



Coral Hutchison
Manager Community Development
Nambucca Shire Council
PO Box 177, MACKSVILLE NSW 2447

6 May 2019

Dear Coral,

Nambucca Heads Library Extension and Cultural Activation Project

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the plans for the extended Nambucca Heads Library and surrounding cultural facilities. I understand from our discussions that that \$1.5M in funding from the Regional Cultural Fund has been secured, and that Council is looking more closely at options for the project as it moves from concept plans to a concrete project.

Public Library Trends

Public library building and space requirements have evolved significantly over the past 20 years, based on a broader base of services and high usage.

NSW is experiencing a sustained public library boom with upward trends in library use over recent years. Some observations on NSW public library trends include:

Sustained high usage of facilities and collections:

- Physical visits to public libraries were over 35 million in 2016/17.
- Loans of collection items were 42.1 million in 2016/17.
- Collection development, management, display and circulation remains significant business for public libraries.

Internet use and online services have experienced extremely high growth over a relatively short period:

- Virtual visits to public library websites grew by over 4 million to 13.2 million visits between 2012/13 and 2016/17.
- Internet bookings in public libraries have increased from 5.4 million in 2012/13 to 11.3 million sessions in 2016/17. Wi-Fi sessions account for most of this growth.

The number of public programs offered in libraries, including early literacy programs, or programs for seniors, and the number of people attending these programs has grown significantly over the past 5 years to 1.6M per annum.

These trends highlight the need for a continued focus on quality lending collections, IT and internet provision, and notably the need for space for people to use services and interact.

The trends are driving changes in the size and shape of library spaces. More space is required for:

- lending collections
- children's and young adult areas
- meeting rooms
- casual and formal seating and desks
- programs and events
- internet PCs and wi-fi access

This growth in demand is driving growth in the size of library buildings.

Many NSW public libraries were built at a time when the prevailing service model was book display and book lending. These library buildings are not adequate to meet the needs of communities in the current era and will be even less able to meet needs into the future.

Modern library buildings need to be able to continue to provide these traditional services for expanding populations, and also provide space for other services.

Contemporary and future public libraries must be buildings that:

- provide easily accessible collections in a range of formats
- provide a cultural hub and focal point for the community
- are functional and multipurpose, accommodating a range of activities and uses
- enable user-friendly access to the latest in technology
- attract a wide range of users
- provide areas for relaxation, research, leisure and learning
- have effective and efficient delivery of services.

The State Library has developed public library building guidelines which outline size needs, locational considerations and flexibility of spaces.¹

The following commentary on the plans for the Nambucca Heads Library Extension and Cultural Activation project has been developed with reference to the guidelines.

¹ Library Council of NSW (2012) *People Places: a guide for public library buildings in NSW*
<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/people-places-tools>

Yours sincerely,

Cameron Morley
Manager, Public Library Services

Documents provided by Nambucca

- 1) Concept Plans, including site photographs
- 2) Regional Cultural Fund Grant Application for the extension, including Business Case (September 2018) and Nambucca Shire Library Strategy (draft for exhibition August 2018).
- 3) Issues Paper: extension to Nambucca Heads Library and Activation of Cultural Space Project (10 April 2019).

State Library Commentary

The State Library has examined the documents listed above and offers the following commentary on the proposed library extension project.

The rationale and business case for the extension and upgrade to the library, halls and amenities is very strong, and it is not surprising that the project was successful in the Regional Cultural Fund grants program. The co-location of the library with these other community facilities is particularly attractive, and will produce a vibrant and complementary set of spaces.

The *Expected Outcomes* summarised in section 2.4 of the Business Case are compelling and the State Library endorses the points listed.

The concept plans provided show a logical extension to the precinct which currently includes underutilised outdoor space between the library and other community facilities.

The existing Nambucca Library, at approximately 240 square metres, is not adequate to serve the population catchment. A report by the State Library based on an *assessment and compliance* visit to Nambucca in 2016 recommended that a library of at least 690 square metres is necessary for the catchment population, which includes Nambucca Heads, Valla and Bowraville, and excludes the Macksville catchment.

The State Library's *People Places* tools available online enable a tailored approach to library size specification based on population catchment, collection size, seating and services offered.²

The proposed extended library provides the additional space required, however the new shape of the library, which extends to the north and east may present some challenges for supervision and management. This is exacerbated by the layout of the shelving and furniture indicated in the plan (SK04), which interferes with sight-lines

² <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/library-buildings-spaces>

and creates bottlenecks in places, particularly at the end of shelving rows. This issue could be overcome with an alternate design and layout across the proposed library space. The State Library can assist with this.

The proposed extension would bring the library space to 553 sqm which is a considerable improvement on the existing 240 sqm library. The guidelines for the population served set out that 690 sqm is required. Revisiting the design and options on the site is recommended in order to attain the 690 sqm target if possible. The collection size to be accommodated, specific service areas, and the optimum number and style of seats needs to be factored in to the design and layout of the library. The People Places Building Guidelines tools developed by the State Library give an indication of the collection and seating space required.

According to the Guidelines, a library servicing a catchment of 10,000 people needs to be approximately 690 square metres in size. Within this space, allocations would include up to 400 square metres of collection space (2 items per capita with 30% on loan) and 250 square metres of reading, seating and study areas (70 seats in a mixture of single seats, lounge, activity and group study).

In addition to the functional area specification tool, the Small Library Project and Modular Library Project information on the State Library website may be of use:

<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/library-buildings-spaces>

Service desk

Current library trends show a preference for smaller information/circulation desks that make it easier for staff to interact with clients. A more effective approach is to have staff assisting clients from small information 'points' or via a roving reference service, with most loan transactions occurring through self-service technology, which will be facilitated by the new RFID at Nambucca.

Issues Paper

The Issues Paper raises a few issues and ideas, including the library potentially incorporating Hall 2 for meeting rooms and storage. This appears to have merit from the State Library's perspective.

Questions were raised about toilet flushing/odours, and musical group noise impacting on the library. Neither of these matters will be issues with the right design.

Meeting rooms appear easily achievable in or adjacent to the library space. If in the library space it is recommended that they have transparent walls.

Alternate approach on same site

An alternate approach could be to extend the library in an immediate easterly direction (where Hall no.2 is indicated in SK05). This would make it easier to design

a functional library space with better sight lines. This would mean that Hall no.2 would need to be situated at the northern end of the site in a similar position to where the existing hall is located (SK02). The high everyday usage of the library would likely justify this change to the plans.

It is acknowledged that council needs to be mindful of the needs of multiple audiences, but it appears that the view of the arts group and hall users is the main voice that comes through in the consultation document.

The co-location of the library with the community halls would be of great benefit to the library and community, and enable shared events and programming, break-out space, and community amenities under one roof.

The Library is visited by 60,000 people per annum, seeking their view and the view of non-users is likely to show a different view.

It is noted that there is storage and staff areas in the level below the library and halls. In conversation on 9 April Nambucca staff asked the State Library's opinion on multi-storey library on the site.

Single storey libraries are preferable, especially for a library with floor space of less than 1,000 square metres. Multi-storey libraries can be effective, but they tend to be a better option only for larger libraries with higher numbers of staff, or where a site precludes a single storey approach.

In a smaller library setting (such as Nambucca), the management of collections and library customer services across two floors will be less efficient and effective. A lift and stairs would be required for public access. The movement of collections between floors is a factor to be addressed, with WHS implications, and there is typically reduced accessibility for older people, families with prams and the less mobile.

The State Library recommends against using the basement level as public library space. Without additional rostered staff, supervision of this area will be extremely difficult, and resulting safety issues may impact on both library patrons, staff, collections and facilities. Security cameras cannot provide as effective monitoring as staffing, and tend to be of use after an incident has occurred.

The basement area could be more suitable as storage, or possibly a meeting room, with ground floor entrance from the side, which would allow for separate access with the opportunity to be used by the community outside of library hours. Community spaces such as meeting rooms used by organised community groups are more likely to be self-regulating than library spaces, which are open to all in the community

The State Library notes that there are a range of libraries that incorporate a mezzanine area as part of the library, in contrast to a true second storey. Mezzanines are useful in providing additional space, however caution is recommended when designing a

mezzanine and careful consideration of the functions to be housed on a mezzanine is required.

Access to a mezzanine will generally need both a lift and staircase in order to be universally accessible.

Library collections are heavy, so floor loading needs to be specified at a level to be able to cope with library collections.

If the mezzanine is to be a public area with open sides, bear in mind that noise flow between the ground floor and mezzanine may be an issue. There are acoustic treatments that can minimise this issue, and it is also acknowledged that public libraries are no longer designed to be all quiet space. Spaces for people to interact should be more prevalent than any designated quiet spaces

Some functions that may be more suitable for a mezzanine (or upper or basement floor) are staff areas, study areas, meeting rooms and public IT. Children's areas, collection browsing (including large print collections) and casual seating are generally best for ground floor areas.

Alternate site

In conversation on 9 April, Nambucca staff indicated that there may be an opportunity to consider an alternate site for a new library, possibly in partnership with TAFE, at a location north of the Nambucca Heads CBD.

The State Library has prepared guidelines for joint use and co-located libraries that will be of use if there is a desire to investigate a joint operation with TAFE. The guidelines are available on the State Library website here:

<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/library-council-guidelines/co-location-and-joint-use-libraries>

The State Library advises that this possible option is approached with caution, because the current main street site is very good. Co-location with TAFE or other partner at another site could work however moving the library out of the centre of town is not recommended without a very compelling reason.

Public Libraries work best when they are close to other community facilities and retail precincts. Public libraries have a symbiotic relationship with local businesses, so proximity to shopping, cafes and other facilities is recommended.

Public libraries need a street frontage that is appealing and inviting with clear and attractive signage. It is recommended that an architect or designer is engaged to design the façade and signage, no matter which site is chosen.

Visitation to the current Nambucca Library is 60,000 per annum. This figure is assisted by proximity to the CBD and by the same token use of the CBD is assisted by

the library. Locating the library in a non-central position is not recommended if there are other options.

Disruption for the community and negative reaction from both the community and business could occur if the library is moved from a main street location to one that is out of town.

The State Library is not able to determine the nature of the alternate precinct from the information provided. Use of the locational matrix available on the State Library website (and copied below) is recommended to assist with determining sites. The matrix provides an example of site features that can be weighted and scored to determine a preferred location.

LOCATIONAL CRITERIA	WEIGHTING (OPTIONAL)	SITE A		SITE B		SITE C	
		Score	weighting X (score out of 3)	Score	weighting X score out of 3	Score	weighting X score out of 3
MAIN STREET OR SHOPPING CENTRE LOCATION	3	2	6	3	9	1	3
HIGHLY VISIBLE LOCATION	3	1	3	3	9	2	6
GROUND FLOOR AND STREET FRONTAGE	3	2	6	3	9	3	9
HIGH LEVELS OF PERSONAL AND PROPERTY SAFETY	3	1	3	3	9	1	3
FULLY ACCESSIBLE	3	2	6	3	9	3	9
PROXIMITY TO LOCAL SCHOOLS / EDUCATION FACILITIES	2	1	2	2	4	3	6
POTENTIAL FOR OUTDOOR SPACE	1	1	1	2	2	3	3
PRIORITY PEDESTRIAN ACCESS	3	2	6	3	9	1	3
WALK TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT	1	2	2	3	3	1	1
CONVENIENT AND SAFE PARKING	3	3	9	2	6	3	9
ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL VEHICLES	3	1	3	1	3	3	9
FUTURE EXPANSION CO-LOCATION OPPORTUNITIES	2	2	4	1	2	3	6
	2	1	2	2		2	4
OVERALL SCORE			53		74		71

Architects

The State Library is aware of a range of architects and designers that have worked on public library projects in recent years, including:

Fjmt - <https://fjmtstudio.com/>

Neeson Murcutt <https://neesonmurcutt.com/>

Brewster Hjorth <http://brewsterhjorth.com.au/>

Bligh Voller Nield <http://www.bvn.com.au/>

Thomson Adsett <https://thomsonadsett.com/>

CK Design <http://ckdesign.com.au/>

State Funding

Additional State Government funding for public libraries will be phased in from 2019/20. This includes an increase to all council's library subsidies and a new capital grant program.

The State Library will provide councils with details shortly.