SHARE YOUR STORIES
WITH THE WORLD

VICTORIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Public Libraries
Victoria Network

STATE LIBRARY
VICTORIA
What's your story?

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are highly regarded institutions and leaders in the community, with significant influence on local government. The purpose of this report is to support leaders in the Victorian library sector to leverage their relationship with local government and policy makers; and to share their stories and contribute to federal reporting on the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"   Most local governments in Australia place a strong emphasis on sustainability, but few as yet make the direct connection between what they are doing at the local level and the Sustainable Development Goals. You can help your government be one of the first to make this leap." – Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)

WHAT ARE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

In September 2015, Member States of the United Nations (UN) adopted *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This agenda is an inclusive, integrated framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) spanning economic, environmental and social development. By fulfilling this agenda, **"no one will be left behind."**

WHY PUBLIC LIBRARIES?

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has identified, from among the 17 Goals, five that are most relevant to the public library sector. These five Goals sit alongside the commitment to achieving **universal literacy**, recognised in the vision for the UN 2030 Agenda. They are:

Goal 5, Target B: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

Goal 9, Target C: Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

Goal 11, Target 4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

Goal 16, Target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

HOW CAN LIBRARIES CONTRIBUTE?

Victorian public libraries will play a key role in Australia achieving and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals to the United Nations.

Libraries across the state already provide wide-reaching support to their communities including:

- Universal access to information
- Early literacy programs
- Lifelong learning programs
- Access to cultural heritage collections
- Safe spaces for community members, particularly those at risk.

The day-to-day work of our libraries and staff is at the core of what the SDGs hope to achieve: a global commitment to social, economic and environmental wellbeing for the communities we serve.

In supporting the commitment that IFLA and ALIA have made to report on the SDGs to federal government, Victorian public libraries now have the opportunity to share their stories of success on a global stage.

WHAT DO THE SDGs LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

In order to develop an understanding of how we can contribute to reporting on the SDGs, it's useful to consider the programs and services we already deliver and how they map against relevant Goals.[1]

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[1] In recognition of libraries across Victoria offering similar programs, we have avoided naming specific services in examples highlighted in this document.

Goal 5.B

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

> " Libraries support gender equality by providing safe meeting spaces, programs for women and girls on rights and health, and ICT and literacy programs supporting women to build their entrepreneurial skills." – IFLA

Libraries around the state deliver programs that encourage women to connect and interact socially as well as develop new skills. These programs empower women to gain confidence, feel less isolated, apply for employment and enter education.

- *Stepping Stones* and *Job Club* are programs offered in partnership with not-for-profit organisations that are tailored to the needs of migrant and refugee women. These partnership programs provide opportunities to develop new skills and relationships and also connect individuals to other library services and programs.

- In Melbourne's West, Jesuit Social Services deliver a job search program specifically for Sudanese women. In partnership with the local public library, volunteers and staff support women to develop relevant skills that lead to gainful employment. With weekly access to library computers, women in the group are supported to create email addresses, develop basic computer skills and write resumes. Participants learn how to search for employment online, upload their resume, and submit applications. Even after the program is complete, library staff provide ongoing support through library membership, use of computers, and access to printing and online resources.

- The *RoboGals* organisation supports libraries to deliver STEM programs to young girls to explore and develop skills from engineering fields. These popular programs are run in partnership with *RoboGals* in libraries across Victoria and encourage young girls to develop problem solving skills in engineering, science and technology.

INCREASE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND STRIVE TO PROVIDE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

"Libraries are at the heart of research and academic life. They provide access to high speed internet, research infrastructure and skilled professionals. In many countries, public and educational libraries are the major or only providers of public internet access at low or no cost, a key means of increasing connectivity." – IFLA

One of the key services provided by contemporary libraries is free or low-cost access to the Internet. Victorian libraries provide access to 3,790 public access computers booked 3.7 million times, with an additional 3.6 million sessions on WiFi systems annually.[2]

Geelong Regional Library Corporation's new WiFi-enabled Mobile Library

[2] Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries 2015-16, available at:
https://www.publiclibrariesvictoria.net.au/resources

Free library membership is another fundamental service that allows all community members access to online and print resources, digital literacy programs, public access to devices, and daily support from experienced specialists. Library staff support customers with information technology through dedicated classes, one-on-one support and through partnership programs with locally run services, including U3A and AMES.

- Some libraries also provide specialist support programs exploring social media, coding, web development, hosting, digital tools and analytics. Examples include *Device Advice*, *OpenTech*, *E-Help*, *MyGov* and *Tech Help*. These programs are supported by the provision of access to online resources like *Lynda.com*, *Computer School*, and *BizLibrary*.

PROTECT AND SAFEGUARD THE WORLD'S CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

" Libraries have an essential role in safeguarding and preserving invaluable documentary heritage, in any form, for future generations. Culture strengthens local communities and supports inclusive and sustainable development of cities." – IFLA

Public libraries maintain close links with local historical societies and community groups, working in partnership to share, promote and preserve local history for future generations. Many library services maintain online repositories for local resources of historical and cultural significance. Libraries play an essential role in preserving intangible heritage, such as languages, practices and identity.

- In Melbourne's outer west, a dedicated website supports local and community history. The portal is maintained by the library, but recognises and encourages contributions from community members. A number of projects are underway to develop new content for the site with a push to encourage the local community to contribute and develop a sense of ownership. Content includes stories, photos, videos, artefacts and other historical ephemera.

"Postcard of seven men dressed in army uniform from World War One.,"
Wyndham History, accessed May 11, 2017, http://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/

- In Melbourne's outer south-east, a local library service in partnership with local Aboriginal Elders and a public gardens program established an Indigenous Bush Playgroup. Delivered 'on Country', the program connects Koori children and their extended families to Boon Wurrung Country, traditional knowledge, languages, stories, song and dance, in an effort to strengthen their cultural identity, well-being and emergent literacy development. The public library's early years outreach program officer supports the delivery of the playgroup each week by providing Indigenous storybooks and natural craft activities to bring the stories to life.

Materials, crafts and stories used in Playgroup sessions.
Image courtesy Sarah Bingle, Casey-Cardinia Libraries Corporation.

ENSURE PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

" To realise access to information fully, everyone needs both access and skills to use information effectively as outlined in the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development. Libraries have the skills and resources to help governments, institutions and individuals communicate, organise, structure and use information effectively for development." – IFLA

Access to information is an important driver for libraries and is included in many libraries' corporate or strategic plans.[3] Skilled library staff also enable patrons to connect with others via web services including email and social media. They also support improved understanding of how the web and digital services work, as they relate to information online and in print.

Libraries have extensive collections in languages other than English (LOTE) and a very strong focus on English language learning and digital literacy skills for people of non-English speaking backgrounds. Print collections and online news resources are available in different languages and vary from service to service to reflect their demographics and support emerging communities.

• Responding to the needs of diverse local migrant communities, a library service in Melbourne's north has developed a suite of programs and services targeted at culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD). They maintain extensive adult and junior LOTE collections, including Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese, among others. The service also hosts a twice-weekly Conversation Café, where recent migrants and English-language beginners come together to practice their English over a cup of tea. Newspapers in various languages are also available online. Together these programs and services empower individuals from diverse backgrounds to form communities, develop social networks, and engage with the library to further their learning and personal development.

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[3] Based on a survey conducted as part of the Shared Leadership Program, 2017

STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALISE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"Libraries provide a global network of community-based institutions ready to support national development plans locally and nationally, and a resource for improved decision-making." – IFLA

Libraries have supported national and statewide initiatives funded by government and business institutions to deliver opportunities for people to improve their digital literacy skills. In this way, public libraries continue to function as community hubs, connecting their patrons to a vast array of government services, community groups and networks.

With more and more government services available online, communities must go online to access benefits from Medicare, Centrelink, Veterans' Affairs and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As libraries are often the only place at-risk members of the community can access the internet at little to no cost, there is a clear need to provide support with these services.

Through government and corporate supported programs including *Victorian Tech Savvy Seniors* and the *Go Digi: Year of Digital Inclusion*, the collective network of public libraries has been able to help realise the goal of enabling all citizens to develop improved digital literacy skills.

WHAT NEXT?

In the years leading up to 2030, ALIA and IFLA will be looking to libraries to share stories and data with councils and peak bodies to support their work with federal and international policy makers.

You can report on the great work in your libraries right now by sharing your stories on the IFLA website.[4]

ALIA is also working on collecting important data around council policy in Victoria in relation to Goal 16 and needs your help to do it. ALIA has identified three simple steps you can take right now to support them.

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[4] Submissions are invited at: https://goo.gl/1QuEXi

THINK GLOBAL,
ACT LOCAL

Most local governments in Australia place a strong emphasis on sustainability but few as yet make the direct connection between what they are doing at the local level and the Sustainable Development Goals of the world's 2030 Agenda.

Help your government be one of the first to make this leap.

Step 1 Include the Sustainable Development Goals in your library service's strategic plan, either as part of the main body of the document, as an addition to the existing document, or as a standalone policy.

These are some words you might consider using as the basis for your statement:

" **We are part of the global drive towards social, economic and environmental goals.**

[Name of library service] is contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed by the United Nations' 193 member countries, by ensuring that:

- There is free public access to information in print and online
- There is free public access to computers
- There is support for early literacy and lifelong learning
- Items of cultural heritage are accessible today and are preserved for future generations.

We also provide:

- Information and training in new skills needed for education and employment
- Public access to health and wellness information that helps individuals and families stay healthy

- Safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for meetings, study, group activities and personal relaxation
- High speed internet connectivity."

We suggest that you link your statement to resources available from IFLA,[5] which sets out each of the 17 Goals and how libraries contribute to the targets. For example, you might print out an A2 or A3 poster (landscape), with your statement and branding on one half of the page and the IFLA graphic on the other.

There are further logos and graphic resources on the United Nations website.[6]

Step 2 Share your statement with the council executive.

This is a good opportunity to showcase how libraries work together nationally and internationally to the benefit of their communities.

There is plenty of information available from IFLA[7] to help you familiarise yourself with libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals worldwide. There is also a summary of the information on the ALIA website.[8]

[5] https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/ifla-poster-sdgs.pdf
[6] http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/
[7] https://start.me/p/ZMXJQn/libraries-and-the-un-2030-agenda
[8] https://www.alia.org.au/advocacy-and-campaigns/think-global-act-local

Step 3 If your council has not done so already, ask your council executive to consider making a broader statement about its support for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Most councils already talk about sustainability and are working towards more efficient use of public transport, eco-friendly planning and development, reduced energy consumption, recycling and reduction of household waste, and so on.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide the opportunity to link these local initiatives to a global imperative. If you were to write to the senior team, you might consider something along these lines.

> To the Council Executive,
>
> Libraries have been closely involved with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a national and international level. For example, our peak body, the Australian Library and Information Association, is organising the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Summit for library and information professionals on the Gold Coast in 2018.
>
> At a local level, we have linked the services we already offer our residents to the Sustainable Development Goals, to show how well council is delivering against the public access to information, culture and information technology targets. (Include your statement.)
>
> The Sustainable Development Goals provide an excellent opportunity to link the achievements we have made locally with this major global drive towards better social, economic and environmental outcomes for everyone.
>
> We would like to propose that council consider making a policy statement or including a form of words in its next strategic plan to make an explicit link between our sustainability initiatives and the world's 2030 Agenda."

Please let us know if you are willing to participate in further initiatives relating to the SDGs. Send your contact details to advocacy@alia.org.au.