

The National Broadband Network and Public Libraries:



**The necessity of future proofing our services
as high speed broadband changes our society**

**2012 Shared Leadership Program
for Victorian Public Library Staff**

The project team would like to express their thanks to the State Library of Victoria and the Public Libraries Victoria Network for the opportunity to participate in the Shared Leadership Program.

We would also like to express our gratitude to our project sponsor Carolyn Macvean for her support, enthusiasm and generosity of time; our individual library services and managers for supporting our involvement in the 2012 Shared Leadership Program, and the program facilitators Sue Upton and John Martin for their enthusiasm both for the program and the future of libraries.

The NBN project team:

Kat Cain- Geelong Regional Library Corporation

Christina Davidson- Whitehorse-Manningham Libraries

Barbara Johnson- Moreland City Libraries

Ned Railic- Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

Radmila Sekulic- Glen Eira Libraries

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. What are the key themes relevant to libraries?
 - 3.1 Digital literacy
 - 3.2 Digital inclusion
 - 3.3 Information access
 - 3.4 Building cultural and social capital
4. What are the potential roles libraries can play in the NBN?
 - 4.1 To provide the 3rd space
 - 4.2 To provide informed staff with specialist skills
 - 4.3 To provide online access
 - 4.4 To provide educational programs to the community
 - 4.5 To support and partner with local government and community organisations
 - 4.6 To network with the public library community
5. What do public libraries need to consider when future proofing for the NBN?
 - 5.1 NBN rollout timeline
 - 5.2 Infrastructure
 - 5.3 Education and training
 - 5.4 Applications
 - 5.5 Services and programs
 - 5.6 Accessible content
 - 5.7 Funding
6. Conclusion
7. Core References
8. Further Reading
9. Appendix i : SWOT analysis of future proofing public libraries for the NBN
10. Appendix ii: The National Digital Economy Strategy and public library planning
11. Appendix iii: Funding opportunities

1. Executive summary

Public libraries are expected by their users to be ahead of trends and to anticipate user needs. Libraries have long provided a neutral and an accessible centre of information in our society. This traditional information gateway role has expanded in our current digital age to encompass Information Communication Technology [ICT] access for users, along with user expectation of library staff ICT proficiency. This demand is set to increase with the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN). The NBN is the major technology infrastructure project for Australia to provide ubiquitous, high speed broadband to all Australians to enable effective participation in the digital economy.

This report investigates the potential of the NBN for public libraries and the prospective risks if libraries fail to capitalise on this opportunity. Public library managers must be aware that the NBN rollout is more than just an infrastructure change. It will revolutionise online applications and services, with resultant changes in user expectation and staff skill sets. Moreover, in review of NBN literature relevant to libraries, a number of key themes emerge: digital literacy; digital inclusion; information access; and the building of cultural and social capital.

An exploration of the role of public libraries in a networked society therefore strongly shapes this report. Libraries must empower their communities to fully engage in an online environment. The elements which will effect digital engagement in libraries are provision of space, internet access, programs, training, service delivery, partnerships with community and government organisations, and networking with other libraries.

This report also analyses what public libraries need to take into account when future proofing for the NBN. Consideration of factors such as the NBN rollout timeline, infrastructure, education and training, applications, services and programs, accessible content and funding are vital to libraries being ahead of user needs.

Following on from this, is an evaluation of how the National Digital Economy Strategy can inform public library strategic planning to ensure public libraries have a relevant and active place in Australia's networked society.

Pivotal recommendations to emerge from this report are that public libraries must have a proactive role within their councils and get involved in the NBN rollout planning, future proof their infrastructure, up skill their staff and recruit specialist IT staff, provide ongoing training for their users and position themselves to be attractive to funding bodies.

The findings of this report indicate that NBN future proofing is a high priority for the public library industry. If libraries do not strategically situate themselves in advance of the NBN they will lose the opportunity to advance their position as community hubs and information specialists.

2. Introduction

Why should public libraries be interested in the NBN rollout?

There is an expectation in our community that libraries are information providers, and that we will always be at the forefront of information technology. To maintain this expectation we need to remain relevant and proactive; future proofing our organisations to ensure our resources are best allocated to meet community need.

This report is designed to provide public libraries with an overview to the themes, roles and implications of library delivery that the NBN will directly affect. Libraries need to be aware the NBN rollout is more than an infrastructure change. It will revolutionise applications and online services; the expectations of public library involvement in local business, community engagement and government service delivery.

What is the NBN in the context of public libraries?

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is Australia's first national wholesale-only, open access communications network that is being built to bring high speed broadband and telecommunication services within the reach of all Australian premises. The NBN will utilise three technologies; fibre, fixed wireless and satellite. Within the next decade, the plan is for every home, school and workplace in the country to have access to the high speed broadband¹.

Australia is currently ranked 18th amongst OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) member states for broadband penetration, we are lagging behind the worlds digital economies. The NBN intends to place Australia among the top 5 OECD nations to provide broadband at home, "Ensuring that Australia is a leading digital economy by 2020 requires collaboration by government, industry and the community"².

¹ NBN Co Limited, 'NBN Rollout', www.nbnco.com.au/rollout/, 2012, (accessed 1 August 2012)

² Australian Government, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 'National Digital Economy Strategy', 2011, p. 18, <http://www.nbn.gov.au/the-vision/digitaleconomystrategy/> (accessed 4 August 2012)

This will provide users with broadband speeds up to 10 times the current broadband speed, with vastly improved uploading, downloading and streaming capabilities. The objective of the NBN is to facilitate the creation of a network society—a society that is structured in its dominant functions and processes around networks³—and to foster digital engagement for our communities. This has massive implications as to how we all use the internet, how we communicate online, and how we send and consume information.

By running a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis on the impacts of the NBN on public library service delivery, we were able to identify relevant key themes, the potential roles for public libraries in the NBN and recommendations for public library managers.

³ M. Castells, *The rise of the network society*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 2000, p.408

3. What are the key themes relevant to libraries?

3.1 Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion includes physical access and the skills necessary to use the technology.

Social groups which stand to benefit most from improved access to high speed broadband include those in rural and remote areas, Indigenous Australians, people with disabilities or special needs, the elderly, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and those in poor socio-economic circumstances⁴. However, these groups are often those who have the lowest levels of digital literacy, and therefore require the most support. Already there are organisations that use the videoconferencing capacity of the NBN, such as the planned Vidkids (with Vision Australia) that provides improved health and education services to children with hearing and/or vision impairment in regional and remote areas⁵

Core to the NBN rollout, arising from the federal government's Commitment to Regional Australia (2010)⁶, is the prioritisation of fibre optic and satellite services to regional areas. Consequently, this commitment means that these regions will be amongst the first to receive NBN powered services. This will have a direct impact on regional library organisations, who will be amongst the first to experience the NBN's impacts. As noted throughout the 2012 Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC) review submissions, regional libraries have particular funding concerns of how to meet their support responsibilities.

While the provision of technology is required to address digital exclusion, it is not enough on its own. ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) notes that,

⁴ S. Coker and L. Johnstone, 'National Broadband Network: implications for libraries and local governments', December 2011, p. 3, http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/206594/SLQ_PLAG_NBN_20120123.pdf (accessed September 2012)

⁵ Vidkids, www.sheperdcentre.org.au/for-children (accessed 2 December 2012)

⁶ Australian Government, 'Commitment to Regional Australia, 2010, <http://roboakeshott.com/system/files/images/Regional%20Aust%20package.pdf>, (accessed September 2012)

“not only is high speed broadband required for regional Australia to support improved education, health, social and economic conditions, it is critical that high quality information be made available with local support, particularly through public libraries”⁷.

3.2 Digital literacy

Digital literacy skills are required by users to engage with the benefits of the technology. People who are already behind in their digital literacy knowledge are at risk of being left further behind as technology advances and applications range increases with the additional capabilities of high speed broadband.

Current levels of online engagement raise concerns regarding digital literacy in our community. Notably, the ABS 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey estimates that 46% of Australian adults are still defined as ‘prose-illiterate’⁸. A basic level of prose literacy is required to develop digital literacy skills, making this statistic exceedingly relevant to levels of digital engagement and potential digital literacy strategies.

As identified by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), “Targeted action is required to minimise the extent to which digital exclusion overlaps with, and exacerbates, social exclusion and to maximise the extent to which the benefits ... are enjoyed by all Australian families and communities”⁹. There is an expectation by users that libraries are positioned to provide knowledge and resources to address this community need. Current government funded initiatives include: Digital Hubs and the Broadband for Seniors program¹⁰.

⁷ Submission from ALIA to the House of Representatives, Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, ‘Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network’, 2011, p.2

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2006, [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4228.0Main%20Features22006%20\(Reissue\)?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4228.0&issue=2006%20\(Reissue\)&num=&view=.](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4228.0Main%20Features22006%20(Reissue)?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4228.0&issue=2006%20(Reissue)&num=&view=.) (accessed 4 December 2012)

⁹ Australian Government, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, p. 21

¹⁰ http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/digital_hubs_program
www.necseniors.net.au.

3.3 Information Access

“The Government’s National Economy Strategy set a goal that by 2020, four out of five Australians will choose to engage with the government through the internet or by other types of online service”¹¹.

Federal, state and local governments will be using the NBN to further place their resources and interaction online. The Federal government initiatives relating to NBN opportunities are heavily focused on how online access to government services and healthcare services will be encouraged.

According to the DBCDE, “given a choice, most people would prefer to use an e-government channel to access a government service... ubiquitous, reliable broadband will allow many government services to be accessed online in a way people prefer”¹². Regardless of how people prefer to access government information, it is clear that government services are increasingly being provided online and physical access may be limited.

The ALIA Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network recognises that the “national broadband strategy must include recognition of the huge demand and exponentially growing expectations in communities for assistance from public library staff in using electronic services, not only for government information, but for everyday living skills. This includes e-banking, setting up a mobile phone, online shopping, and setting up an e-mail account”¹³.

¹¹ S. Conroy, ‘Local Government to benefit from the NBN’, 22/6/2011, http://www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2011/202, (accessed September 2012)

¹² NBN Co Limited, ‘Opportunities of the National Broadband Network’, http://www.nbn.gov.au/files/2011/05/2012_59009-Opportunities-of-the-NBN-FACT-SHEET-WEB.pdf, (accessed August 2012)

¹³ Submission from ALIA to the House of Representatives, Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, ‘Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network’, 2011, <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/role.nbn.pdf>, (accessed August 2012)

3.4 Building cultural and social capital

The State Library of Queensland paper *National Broadband Network- Implications for Libraries and Local Governments* suggests that “wider availability of broadband services will allow the digital collections of museums, galleries and libraries in Australia and overseas to be accessed and enjoyed by everyone, including remote and isolated people”¹⁴. This provides all sorts of opportunities for the preservation, maintenance, and access of specific cultural materials; broadening the reach of the museums and organisations responsible for facilitating cultural content. This has already been utilised by the National Library of Australia in using crowdsourcing to edit content in digitalisation projects, amongst others.

There is also great capacity for NBN technology to facilitate social development. According to National Digital Economy Strategy, “greater digital engagement can boost productivity. IT can bridge distances and improve service delivery for regional and rural Australians. It can improve educational and health outcomes, allow for better management of the country’s growing and ageing population, promote social inclusion and facilitate more environmentally sustainable management of the built and natural environment”¹⁵. Public libraries already have a key role in the facilitation of building social capital in our communities by providing accessible creative spaces as cultural hubs; the NBN provides the means to enhance these spaces.

¹⁴ S. Coker and L. Johnstone, p. 4

¹⁵ Australian Government, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, p. 12

4. What are the potential roles libraries can play in the NBN?

In order to strategically plan for the NBN, public libraries need to be clear on what their role is in a networked society.

4.1 To provide the 3rd space

The 3rd space is a social and community space that anchors community life, enhancing social and cultural capital. It is separate from home (1st place) and work (2nd place). Ray Oldenburg describes the 3rd place as central to local democracy, cohesion and community vitality¹⁶. In a library context, it is a combination of a cultural community hub environment supported by technologies that deliver these services.

The internet is no longer a novelty for discretionary use. It is an essential part of life and work. More and more government services are required to be accessed online. However not everyone has access to personal internet use at work or online access at home. Fast broadband offers significant potential for public libraries to enhance the 3rd place experience.

The Australian Government has identified increased teleworking as one of its key NBN strategies. Its goal is to have at least 12% of Australian employees having a teleworking arrangement with their employer by 2020¹⁷. In this context, teleworking is defined as working from home, the use of mobile devices in transit or at a different place of business. For many people, working from home is not a practical option. Libraries provide the perfect working 'at home' alternative. Libraries could also provide videoconferencing facilities and other services to support these workers.

A high speed broadband 3rd space also provides a place for people to access online recreational activities such as interactive gaming, involvement in crowd sourcing activities and social networking.

¹⁶ R. Oldenburg, *The great good place*, New York, Marlow and Co, 1999.

¹⁷ Australian Government, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, p. 40

4.2 To provide informed staff with specialist skills

As libraries transition from lending to learning, competent professionals are required to navigate and guide people through all the online databases and applications to help communities capitalise on the NBN and to provide the hardware to use them.

Library staff need to continue to meet public expectations as search specialists and knowledge navigators; they need to be aware of relevant trends and professionally engaged in order to offer a best practice service. Library staff also need to support the critical role that libraries play to meet the lifelong learning needs for many Australians, including immigrants and refugees, low socio-economic groups, the unemployed, students, seniors, and those with low literacy.

Many people in our community do not have the time, skills or finances necessary to keep up with the latest hardware technologies and online applications. To keep up with new innovations, they need competent professionals to turn to. It is an expectation that library staff will be able to help users with a variety of platforms and devices.

A common theme expressed in the MAC review submissions for Tomorrow's Library¹⁸ was the challenge for library services to have adequately trained staff with contextualised IT knowledge to support their users with their technical needs. ALIA has recommended that it work with the Government to develop a range of programs through libraries to support internet education and skills training to ensure greater usage and benefit from the NBN. In order to foster this digital literacy support for all Australians, library professionals need ongoing professional development around digital literacy. To meet digital literacy and inclusion challenges, ongoing planning, and funding needs to be provided for staff training.

¹⁸ Department of Planning and Community Development, 'Tomorrows Library', <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/public-library-support/ministerial-advisory-council-on-public-libraries/tomorrows-library> (accessed 2 August 2012)

4.3 To provide online access

Public libraries need to continue to provide free access to resources and technology to position themselves as access points for the digitally excluded. Access to quality information creates better informed communities, and librarians are specialist information seekers who can assist their users to find and access authoritative information.

For libraries to successfully position themselves as access points they need to ensure that their infrastructure is efficiently matched to NBN infrastructure so that the maximum benefit can be obtained from the augmented capacity the NBN provides. Notably, with the NBN enhancing the capabilities of information access, user expectations of delivery and volume of content is raised. There will be an increased community expectation that libraries be able to provide access to up-to-date equipment and have the technical support necessary to use and troubleshoot these devices.

4.4 To provide educational programs to the community

Libraries are already concerned with empowering communities to fully engage in an online environment. The NBN's impact on the community will increase expectations on the level of training that the library provides in regards to all new technology, as well as the NBN itself.

As the speed of the NBN drives information and services online, there will be an increased demand on libraries to continue to provide relevant training in current environments.

According to Kiel¹⁹, learning to use the internet creates positive experiences and future opportunities, especially for older people. It generates cognitive stimulation which helps prevent intellectual decline. It also provides a platform for other forms of online engagement and learning.

¹⁹ J. M. Kiel, 'The digital divide: internet and email use by the elderly', *Informatics for Health and Social Care*, vol. 30, no.1, 2005, pp. 19-23.

Training and education by libraries can take many forms, and will continue to be contingent on community need. Knowledge areas that will be enhanced by the NBN could include video streaming, gaming, online services and access to the library's own e-collections.

4.5 To support and partner with local government and community organisations

Libraries have a history of partnering with local organisations, and fast speed broadband presents an opportunity to strengthen these partnerships and broaden their user base.

Libraries need to plan for services for assisting digitally excluded groups to participate in the digital economy, and partner with local community organisations, community houses, and welfare organisations to maximise their service provision without duplicating existing services.

Additionally, local government, community groups and business will be able to use library facilities to demonstrate and educate the public as more health and education applications and programs come online.

4.6 To network with the public library community

To take full advantage of the benefits of the NBN, it is imperative that libraries work together and share knowledge, strategy and experience, especially given the rollout will affect libraries at different times, some years apart. ALIA has already created several information and advocacy documents which can support strategy and planning for public library communities.

Meeting the key objectives of the NBN that relate to public library services suggest we have a common goal which will be best met through collaborative networking. Established PLVN networks can easily facilitate this within their current role, and provide ongoing support and training. Library organisations would greatly benefit by

engaging in these forums so they are not reinventing the wheel with every innovation designed to meet NBN implications.

5. What do libraries need to consider when future proofing for the NBN?

The following recommendations are suggested for Victorian Public libraries:

5.1 NBN rollout timeline

The estimated rollout of the NBN is between 2012 and 2020. As underground cabling works are involved in the rollout it will mean that not all libraries will be connected at once; library services will find some of their branches will have NBN rolled out before others. These services will need to plan for how to deal with differences in broadband speed within their organisation in addition to their diverse user needs.

If libraries do not situate themselves in advance of the NBN they will lose the opportunity to take advantage of their position as community hubs and information specialists. Local governments are already active in preparing for the NBN and articulating their needs and concerns²⁰. Libraries must not assume they will be part of this process; they must actively make it happen. According to the 2011 ALIA Internet Access in Public Libraries Survey only 29% of library services were in discussion with their council or other bodies about the NBN²¹.

Recommendation: Library managers need to have a proactive role within their councils and to have input into NBN roll out decision-making. This needs to happen well ahead of any announcements of NBN in their local area.

Recommendation: Communicate with other library services in order to capitalise on their experiences, learnings, and beneficial strategies, e.g. Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries who successfully received digital hub funding.

²⁰ S. Coker and L. Johnstone, 'National Broadband Network: implications for libraries and local governments', December 2011, p. 4, http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/206594/SLQ_PLAG_NBN_20120123.pdf (accessed September 2012)

²¹ Australian Library and Information Association, 'Internet access in Public Libraries Survey 2011', <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/Internet.Access.Survey.2011.pdf>, (accessed 1 August 2012)

Recommendation: Libraries need to monitor NBN developments in their area, to assert themselves in local advocacy groups, and provide input about the libraries ongoing role in the community; a strategy seen in action with groups like Broadband Today Alliance, a coalition of local councils that collaborate and share knowledge on the NBN, Broadband and the Digital Economy.

Recommendation: Library services get involved in the NBN rollout planning, find out who the key players are in your council/region, engage local ICT interest groups, and be an active stakeholder.

Recommendation: Library Advocacy bodies ALIA or PLVN to create a statewide/national digital engagement plan for public libraries.

5.2 Infrastructure

Libraries need to plan for the physical aspects of the NBN in new building and refurbishment plans to avoid the costs of retrofitting.

Library buildings need to provide appropriate spaces to meet our objectives in supporting an equitable digital community and economy.

Recommendation: Include spaces for private video conferencing for online education, social connectivity, telehealth and telework.

Recommendation: Include spaces for training and collaborative content creation by the community.

Adequate computer hardware and network infrastructure is essential for public libraries to prepare for the NBN rollout. The current baseline ALIA standard is 1 PC per 3000 population or part thereof minimum, or enhanced 1 PC per 2000 population or part thereof.

Recommendation: These standards need to be reviewed in light of the not only the NBN rollout but also the changing levels of digital engagement.

5.3 Education and Training

Libraries are trusted providers of information and training. In order to deliver the goals of the NBN libraries need a skilled workforce. Training needs to be in place well before the rollout of the NBN. Library staff need training and skills in IT. It is vital staff have the skills relevant to providing IT support and services to users and to be champions of digital literacy.

Libraries already train their users in IT, and this will only increase as a result of changing technologies and the changing online environment provided by the NBN. Applications, especially video and online collaborative, will become prolific. Many government and social services will be accessible mainly online and libraries will need to support users in this environment.

Recommendation: In addition to skilled library staff who are competent in terms of social media and eServices, public libraries need dedicated IT professionals who are proficient in the following areas:

- **troubleshooting,**
- **ICT maintenance**
- **Hardware and software updating**
- **providing remote assistance to library users,**
- **keeping abreast of digital developments relevant to users**
- **specialist knowledge in purchasing devices**

Recommendation: Public libraries need to consider strategies and employment position descriptions to attract IT professionals into library field.

5.4 Applications

The NBN will usher in a new wave of applications, particularly video apps. It is estimated that 90% of internet traffic post-NBN will be video streaming ²². NBN will make online TV, live streaming, and video conferencing faster, reliable and of superior quality. This will attract new users to the library that have not considered us as a resource before.

Recommendation: Library staff provided with sufficient training themselves in order to proficiently guide users in the use of various video apps.

Recommendation: Libraries to provide collaborative creative applications, to engage and capture their community cultural artifacts.

5.5 Services and programs

As a result of the new developments in online applications, libraries need to review how broadband capability can transform the design of programs and services.

Recommendation: With the increased capabilities the NBN will provide, libraries should review the delivery of their services and programs to continue meeting community demands and needs. This can include:

- **Training programs**
- **Programs utilising video streaming apps eg, webinars**
- **Sharing events across libraries e.g. streamed storytime, podcasts**
- **Free eResources eg. downloadable music, eBooks, eAudiobooks**

Recommendation: Partnerships with local/state/federal government to use libraries as venues for public interaction with government online, public awareness, and education about the NBN.

²² T. Denison, 'Broadband, Libraries and Communities' Broadband and Libraries, 3rd Melbourne Unconference 2011, <http://yprl.vic.gov.au/about/organisation/unconference>, (accessed 21 August 2012)

As previously discussed, the technological implications of the NBN will have a direct effect on the social and cultural capital of our communities. Libraries need to consider how they can mitigate these effects and empower their users.

Recommendation: Targeted programs to be designed according to specific community need. Business plan projects could include:

- Targeting baby boomers and older people
- Targeting 'hard to reach' communities at risk of digital exclusion

Recommendation: Developing targeted training programs for use by public libraries to teach relevant IT skills to access information and services online. In addition, develop user training programs that focus on innovative technologies and new devices eg. video conferencing applications

Recommendation: Consideration of alternative service delivery models for digital literacy programs e.g. Train the trainer, volunteer, or buddy systems

Recommendation: Investigate the role of libraries in regards to provision of devices (currently each library service is making the decision for themselves) and the need for standards of best practice.

5.6 Accessible content

Libraries need to review their computer and internet usage policies to take into account the increase in download and upload capabilities. Current policy is reflective of bandwidth that has implied limitations.

Recommendation: Libraries to review if increased bandwidth will implicate them in possible copyright infringement by their users.

Governments have already indicated that many if not most government services will be moved into online environments. For communities, this means very personal information will be accessed and communicated online in public spaces. For libraries, there will be increased concern from users that their information is secure, safe, and remains private.

Recommendation: Libraries need to consider if their current hardware and physical space considers public privacy concerns. Libraries may also find themselves with a demand to provide cybersafety information for their communities.

Recommendation: Investigate the possibility of offering different bandwidth capabilities e.g. lower bandwidth (free) for general public and high bandwidth (at a charge) for organisations and business use.

5.7 Funding

It will be vital for libraries to access additional funding to meet the requirements created and exacerbated by the NBN.

Recommendation: Public libraries to position themselves to be eligible and attractive funding recipients by demonstrating their existing and growing role as community hubs, and their good relationships with local community groups and organisations. (Refer to appendix iii for details of funding opportunities.)

Recommendation: Library managers to be aware of funding possibilities and to ensure they can make themselves attractive for funding and/or partnerships with eligible organisations. The National Digital Economy Strategy outlines areas of interest to government; refer to appendix ii for aligning library planning to the NDES.

6. Conclusion

Within the next decade, all Australians will have the potential for access to high speed broadband, which will revolutionise the way our society communicates, learns, and works. This report has identified the multifaceted roles that public libraries can and should play in the NBN rollout as part of their core service and product provision.

Additionally this report has explored the inherent challenges for public libraries as our society moves towards an accelerated broadband environment. The challenges are complex and composite, largely centred around public libraries effectively aligning themselves with stakeholders to ensure equitable physical access to ICT, high quality information access, that staff are strongly digitally literate in order to foster user digital literacy.

Essentially, public libraries must continue to build on their roles as the cultural hubs of their communities. The recommendations of this report reflect that future proofing for the NBN is critical for the public library industry.

7. References

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2006, [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4228.0Main%20Features22006%20\(Reissue\)?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4228.0&issue=2006%20\(Reissue\)&num=&view=](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4228.0Main%20Features22006%20(Reissue)?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4228.0&issue=2006%20(Reissue)&num=&view=), (accessed 4 December 2012)

Australian Government, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 'National Digital Economy Strategy', 2011, p. 18, <http://www.nbn.gov.au/the-vision/digitaleconomystategy/> (accessed 4 August 2012)

M. Castells, The rise of the network society, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 2000

S. Coker and L. Johnstone, 'National Broadband Network: implications for libraries and local governments', December 2011, p. 3, http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/206594/SLQ_PLAG_NBN_20120123.pdf (accessed September 2012)

S. Conroy, 'Local Government to benefit from the NBN', 22/6/2011, http://www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2011/202, (accessed September 2012)

T. Denison, 'Broadband, Libraries and Communities' Broadband and Libraries, 3rd Melbourne Unconference 2011, <http://yprl.vic.gov.au/about/organisation/unconference>, (accessed 21 August 2012)

Department of Planning and Community Development, 'Tomorrows Library', <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/public-library-support/ministerial-advisory-council-on-public-libraries/tomorrows-library> (accessed 2 August 2012)

J. M. Kiel, 'The digital divide: internet and email use by the elderly', Informatics for Health and Social Care, vol. 30, no.1, 2005, pp. 19-23.

NBN Co Limited, 'NBN Rollout', www.nbnco.com.au/rollout/, 2012, (accessed 1 August 2012)

NBN Co Limited, 'Opportunities of the National Broadband Network', http://www.nbn.gov.au/files/2011/05/2012_59009-Opportunities-of-the-NBN-FACT-SHEET-WEB.pdf, (accessed August 2012)

R. Oldenburg, The great good place, New York, Marlow and Co, 1999.

Submission from ALIA to the House of Representatives, Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, 'Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband

Network”, 2011, <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/role.nbn.pdf>, (accessed August 2012).

8. Further Reading

Australian Library and Information Association, 'Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network, March 2011, <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/role.nbn.pdf>

Coffs Harbour City Council, 'Switched on Coffs: digital strategy', 2011, <http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/learning-and-prospering/Documents/SWITCHED%20ON%20COFFS%20Digital%20Strategy%20lowres.pdf>

S. Coker, 'Library Services at the speed of light', http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2012/Papers/29_Susan.Coker.pdf, 2012

Submission from National and State Libraries Australasia to House Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, 'Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network', March 2011, http://www.dbcde.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/147083/Australian-Government-response-to-the-parliamentary-inquiry-into-the-role-and-potential-of-the-National-Broadband-Network.pdf

R. Duncan, 'Libraries and their role in the digital economy', Public Libraries Australia paper 2011 <http://www.pla.org.au/News/libraries-and-their-role-digital-economy>

T. Frey, 'The Future of Libraries', <http://www.davinciinstitute.com/papers/the-future-of-libraries/>

J. Gans and S. King, 'Policy Forum: Telecommunications. 'Big Bang' Telecommunications reform', 2010, *The Australian Economic Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp 179-86.

J. Goodman, 'Six Reasons Why Public Libraries Should be The First Stop on the Australian National Broadband Network's Rollout', *Aplis* 24(4), December 2011, p. 141

S. Hutley, 'Where's the Strategy?' *Incite*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan 2011: 13-14. NBN Co. <http://www.nbco.com.au>, 2012

Public Libraries of New Zealand, *A strategic framework, 2012-2017*, 2011, <http://www.publiclibrariesofnewzealand.org.nz/strategicframework>

A-M. Schwirtlich, 'Public Libraries and Change: A perspective from Victoria', *Aplis* 23 (1), March 2010, pp. 22-27.

SGS Economics and Planning for the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 'Dollars, sense and Public Libraries: the landmark study of the socio-economic value of Victorian Public Libraries', 2011,
http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/dollars-sense-public-libraries-summary-report_1.pdf

M. Visser and M.A. Ball, 'The Middle Mile: The role of the public library in ensuring access to broadband', *Generating Collaborative Systems for Digital Libraries*, December 2010, p. 187-194

T. Williams, 'Connecting Communities: The impact of broadband on communities in the UK and its implications for Australia' February 2011,
<http://www.rtirc.gov.au/files/2011/12/Huawei-Appendix-1-Connecting-Communities.pdf>

9. Appendix i : SWOT Analysis

S

Strengths

- Easily accessible
- Highly visited and used
- Experience in providing training
- Information specialists
- Centralized locations within the communities
- FREE

W

Weaknesses

- Lack of specialist staff
- Public expectation may outweigh staff expertise
- Lack of funding
- Some locations remote
- Old and inadequate buildings
- Inadequate training
- Hardware infrastructure

O

Opportunities

- Champions of NBN
- Strategic alliances, partnerships
- Improved community engagement
- Increased specialist staff
- Online sharing of events and resources
- Live events broadcast to several locations
- Improve quality and capacity of service delivery

T

Threats

- Users not accessing the physical libraries
- Unable to offer the applications and resources in high demand
- Greater cyber safety risks
- Increased copyright issues
- Cost due to increased online traffic

10. Appendix ii: The National Digital Economy Strategy (2011) and public library planning

National Digital Economy Strategy Goals	Considerations for libraries
1. Online participation by Australian households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access • Training and skills • Remote assistance and support
2. Online engagement by Australian business and not-for-profit organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach • Community engagement plan • Local promotion and resource sharing
3. Smart management of our environment and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green buildings, processes and services • Access to Sustainability Resources • Engagement with the local government to promote sustainability applications and programs
4. Improved health and aged care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private space for telehealth consultations • Outreach for housebound users • Broadband for Seniors • Targeted training
5. Expanded online education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet space • Staff assistance and training • Access to quality information
6. Increased teleworking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate space • Improved infrastructure and equipment e.g. higher bandwidth • Training (Specialists)
7. Improved online government service delivery and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and support • Partnerships with government programs
8. Greater digital involvement in regional Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide awareness of NBN • Training and support • Access

11. Appendix iii: funding opportunities

Digital Hubs Program

The Digital Hubs program is part of the Digital Communities initiative of the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. The program targeted to the Digital Economy Goal that by 2020 Australia will rank in the top five nations in the OECD in the percentage of households that connect to broadband at home.

The Australian Government will fund \$13.6 million in grants over three years from 2011–12 to establish a Digital Hubs program aimed at training communities in the skills needed to be active online users and optimise the benefits provided by the NBN.

The goal of the program is to create Digital Hubs in 40 communities where work on the rollout of the NBN has already commenced. The Digital Hubs will provide local residents with free online training and the opportunity to familiarise themselves with NBN-enabled services and technology.

([http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs and initiatives/digital hubs program](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/digital_hubs_program))

Digital Enterprise Program

The Australian Government will fund \$10 million in grants over three years from 2011–12 to establish a Digital Enterprise aimed at training and supporting small-to-medium enterprises and not-for-profit organisations (including local cultural organisations) in 40 communities and optimise the benefits to them provided by the NBN and greater digital engagement.

([http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs and initiatives/digital enterprise program](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/digital_enterprise_program)). It is worth investigating the possibilities for libraries to partner with local businesses and/or not-for-profits to provide spaces and/or deliver training programs.

Digital Local Government program

The \$17.1 million Digital Local Government program provides funding to local governments in communities that are among the first to rollout NBN to improve their online services.

([http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs and initiatives/digital local government program](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/digital_local_government_program))

It is worth investigating the possibilities for libraries to access funding for improving their online services.

Broadband for Seniors Program

Broadband for Seniors is an example of an established network, with 2000 internet kiosks providing online access points for older Australians. The government has committed funding of \$10.4 million over four years from 2011-12 to continue the Broadband for Seniors initiative.

The Broadband for Seniors kiosks are targeted at people over 50 to learn how to use computer, access the internet and send emails. The goal is to engage older Australians in the digital economy. Libraries are among the local services that currently provide the Broadband for Seniors Program. They provide free training and access to training materials including an online development course so that they can continue learning at home.

(<http://www.necseniors.net.au/>)

The NBN-enabled Education and Skills Services Program

The NBN-enabled Education and Skills Services program is a four-year initiative commencing from 2011–12, which funds innovative online and interactive education and skills services using the NBN. The \$27.2 million program will fund projects to develop services that:

- connect teachers with learners to address skills shortages and improve teaching and learning experiences
- improve professional development (for example, sharing of resources)
- enhance community links
- facilitate workplace training and assessment to improve workplace productivity.

(http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/nbn-enabled_education_and_skills_services_program)

Digital Regions Initiative

The four-year \$60 million Digital Regions Initiative co-funds - with state, territory and local governments - innovative digital enablement projects through a National Partnership Agreement. The goal is to create collaborative approaches to improve the delivery of education, health and/or emergency services in regional, rural and remote Australian communities.

It is worth investigating the possibilities for rural libraries to access funding for projects collaborating with education, health and/or emergency services.

(http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding_and_programs/digital_regions_initiative)

The Indigenous Communications Program

The Indigenous Communications Program is a \$31 million initiative to help improve communications services in remote Indigenous communities. The program provides essential telephone services, basic public internet access facilities and computer training for many remote Indigenous communities.

May not be relevant in Victoria.

http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding_and_programs/indigenous_communications_program)

Other Initiatives

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is receiving funding for initiatives that will help their regions to capitalise on the advantages of the NBN. Libraries should get involved with their RDA to partner in these initiatives.

<http://rda.gov.au/news/rda-committees-help-regions-get-nbn-ready>)

The National Vocational Education and Training E-learning Strategy (2012–2015) aims to develop projects that will use e-learning to develop digital literacy, foundation and prevocational skills for disadvantaged people.

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/about.htm>)

This funding will require partnerships with educational or community organisations.

Digitisation programs

The Australian Government's report on its Inquiry into the Role and Potential of the National Broadband Network (NBN) Recommendation 11, which states that the government should develop a strategy for the digitisation of Australia's culturally and historically significant content. As such there should be an increase in support for digitisation projects.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ic/nbn/report.htm)

New programs

The Australian Government's report on its Inquiry into the Role and Potential of the National Broadband Network (NBN) discussed using the Broadband for Seniors model to provide further support for digital literacy programs targeted at disadvantaged and digital excluded groups using libraries and not-for-profits groups. This is an opportunity for libraries to develop programs, in partnerships with other community organizations. Other new programs for digital literacy training to particular target groups are likely as the need arises.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ic/nbn/report.htm)

Telework Week

Libraries should investigate ways of generating income from positioning themselves to be hubs for teleworkers.