future generations. They foster inclusion, education, innovation, and experimentation; and they are welcoming public places for engagement with cultural identity and history.

Libraries and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has been a key contributing body to the development of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development agenda, representing the importance of libraries in achieving these global goals.

Libraries drive progress across the 17 sustainable development goals, with particular impact on the goals underpinned by literacy, education, sustainable communities, industry development and strong civic institutions.

In Australia, NSLA, ALIA and the Australian Public Libraries Alliance (APLA) published a report in January 2018, Australian Libraries Support the Sustainable Development Goals, detailing programs and services across the extensive network that promote universal literacies and improve community outcomes.

The NSLA libraries in Australia and New Zealand support the continued strengthening of library services as part of the Pacific Regionalism Framework.

About NSLA

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) is the active collaboration between the ten National, State and Territory libraries in Australia and New Zealand.

NSLA Member Libraries:

> Libraries ACT
> LINC Tasmania
> National Library of Australia
> National Library of New Zealand
> Northern Territory Library
> State Library of New South Wales
> State Library of Queensland
> State Library of South Australia
> State Library Victoria
> State Library of Western Australia

During the 2016-2017 financial year:

> 12.5 million people visited our library buildings
> 47.2 million people visited our websites including Trove
> 14.7 million people visited our online catalogues
> 7,217 terabytes of digital collections were stored
> $33.5 million was the total spend on collections
> $5.3 billion was the asset value of our collections
> $997 million was the asset value of our buildings/sites

Please note: Each of the ten NSLA member libraries works within different government jurisdictions. The National Library of New Zealand is part of the Department of Internal Affairs, a New Zealand government department. The views expressed in this letter should not be taken to reflect the views of the New Zealand Government.

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