

DOLLARS, SENSE AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The landmark study of the socio-economic value of Victorian public libraries



KEY FINDINGS

5 reasons to keep investing in our public libraries

1. For every dollar invested in Victoria's public libraries, \$3.56 is the average rate of return in community benefits

Public libraries supported 4,430 jobs, contributed \$722 million to income and added \$120 million to the Victorian Gross State Product.

2. The majority of Victorians are public library customers

63% of Victorian householders used a public library in the past 12 months.

Public library members in Victoria could fill the MCG more than 25 times over.

3. Library customers receive services valued at \$419 per year

Library customers surveyed estimated that if they had to pay for the services accessed at their library, it would cost them an average of \$419 per year.

4. Victorian public libraries have something for everyone

Public libraries contribute to meaningful pastimes, lifelong learning and finding information. They provide access to a wide variety of resources including books, DVDs, CDs, PCs and the internet. Libraries are a safe and welcoming place to meet and encourage socially responsible behaviour.

5. People would pay more... but don't have the capacity to do so

More than 80% of public library customers and non-users said they would be willing to pay more for public library services, but don't have the capacity to do so. According to *Libraries Building Communities*, 10% of library customers worked full-time, 41% were not in the labour force (mainly retired people, parents at home with young children, and students), 36% were working part-time and 13% were unemployed.

With library services in great demand, and so many Victorian library members, it makes sense to keep investing in public libraries.

Commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, SGS Economics & Planning surveyed library customers, talked to Victorian households and used robust economic modelling to demonstrate the economic benefits of public libraries. The results of the project are described in a summary report and a full technical report.

Find out more about the dollars and sense of Victorian public libraries by visiting www.plvn.net.au

Protecting the investment

Where there is a difficult funding decision to be made, take note

Victorian public libraries provide a return on investment that is equal to, and in some cases better than, other government initiatives.

Outstanding value

An investment of \$36 per person per annum gives Victorians access to free information and entertainment. It connects people, through library PCs and wireless hotspots, to friends and family, potential employers, government, banks and other online service providers. It provides a safe, welcoming community space – a critical entry point for people who might otherwise not connect with what's happening around them. Government must invest at an appropriate level in the future to ensure the community continues to receive this outstanding value.

For those who need it most

The vast majority of customers do not have the capacity to pay for the services they receive free of charge at their public library. Library customers include people from disadvantaged backgrounds, often described as 'hard to reach' by other agencies.

Others have recognised the value of the return on investment

The funding of Victorian public libraries lags behind most other states. Funding is 17% less than that of public libraries in New South Wales (with a similar size of population) and 24% behind Western Australia. (National and State Libraries of Australasia 2010).

Impressive statistics

In the 2008–09 financial year, there were:

- 44 municipal public library services in Victoria;
- 256 municipal public library branches;
- 27 mobile libraries and 389 stops;
- 30 other service points e.g. general stores;
- 27.2 million visits by library customers;
- 31 million virtual visits via library websites;
- 917,000 participants in library programs; and
- more than 48% of Victorians (2.5 million) were library members.

The popularity of public libraries

In 2007–08, there was \$191 million of expenditure on public libraries in Victoria, returning \$681 million in community benefit. Applying the same multiple to 2008–09, there was \$194.8 million of expenditure, returning \$693.5 million in community benefits.

- Public library members in Victoria could fill the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) more than 25 times over.
- The number of public library members in the state equates to more than 10 times the population of Victoria's second largest city, Geelong.
- There are more public libraries than there are McDonalds restaurants in Victoria.
- For every person who attends the Melbourne Cup Carnival, there are seven who participate in Victorian public library programs.

Per capita expenditure on Australian public libraries

State/territory	Expenditure per capita on public libraries 2008–09	Comparison with Victorian expenditure per capita
South Australia	\$45.97	+28%
Western Australia	\$44.69	+24%
New South Wales	\$41.95	+17%
Queensland	\$40.86	+14%
Victoria	\$35.89	
Tasmania	\$34.10	
Northern Territory	\$32.01	
Australian Capital Territory	\$30.50	