

4 August 2020

## Submission in response to the NSW Productivity Commission's Review of Infrastructure Contributions in New South Wales

### About the New South Wales Public Libraries Association (NSWPLA)

NSWPLA is the peak body for public libraries across NSW. The role of the Association is to:

- Advocate and lobby for the NSW public library network
- Initiate strategic partnerships
- Champion the public library cause
- Build trust and support
- Provide relevant information
- Foster cooperation and collaboration
- Strengthen the public library network

Membership to the Association is open to all Local Government Councils in NSW that have adopted the NSW Library Act 1939. The Association currently has 100% membership of NSW Councils, which provides a clear imprimatur for NSWPLA to represent the interests of NSW libraries as their recognised peak body.

### Public Libraries in NSW

There are currently 363 public libraries and 23 mobile libraries in NSW.

In 2018-19 there were:

- 2,356 staff employed in NSW libraries
- 3.2 million library members
- 34 million visits
- 40.3 million loans
- 12.1 million visits to library websites
- 3.4 million internet sessions and 6.6 million wifi sessions
- 95,600 programs and event attended by 1.9 million people

Public libraries provide important community spaces where a significant proportion of NSW constituents attend for a wide variety of reasons including education, recreation, entertainment, and social integration.

Libraries provide physical and social focal points for their communities and make a significant contribution to prosperity and wellbeing of constituents. From a physical perspective, library buildings are often architectural landmarks and centrepieces of greenfield developments that make a significant contribution to the liveability of towns and cities. Investment in libraries is investment in communities.

Despite the closure of libraries across the state during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown period, libraries very successfully reinvented their services to meet the changed circumstances. Nevertheless, a post-lockdown survey conducted with library members across Australia by the Australian Library and Information Association revealed that the loss of social interaction that libraries provide was one of the biggest impacts felt by communities.

