Review of *The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries*

Consultation report
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Dr Kate Davis and Dr Matt Finch
Digital Life Lab | University of Southern Queensland
On behalf of State Library of Queensland
Executive summary
The State Library of Queensland (State Library or SLQ) contracted the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) to undertake a project that would review the existing statewide vision for Queensland public libraries, *The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries*. The review was intended to inform the development of a new vision for the period 2018 to 2021. The project was conducted by Dr Kate Davis and Dr Matt Finch of USQ's Digital Life Lab.

The research team collected data via interviews with library managers (19 interviews with 22 managers), workshops with library staff across the state (nine workshops for public library staff, from Cooktown to the Gold Coast, and one for State Library staff), and an online questionnaire that attracted 190 complete responses. The data collection and analysis was undertaken during September and October 2017.

This report provides an overview of the project and an analysis of the data, as well as recommendations for developing and implementing a new vision.

Key findings

The current vision
*The Next Horizon* is a useful strategic tool and its themes remain relevant. Survey respondents’ awareness of the vision is strong, however, they may not be particularly familiar with the content, with only 34% of respondents indicating they are familiar or very familiar with the document.

Role and function of the vision
The statewide vision for public libraries serves a number of functions, from advocacy, to strategic planning, to supporting business cases and funding applications. It sits alongside the standards and provides a complementary high level view of the direction public libraries should be heading in over the life of the document. It must be both aspirational and attainable, and there must be room for local interpretation of the vision.

The future public library
The research team identified a number of key themes related to what the future library is, what it does, and how it operates. The public library of the future must be agile. It is a place of connection and learning, both inside the library walls and beyond, using alternative delivery models to provide customers with the services, programs and collections they need and want. It also has a robust online branch to serve members of the community who would prefer to engage online. It is deeply local, and welcomes, supports and values all members of the community, having a strong focus on community needs. It supports creativity, provides inspiration and fosters critical engagement with information. Its greatest strength is its skilled, passionate workforce.

Related themes
A number of themes emerged during analysis that are not specifically related to the vision, but which may impact on how it is applied and enacted. These themes relate to: sustainable programming; grants and grant management; marketing libraries to non users; a need for advocacy support; assessing performance against the vision; professional networking; and resource sharing to support program delivery.

Barriers to realising the vision
A number of barriers to realising the vision came up across the consultation, but primarily surfaced via interviews with library managers. Budget, particularly as it impacts on staffing, physical spaces, and the collection was a theme across many of the interviews. There are also a number of barriers related to staffing, including low staffing levels, difficulty with recruiting suitable candidates, skills and knowledge of existing staff, and staff engagement. A lack of spaces suitable to support the current focus on experience...
rather than transactions was another issue for many library managers, more often for regional and rural libraries. Finally, internet connectivity is a significant barrier to program and service delivery in a number of areas around the state.

Recommendations
It is recommended that State Library develop a vision grounded in the findings from the consultation.

In addition, the research team makes a number of recommendations related to communication of the vision, implementation of the vision, and associated issues. These are outlined in the Recommendations section of this report.
Table of contents

Executive summary.............................................................................................................. 2
Table of contents .................................................................................................................. 4
1 Introduction......................................................................................................................... 6
2 Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 6
2.1 Scope ............................................................................................................................... 6
2.2 Data collection ................................................................................................................ 6
2.3 Analysis ........................................................................................................................... 8
3 Feedback on The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries ...................... 9
3.1 Awareness of the vision ................................................................................................. 9
3.2 Impact on work .............................................................................................................. 9
3.3 How the vision helps libraries ....................................................................................... 10
3.4 Ongoing relevance of the existing vision .................................................................... 11
3.5 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 13
4 The role and function of a statewide vision ....................................................................... 13
4.1 How the vision is used ................................................................................................ 13
4.2 Pitching the vision ....................................................................................................... 16
4.3 Interpreting, contextualising and enacting the vision locally ..................................... 16
4.4 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 17
5 The future public library .................................................................................................. 17
5.1 Agility ............................................................................................................................ 17
5.2 A place of connection ................................................................................................. 17
5.3 The library as place ..................................................................................................... 18
5.4 Alternative delivery models ....................................................................................... 19
5.5 The online branch library ......................................................................................... 20
5.6 A place of learning .................................................................................................... 21
5.7 The ‘local library for the local people’ ...................................................................... 22
5.8 Community needs ....................................................................................................... 23
5.9 Creativity and innovation ............................................................................................ 24
5.10 Critical engagement with information ...................................................................... 24
5.11 Collections ................................................................................................................ 24
5.12 Our people are our greatest strength ...................................................................... 25
5.13 Technology ................................................................................................................ 26
5.14 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 27
6 Related themes from the data ......................................................................................... 27
6.1 Sustainable programming ......................................................................................... 27
6.2 Grants and grant management ................................................................................... 28
6.3 Marketing libraries to non users ............................................................................... 28
6.4 Need for advocacy support ....................................................................................... 29
6.5 Assessing performance against the vision ............................................................... 30
6.6 Professional networking ............................................................................................. 30
6.7 Sharing resources to support programming ............................................................ 30
6.8 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 31
7 Barriers to realising the vision ....................................................................................... 31
7.1 Budget .......................................................................................................................... 31
7.2 Staffing ......................................................................................................................... 31
7.3 Space ............................................................................................................................ 33
7.4 Internet connectivity .................................................................................................. 33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.5</strong> Summary</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> Communicating the vision</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Staff awareness</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Communicating the vision to councils</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong> Implementing the vision</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Getting the basics right</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Tools to support the new vision</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> Recommendations</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Communicating the vision</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Implementing the vision</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Related recommendations</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Interview discussion guide</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Questionnaire instrument</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

The State Library of Queensland (State Library or SLQ) contracted the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) to undertake a project that would review the existing statewide vision for Queensland public libraries, The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries. The intent was for the review to inform the development of a new vision for the period 2018 to 2021. The statewide vision for Queensland public libraries is a joint initiative of the three major stakeholders in Queensland’s public libraries – State Library of Queensland (SLQ), the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the Queensland Public Library Association (QPLA).

Guided by a project working group comprising representatives from SLQ, LGAQ and QPLA, the objectives of the review were to:

- assess stakeholder awareness, acceptance and use of VISION 2017
- identify the purpose and use of a renewed vision
- identify opportunities for optimising the value of a strategic vision.

The research team (Dr Kate Davis and Dr Matt Finch) collected data via interviews with library managers (19 interviews with 22 managers), workshops with library staff across the state (nine workshops for public library staff, from Cooktown to the Gold Coast, and one for State Library staff), and an online questionnaire that attracted 190 complete responses. The data collection and analysis was undertaken during September and October 2017.

This report provides an overview of the project and an analysis of the data, as well as recommendations for the renewed vision and its implementation.

2 Methodology

2.1 Scope

2.1.1 In scope
The project was a consultation and its design encompassed three consultation activities to solicit input from public library staff in Queensland. The project methodology included three consultation activities: interviews with library managers; workshops; and a questionnaire. The focus on public library staff as participants was a directive from the working group formed by State Library to guide the project.

2.1.2 Out of scope
The project scope did not include an environmental scan or literature review. However, State Library have conducted an analysis of strategic library documents from 15 national and international agencies. State Library’s analysis revealed that the most common themes across these documents were:

- Community – such as connected communities, community wellbeing, community focused
- Digital – such as digital services, responding to the digital shift, digital inclusion
- Service – delivery, inclusive and sustainable services
- Literacy and learning – including supporting, promoting and celebrating literacy and learning

Further information can be found at Public Libraries Connect.

2.2 Data collection
The research team collected data via interviews, workshops, and an online questionnaire, during September and October 2017. Participants in the study were primarily public library staff across the state, as the brief for the project was to focus on eliciting the views of library staff.
The approach used design tasks, brainstorming, and in depth interviews to ensure that participants’ voices came through clearly, helping the research team to construct a collective understanding of the current position and future vision for public libraries in Queensland. In addition to exploring what the future public library looks like, the research team also sought to understand what library services need from the vision document to ensure it is a useful and relevant strategic planning and management tool.

The consultation and data collection activities were treated as research data collection activities with University of Southern Queensland human research ethics approval. Appropriate measures were put in place to provide anonymity and to brief participants on the way data would be reported.

2.2.1 Interviews
19 interviews were conducted with 22 library managers from regional and urban library services, and organisations of different sizes. Interviews allowed the research team to evaluate libraries’ experiences of the existing vision document and identify what interviewees perceived as key problems, strategic foci, and overall visions for the library service of the future. The interview discussion guide used for the interviews is attached at Appendix 1.

2.2.2 Workshops
Ten workshops were held across the state in regional and urban centres. In September and October, 9 workshops for public library staff were run across the state, in the following locations:
- Chermside (Brisbane)
- Helensvale (Gold Coast)
- Caboolture
- Ipswich
- Dalby
- Longreach
- Cairns
- Mackay
- Cooktown

Each workshop was attended by between 6 and 30 participants with a mix of library workers including technicians and front-line staff as well as management and specialists, in order to reflect the feelings and perceptions of the whole Queensland library workforce as closely as possible. An additional workshop took place with staff from across the State Library of Queensland to capture that organisation’s perspectives.

It should be noted that there were a very small number of non library staff in attendance for at least two of the workshops, including councilors, council staff, and members of ‘friends of the library’ groups. These participants were invited by library managers and made valuable contributions to the discussion. The focus on engaging with library staff has provided a rich picture of the future public library and the issues on the horizon for public libraries, from the library staff perspective. However, the research team believes that the workshops represented a valuable advocacy opportunity that was largely missed. Additionally, having a wider participant group for the consultation (for example, including councilors and key council staff) would have resulted in a broader range of views that would reflect external perceptions of the library and its future. For future consultations, it is recommended that key council staff and councilors be invited to participate in any workshops that take place, both to gain their perspectives and to promote the value of the library.

Creative, participatory activities were used to elicit stories, strategies, visions, and opinions about Queensland libraries’ ambitions, aspirations, and the potential obstacles they might identify to future growth and change.

The core workshop activity was a version of the “Design the Box” challenge. Participants used a box as the medium to pitch ideas about their personal vision for public libraries, treating their service as a package to
be boxed and sold to other workshop participants. This encouraged them to think about end users as well as their own needs and desires, and to consider the features, functions, characteristics and wider implications of their vision for the Queensland public library.

This activity was supplemented by brainstorming tasks designed to elicit and categorise participants’ broadest understanding of all the services a public library service might offer. In some workshops, an additional prompt was used, asking staff to reflect on an innovation or change which they thought was necessary, but “scary” or challenging to them.

The workshops were a highly successful engagement activity that produced a significant volume of visual, textual and video data. This data has been used in the analysis presented in later sections of this report.

2.2.3 Questionnaire
A short online questionnaire was distributed to all Queensland public libraries, engaging a wide range of public library staff to evaluate the existing vision and optimise the renewed vision. The questionnaire received 190 complete responses. It reached a broad audience including staff at all levels:

- Library assistant (27%)
- Library technician (9%)
- Librarian (25%)
- Branch manager (14%)
- Senior management (10%)
- Other (28%; responses included community services officer, technology resources officer, team leader)

Three councilors completed the questionnaire. Respondents work for 34 councils. Representation of councils was disproportionate, with 29% of responses originating from two councils (one regional and one city).

The questionnaire was primarily quantitative, with some free text responses providing qualitative data. The questionnaire instrument is provided at Appendix 2.

The research team recommends that for future consultations, council staff and councilors are surveyed along with library staff, to gain feedback and input from these key stakeholders.

2.3 Analysis
The project team used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret the data from the interviews, workshops, and questionnaire.

Interview data was grouped into broad categories related to: the future public library; the role and function of the vision; awareness of the vision; implementing the vision; barriers to implementation; and issues on the horizon. Following this preliminary organisation of the data, it was further categorised into sub themes.

Data gathered via workshop brainstorming activities was entered into a spreadsheet and sorted thematically using inductive analysis, working upwards from the data, rather than imposing predefined categories on the data.

Recordings of the “Design the box” pitches were transcribed and thematic analysis was undertaken in a similar manner to analysis of the interview data, with data from the transcribed pitches being integrated with interview data.

Similar analysis was undertaken for the qualitative data from the questionnaire. Quantitative data from the survey was used in the analysis in a descriptive manner, to provide some quantification related to the qualitative analysis where appropriate.
Feedback on The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries

This section presents data primarily drawn from the survey as evidence of the impact and relevance of the existing vision.

3.1 Awareness of the vision

When asked whether their staff were familiar with the document, interviewees indicated that staff at a certain level (for example, branch managers), specialist staff, or staff with a programming focus were probably aware of the document, but that front line customer service staff may not be. They indicated that the staff might have a general awareness of the document and its content, but that they were unlikely to have “studied it in depth” (Interview 1).

This was echoed in the survey data. Approximately 84% of all respondents indicated they were aware of the vision. Of those, 40% of respondents indicated they were not familiar or only slightly familiar with the content (Figure 1).

However, there was also a sense that the themes in the vision document have simply become part of library staff’s professional practice. They may not necessarily know that they are delivering on a particular vision, but they are constantly exposed to the values and foci embodied in the vision, and they enact it as they carry out their jobs:

[T]hey may not know of the actual document, but so much of that document is used in everything that the State Library does, right, so all of their professional development activities, all of their own activities… So, there is nothing in that document that library staff don’t know about. They just wouldn’t really be able to tell you what is in the document... I think it means it’s been successful. (Interview 5)

Figure 1: How familiar are you with The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries?

3.2 Impact on work

Survey respondents were asked what impact the vision had on their work, and how they used it. 35% of participants indicated the vision has a high or very high impact on their work, while a further 38% indicated it has a moderate impact on their work (Figure 2). They indicated that they use the vision for a variety of purposes, including for advocacy, to support strategic and operational planning, and to justify funding bids, with a fairly even distribution across these uses (Figure 3).
3.3 How the vision helps libraries

Survey respondents were asked whether the vision helps their library service’s position with council and the community respectively. A significant proportion of respondents (46%) indicated they were undecided about whether the library service’s position with council and the community were helped by the vision (Figure 4).
Figure 4: The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries helped my library service’s position with council/the community.

Figure 5: The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries has helped our position with council/the community through (choose all that apply)

3.4 Ongoing relevance of the existing vision

Across the consultation, there was strong positive sentiment about the existing vision. Library managers told us that the vision has been an effective tool and that the content aligns with their own thinking. Additionally, workshops surfaced themes that echoed the content of the existing vision.

The questionnaire includes a series of questions designed to elicit responses that would provide insight into the ongoing relevance of the existing vision (Figure 6):

- 92% of respondents indicated that Creative community spaces is still relevant or highly relevant
- 92% of respondents indicated that Connectors – physical and virtual is still relevant or highly relevant
- 79% of respondents indicated that Technology trendsetters is still relevant or highly relevant
- 87% of respondents indicated that Incubators of ideas, learning and innovation is still relevant or highly relevant.
Respondents were also asked which of the existing themes they would choose to keep, assuming that some of the current themes would be rolled into the renewed vision (Figure 7). This question was designed to reveal respondents’ perception about relative importance of the existing themes. The question required them to nominate only one theme, thereby indicating which theme was the most important in their eyes. Creative community spaces performed most strongly, with 43% of respondents indicating they would keep it. At the other end of the spectrum, only 7% of participants indicated they would retain Technology trendsetters, indicating that it was the highest priority for only a small number of respondents.

Additionally, participants were asked which theme they would remove, if they had to remove only one of the existing themes (Figure 8). Responses mirrored sentiment reported above. Only 9% of respondents
indicated they would remove Creative community spaces. 46% indicated they would remove Technology trendsetters, and a further 33% indicated they would remove Connectors – physical and virtual.

![Figure 8: Which of the current themes would you choose to remove?](image)

3.5 Summary

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire indicated they were aware of the vision, but their familiarity with the content varied. This indicates the need for a communication strategy to support the implementation of the new vision, and a need to raise awareness of the vision across its life.

Sentiment regarding the existing vision was largely very positive across the consultation, including in the questionnaire data. Questionnaire respondents indicated they felt the current themes were still relevant, but when asked to decide on one to keep and one to remove, respondents clearly indicated the ongoing importance of Creative community spaces. Responses to these questions also indicated that Technology trendsetters was of less importance relatively. In light of the reported ongoing relevance of the existing vision, it is recommended that the new vision be framed in such a way that it builds on The Next Horizon and its successes.

4 The role and function of a statewide vision

One of the foci for interviews with library managers was to explore the role and function of the statewide vision for public libraries, and the impact it has on their work. Library managers were asked to respond to a number of questions about the way they work with the existing vision and/or the way they anticipate working with a future vision statement. These conversations also revealed important insights about pitching the vision at an appropriate level and the importance of allowing room for contextualising and interpreting the vision at a local level.

4.1 How the vision is used

The vision is a strategic tool that is used by public library services in strategic planning, to support funding applications, and to provide strategic imperative for libraries’ activities. It is also an advocacy tool, used to advocate the value and impact of libraries to various groups, including library staff, council, the community, and potential partners from all sectors.

Library managers were asked what the vision means to them. They described it as a ‘compass’ (Interview 2), an ‘inspirational roadmap’ (Interview 1), ‘my guiding document’ (Interview 3), ‘the basis for our own dreaming’ (Interview 5), ‘a baseline for expectation, State Library expectation’ (Interview 8), and it provides ‘clarity’ (Interview 16). On a more personal level, for at least one manager, The Next Horizon affirmed her
personal investment in her profession: “But the Vision 2017, I think that was the moment when I first read that document five years ago when I thought, oh! And that’s why I do this!” (Interview 16)

One library manager used the metaphor of a compass to describe the vision.

In some ways, it’s a bit of a compass. We’ve got a broad direction where public libraries are heading. [I]f you imagine that visually as a trek, where we’ve got our backpacks on our back. The broad direction is the mountain that’s many miles away and it’s going to take us quite a few years to get there… There’s still enough flexibility, month to month, year to year, that we can choose our path, but if we keep our eye on this, we’re in the general direction…. [I]t’s not something I pull out weekly, monthly. I might look at it a couple of times a year, maybe four times a year. But it’s just that check - where is the Southern Cross in the sky? Okay, yep, I’m still in the general right direction… It’s not a prescriptive day-to-day guide obviously, and it’s not too big-picture that lets you wander off in any old direction. (Interview 2)

Individual libraries will undertake the journey in different ways, following different paths, but the destination is the same. By checking in with the vision throughout its life, managers can ensure they are moving towards a unified vision of the future public library. “[I]t gives me probably confidence too, that we are heading in the right direction, and realigns you if you’re not.” (Interview 8)

The importance of a statewide vision at this point in time, during a period of transition for public libraries, was highlighted by one participant:

[I]t provides a vision for library services across Queensland and helps me to develop the future direction of our library service. As the collections continue to evolve and there’s a bigger focus on outreach and programming now, it gives us direction about what we should be focusing on as we plan our services… It is all very big-picture, so we can implement it in a way that meets the needs of our community. But there is a reason behind what we do… it helps to give us the ‘why’, as to why we’re doing things. (Interview 12)

It provides high level guidance on where library services should be heading, led by their managers and informed by local need.

The vision functions as a ‘building block’ for local strategic planning (Interview 3). It guides library managers in formulating their own visions for their library services (Interview 5), and informs the development of strategic plans. In the absence of local strategic documents, the vision may fill the gap:

that left us in a position of not having our own strategic documents, and so we have actively used Next Horizon as our strategic document for [council] Library Service, while we are on the path to developing our high level documents first - so our social strategy and our cultural plan, and then moving down to a library strategy. (Interview 7)

At a lower level, the vision is a document library managers draw on to argue strategic imperative for specific initiatives. Managers gave numerous examples of instances where they had used the vision to support an argument for particular activities, including to secure more staff, to implement RFID, or to justify specific programs. For councils that have robust strategic landscapes, when it comes to arguing strategic imperative for programs or initiatives, the vision is “one piece of the puzzle” (Interview 4), however, it still plays a role.

The vision lends authority and credibility to arguments for new initiatives, as well as the overarching strategic foci of the library service:

Because as much as we might say things, there’s nothing like having something external give confidence to council, that we’re going in the right direction. So, from our perspective having a statewide vision for public libraries is very helpful, because we can demonstrate to council that the direction that we’re going in is consistent with other public libraries. (Interview 7)

As a number of managers articulated, the vision provides an authoritative voice to support decision making, and reassures council that “that’s not [participant’s name] wanting… you know, steering this ship - it’s actually coming from the funding body, from State Library of Queensland” (Interview 3). Likewise, “I think
it’s about giving the councilors some comfort that what we’re doing is in line with, you know, the state plan and the state’s future” (Interview 9).

Participants also relayed numerous examples of using the vision to support funding applications. This included funding received through State Library grant programs, other government and non-government grant programs, and funding received from commercial organisations through alternative funding arrangements. In these instances, managers used the language in the vision to support their arguments for funding, with significant success.

The vision is a valued advocacy tool that supports managers in advocating to a variety of audiences, including library staff, council, council staff, and external organisations: “it’s got to advocate to our councillors and our leadership team, it’s got to advocate to the wider public” (Interview 4). To be useful as an advocacy document, the vision needs to very clearly articulate what libraries do and why, in simple language. The vision needs to “sell the ‘library’ story to the staff, the council and the community” (Interview 12). It was clear throughout the consultation that the vision serves an advocacy function, however, it was also clear that library managers would like further support to help them advocate to council in particular. This will be explored later in this report.

While the vision is a useful strategic and advocacy document, it is not a tool that is referred to day-to-day. This was evident in a majority of the interviews, and reflected in the survey data, where many respondents had used the vision at one point in time (for example, they may have read it when it was released, or used it to underpin a funding application), but did not feel they were well acquainted with the vision. However, some participants were cognisant of the impact the vision has on the day-to-day operation of the library, even if it is not something they refer to daily: “[The day-to-day business and the strategic] end up being one and the same, don’t they? The strategic then guides your day-to-day stuff... So, if that’s the vision that you’re holding, then that does drive your daily activity” (Interview 5).

Participants value that the vision is research-informed (Interview 8). They also value that the visioning process is conducted by an external consultant:

[I]t's an authoritative document that I don't have to pay a consultant for, to get that external perspective. So that for me, is very important, particularly for a regional library service that is pushing ahead in quite contemporary areas. Sometimes, that can get council a little nervous, and so there’s nothing like having that document as a bit of a, I guess, security for council to go, “Look, this is alright. This is exactly where other libraries are going as well.” And, that I don’t have to continually pay a consultant to tell them that. (Interview 7)

The way the vision is created lends confidence and ultimately gives the vision authority.

While a majority of the managers that were interviewed expressed the value and importance of the vision as part of their strategic landscape, not all participants felt the same way: “It just means more paperwork to read through... And it’s not something that I have actually used much to refer to, yeah” (Interview 11).

### 4.1.1 Vision versus standards

The relationship between the standards and the vision, and their different roles, came up in some of the interviews with library managers. While the vision is a useful planning and advocacy tool, in terms of motivating decisions and arguing business cases, it may not be as useful as the standards because it is not enforceable. “Standards are actually almost more critical when we’re advocating, because the grant methodologies link to the standards, and so it’s got a lot power behind it” (Interview 4). This sentiment was echoed by other participants: “Standards are the stick... sometimes you’ve got to have a big stick, so, maybe [the standards] are more important” (Interview 5). The vision, however, provides opportunities to initiate discussion with council in a way that might gently bring them on board with the library’s strategic direction, rather than enforcing what must be done, as the standards do (Interview 5).
There may be some misunderstanding around the vision in terms of whether libraries are required to deliver on the strategic priorities it outlines. A small number of managers referred to the vision as being something that councils must enact, suggesting they had confused its role with the role of the standards. It would be useful to clarify the role of the vision versus the role of the standards in communicating the new vision with library staff.

4.2 Pitching the vision

As soon as it doesn’t have stretch, then I would dismiss it, because we need that to keep pushing forward with our own library service. (Interview 7)

The vision is an aspirational document that helps libraries to push forward with new initiatives and foci. To fulfil this role, it must truly challenge libraries of all sizes to stretch. However, library services of different sizes and maturity might need to stretch in different areas, and what might be a stretch for one library service may be unattainable for another. The vision will be ineffective if it is unattainable or fails to fulfil the aspirational role.

One of the difficulties with an overarching vision is that, you know, where are you pitching it? If you pitch it too much of a stretch, then a council’s just going to dismiss it. But if it’s too low, then many of us might say, “Oh, look, it’s not relevant. We’re already ahead of that.” So, it’s trying to pitch it at the right level. (Interview 7)

The vision must be both aspirational and attainable for all library services. Managers indicated it should include examples of best practice at various levels of challenge and maturity, along with a clear indication that the foci need to be interpreted and contextualised locally, and that the way they manifest will be different in different contexts. Both the smallest and largest public library services must be able to see how they can work towards the vision.

Likewise, the vision must be sufficiently aspirational that it continues to provide stretch throughout the life of the document:

I like when it has examples of best practice in it, that I find helpful, but it needs to make sure that those, either good or best practices, can last out a few years. Because if I can go through and tick off, “Oh my God, we’ve got all of those”, then I’ve got a problem using that document and I’d have to park it. (Interview 7)

The vision has a multi-year shelf life, but we are operating in a time of rapid and constant change, with new priorities emerging as society responds to that change. The vision needs to continue to provide stretch goals across the life of the vision.

4.3 Interpreting, contextualising and enacting the vision locally

The vision document is an aspirational roadmap that needs to be interpreted locally. The interview protocol allowed room to explore how the vision might allow for multiple local visions and explicitly asked library managers about how well this worked with the current vision. It was evident that the existing document gave managers scope to implement aspects of the vision that were appropriate for their context.

There also needs to be room to interpret the vision according to community needs and wants. Public libraries are deeply connected to their communities, and communities differ across the state, for many reasons. Managers indicated that they need scope to do what their community wants and needs:

So, if my community says “We would really love to just only do crafty things”, you know, have people learning to be self-sufficient. Being in a rural area and growing your own food is a pretty good deal, you know. I would rather have talks about sustainability or, you know, how to keep chooks the best, how to build a really rocking chook house, or install a solar-powered watering system, that’s really more important than teaching somebody how to program a robot – and that needs to be okay. (Interview 5)
4.4 Summary
The statewide vision for public libraries serves a number of functions, from advocacy, to strategic planning, to supporting business cases and funding applications. It sits alongside the standards and provides a complementary high level view of the direction public libraries should be heading in over the life of the document. It must be both aspirational and attainable, and there must be room for local interpretation of the vision.

5 The future public library
This section outlines key themes related to the future public library. These themes have been derived from an analysis of all three data sets: interview, workshop and questionnaire data. Collectively, these themes paint a picture of the future public library as participants see it.

In keeping with the project’s focus on participants’ voices and views, the analysis presented here uses quotes from the data to provide insight in participants’ own words. Quotes used are the best available quotes to illustrate specific points. The discussion of the themes draws heavily on the interview data set because the nature of interviews tends to lead to production of data that is succinct and well-suited to illustrating key points.

5.1 Agility

“We are on a change continuum. That’s our lives.” (Interview 7)

The future public library is agile, flexible and ‘fluid’ (Interview 4). Libraries need to be flexible enough to respond to massive change, particularly technological change, and in turn, to support customers in navigating change. Managers recognise that the library must be responsive to community need and have the flexibility to offer new services and programs that meet those needs. They recognise that it is not possible to predict what those new services and programs might be until they arrive, citing the focus on robotics and coding recently (Interview 15) as an example of adapting to an emergent opportunity and community need. They also recognise responding to community need might involve dropping services and programs that no longer meet needs, especially when this frees up capacity to take on whatever comes next.

Discussion about agility and the conditions that are needed to support it tended to focus on two areas: the workforce; and library spaces. An agile workforce is willing to embrace change and has the capacity to develop new skill sets. Across the state, libraries have ongoing work to do in this space.

Agility and flexibility also relates to library spaces. Physical spaces must be adaptable and flexible to support emergent trends, particularly with regard to programs. Physical space, and particularly the availability of space that is appropriate for programming activities, was cited by many managers as a barrier to realising their vision of the future public library. In the workshops, flexibility of spaces also came up, with one team articulating that the future public library space is

flexible, so it can be whatever its users need it to be. So whatever their requirements is, whether that’s a shelter using that space in a natural disaster, whether that’s kids needing space to study, whether that’s a homeless person wanting a safe space. (“Design the box” pitch transcript)

Another group said:

“We have open space because people can use our spaces for what they want. So, we don’t have predefined spaces where you do X or you do Y. We just have a freedom of space, so people can use it.” (“Design the box” pitch transcript)

5.2 A place of connection
Queensland public libraries continue to recognise the importance of understanding themselves as connectors. “I definitely think the Connectors - physical and virtual [theme from the previous vision
document], we have to sit in that. That theme has to stay. I think that is going to be one of our biggest roles moving forward” (Interview 16). Via the questionnaire, library staff were asked to what extent they believe the themes from The Next Horizon are still relevant to public libraries today. Almost 70% indicated the theme ‘Connectors – physical and virtual’ is still very relevant, and a further 22% indicated it is still relevant.

The word ‘connection’ and variations on it recurrent across the consultation, in workshops, interviews and questionnaire data. In the workshops, participants were asked to brainstorm what the public library does, before consolidating their brainstormed ideas into four groups of like concepts. In this activity, participants used variations on the word ‘connection’, including:

- Meeting/connection place
- Connect to authors
- Connect
- Connecting
- Connecting people
- Connect to diverse communities
- Connect people
- Connecting
- Connection
- Connecting people with conversation
- Pathways and connections
- Connect communities

The sentiment of ‘connection’ or connecting was also embodied in other responses to workshop activities. When asked what the public library of the future does, participants listed terms like:

- Brings people together
- Destination
- Build relationships
- Integrate
- Gather people together
- Create linkages
- Community discussions
- Encourage you to get on board
- Enhance community
- Central hub where everyone meets
- Community connectors (providers of social fabric)
- Provide place to engage
- Provide interaction between different parts of society
- Engage people
- Community hub
- Link customers to services

The concept of ‘connection’ was frequently raised in the context of physical library spaces or the library as place. In Interview 7, the participant talked about why they think the physical public library is about connection:

> We certainly still see - and I see for the foreseeable future - that the more we’re digitally connected in somewhat isolated ways, that there’s this strong need to come together physically and to have that human interaction... And I think that that need for human connection will get stronger and stronger when we engage in the digital space, and the library is perfectly placed to provide that human connection in many different ways. (Interview 7)

Participant 16 echoed this sentiment:

> I think it’s really starting to come full circle. More and more people are turning off their social media or they’re only on it, you know, once a day rather than 15 times a day... So my feeling is that we will need to make those physical spaces available and support those with activities, programs, services that can happen in those spaces. (Interview 16)

Similarly, in Interview 3, the participant talked about the role of the public library as a community hub in a mining town, where transient populations are geographically disconnected from family. As a physical place, the public library provides a space for people to connect with each other.

While the library as place is strongly linked to human connection, the idea of the library as a facilitator of connections is not exclusively about the physical library, nor is it just about human connection. The library facilitates other types of connection, including connecting readers and books, connecting people with inspiration, connecting children to the world through literacy development, connecting people with opportunities through exposure to ideas (Interview 3).

5.3 The library as place
Space and place remain important concepts for the future public library, but the way we conceptualise ‘the library’ as a place is shifting:
I certainly see our public library service remaining very much as an integral community space, but both a physical and a virtual space. And I don’t necessarily see that the physical spaces have to be in a branch library but that we’re taking those spaces elsewhere, and that that could be into a retirement home, it could be into a park, it could be into a school. So, that we’re actually taking and creating space where we go. (Interview 7)

The library itself, it is a place, but in fact it transcends the physical building. So it’s beyond the four walls of the branch, and also, you can take it home with you. It lives in your home. (“Design the box” pitch transcript)

One workshop group conceptualized the future public library as a Tardis: “It can go anywhere – there’s no boundaries to where a Tardis can be and what it can do” (“Design the box” pitch transcript). The future public library goes beyond the library walls and takes its services, collections and programs out into the community (Interview 16).

I think that branch space is still important, but it’s not the be-all and end-all for libraries to be successful. They need to get out and into other people’s spaces, whether it’s childcare, schools. We go to the park. We go to, you know, [the main street], [the beach]... with our pop-up library, and engage with our community there. (Interview 7)

The future public library undertakes outreach activities to engage with those members of the community who may not access the physical library. It builds on the success of outreach-focused activities like First 5 Forever to take the library out into the community.

This outwards focus does not mean that the library building itself can be neglected. The library building is still a destination and a place for community to connect, and there is a need to ensure those physical spaces are maintained.

I think it’s important that the document talks about investing in those physical spaces. There has to be that good, solid, asset management plan in place so that you’re not just dealing with those buildings every ten years and deciding “Well, we might give it a lick of paint”. There has to be continual investment for them to maintain their place in the community. (Interview 7)

Asset management planning in terms of building maintenance and ensuring public library buildings remain fit-for-purpose came up in a number of interviews as an issue on managers’ horizons.

In the future, public libraries will measure the success of outreach activities differently. In terms of metrics, at present, participation in outreach activities is generally not considered as equivalent to a library visit or attendance at a library program on site at the library.

There was some discussion around the fact that First 5 Forever has not necessarily translated into increased membership, borrowing, or onsite program attendance. Failure to ‘get cut-through’ in terms of increasing engagement with the physical library is arguably not a failure at all, but a demonstration of the value of taking the library out into the community.

The way success is measured may not be keeping pace with the shift in focus of library-as-place. As our concept of ‘the library’ shifts, public libraries and their stakeholders will need to reconsider how they measure and evaluate outreach activities.

5.4 Alternative delivery models

Related to the idea that our conception of the physical library continues to shift, there was considerable discussion across the consultation about delivering library services in new and innovative ways through various physical mechanisms, including pop-up libraries and kiosk vending machines.

In some cases, the drive to pursue alternative delivery models came from a desire to find different ways to use existing resources more effectively. In Interview 5, the participant discussed how she is thinking about alternatives to a mobile library as a way of redeploying resources:
Instead of having a mobile library, maybe… because each of those little towns has a Town Hall or a School of Arts or something like that, do we put a computer and wifi and couch and a little free library in each of those places? Is that enough? Is that what people will want? You know, I’m just playing around with ideas, but that would still be cheaper than the mobile and we would still have two people [who run the mobile library now] that we could be using elsewhere… (Interview 5)

In a similar example, a participant talked about rethinking how her library service serves smaller communities in her region, particular when mobile libraries come to the end of their lifespan:

I’m not certain that we would replace it with like-for-like, and so, one of our big things is, well, what next for the world of serving our smaller communities? Is it that we stick kiosk vending machines into those communities so that they have access 24/7? Is it that we then have a small range of fitted-out vans and we’re providing services into other spaces? (Interview 7)

The future public library will embrace alternative service models to make better use of resources and to meet community need.

In the workshops, 24 hour access to library services and collections was a theme, for both physical and digital services and collections. It will be critical for libraries to consider options for providing 24/7 access in the next few years.

5.5 The online branch library

The future public library will have a robust presence online. The library’s online presence will be thought of as another branch of the library that needs to be resourced, staffed and managed effectively. It will provide a level of service and experience online that is comparable with the physical library. Online collections, services and programs will not be a secondary concern, but a strategic priority.

To effectively run an online branch, the library must grapple with how best to engage and sustain a relationship with the customers who want to interact with the library in online spaces only (Interview 18). Libraries must rethink practices around membership, providing ways for customers to join and renew their membership online. Libraries must also explore ways to make the online branch – including the library’s website – as engaging, beautiful, and usable as its online branches. Customers’ expectations of online services are increasingly more sophisticated. The future public library must satisfy these expectations or it risks losing customers to other content providers, learning organisations, and reference services.

There is a real issue around the ways customers engage with eBook and eAudiobook platforms. In the age of the app, the customer goes straight to the vendor’s platform to acquire content, limiting their interaction with the library.

So how, then, do we communicate with you if you’re really, really communicating through a third party that we pay to own the relationship with you? So in a way, we don’t want to lose you too early, until we’ve got much more sophisticated options. And I think we need that. That’s probably something that’s quite urgent. (Interview 18)

The future public library will have strong lines of communication with online customers (Interview 18) that keep the customer connected to the library. The library must also find ways to bridge the gaps between online content silos, to allow customers to fluidly and seamlessly access the entirety of the online collection.
In the future public library, the online branch library is more than a collection.

Just like our physical spaces have many formats, so do our virtual spaces. And whether that is, for example, creating a heritage trail in augmented reality, or whether it is our online collections - so, our eBooks and eAudio - whether it is providing services through the cloud, I see it as a whole range of things - and giving our community both the skills and the resources to be able to participate equitably in those spaces. (Interview 7)

While libraries have explored options for providing online services, including reference services, there has not been a strong focus on programming for online customers. One way for libraries to provide programming online is to format shift face-to-face programs by putting recordings online. This is a practice that libraries have yet to fully embrace:

I don’t think we’ve optimised the digital environment enough in terms of capturing our own programming content and making it available after the fact. We need to do that a lot, lot more. I don’t think we’ve got the skills for that. (Interview 18)

The future public library will design programs that are optimised for the online environment. It will run live streamed events and online-only workshops.

To provide an online branch experience that is comparable to a physical branch experience, libraries must address a number of issues. Infrastructure – library websites, OPACs, library management systems – needs to be improved to provide customers with the quality of experiences they can find elsewhere on the web. Staffing of online services may need to be addressed to ensure that adequate service levels are maintained for online customers. Training and development must be provided to equip staff with the skills to deliver online collections, programs and services, including skills around live-streaming and recording of events.

The future public library will effectively measure and report on online branch and collection usage. As more and more customers choose to interact with the library online, it will be important to monitor and report on these interactions to assist with managing perception around any related down turn in use of physical libraries, and to ensure libraries have an accurate picture of usage across all branch types.

5.6 A place of learning

Our vision is that we are always there to teach people the skills that they need for right now, and to give them a glimpse of what they might need in the future and help them on that journey. And, while we might not know exactly what that is, our role is to, sort of, stay ahead of the wave and try to take our community on that journey, while at the same time giving them the traditional and the people services that are the foundation of what we do. (Interview 7)

The future public library supports the community to develop the skills and knowledge they need to flourish in contemporary society. It also supports them to acquire the skills and knowledge they want, including those related to leisure and entertainment. The library supports community members who are involved in both formal and informal education. It supports the development of literacy in all its forms – digital, traditional, visual, financial, information. It provides resources, expert assistance, and educational experiences to help people learn and grow. This emphasis on growth and personal achievement are illustrated in the following quote.

So the idea of this library is you don’t just walk in and walk back out the same way. You walk in and walk out a different way, ’cause you walk out a different person... We have a little visual representation of the eyes – opening your eyes to the possibilities when you’re inside the library... When you leave the library, it’s a celebration. You take flight in the community, you leave the library with ideas and information [and] knowledge that you take with you into the community to become a better community citizen... (“Design the box” pitch transcript)

Workshop participants told us the future public library “facilitates learning for everyone”. In brainstorming activities, workshop participants said the library “provides spaces to learn”, “programs that enhance literacy”, “abundant training”, “homework help”, “hands-on skill development”, “story time”, “remedial
reading programs”, and “conversation classes”. It “facilitates life transformation through learning”, “develops literacy”, “teaches classes and workshops”, “builds skills and capabilities”, “partners with schools, TAFE and universities”, “gets members of the community in to teach other members”, and “stimulates and satisfies curiosity”. It helps people develop skills in areas such as “life skills”, “sustainable living”, “photography”, “second language development”, “numery”, “literacy”, “social literacy”, “digital literacy”, “STEM / STEAM”, “digital comics”, “web design” and “whatever the community needs” (workshop brainstorming data).

Learning happens within the library building, via outreach programs, and online. The future public library will have an increasing focus on supporting learning outside the physical building, exploring opportunities to take learning to the community, outside the library building and online.

Learning in the future public library starts with babies. The library takes advantage of a unique opportunity to engage with children aged zero to five, before they attend school, to instil a love of reading and develop early literacy. It partners with schools to enhance and supplement the learning that happens there, and provides resources and programs to support the learning of home schooled children.

The future public library encourages the community to look ahead to the skills they may need in the future. It exposes the community to new trends, technologies and issues through programming. It is critical that the library’s programming around technologies in particular addresses the needs of both children and adults. As one library manager stated, “all these kids are going to know how to code, they’re going to know how to program, they’re going to understand the applications for that coding, and the robotics, and all of that” (Interview 16). Managers suggested adults are currently under-served in forward-thinking technology programs. The future public library helps adults in the community to acquire technology skills for today (for example, through basic computer or mobile literacy programs), and tomorrow (for example, coding). The public library needs to consider how it can support Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y to acquire the technology skills that simply were not on the horizon when they were involved in formal study (Interview 16). This need will increase in the coming years.

5.7 The ‘local library for the local people’

I think people can live anywhere in the world today, so how do we make them want to choose our city, and live here, and be the place to raise your family, to work, and to contribute and make this city better. And I think libraries have a big role in that because we are located where people live. You know, we are the local library for local people, and we’re an important place-maker and an important way of strengthening that sense of fitting into a community. And I think we’ve done that role passively, but I actually think we could be much more active in selling our role in that space. (Interview 18)

There was a strong focus across the workshops on welcoming, supporting and valuing all members of the community. In their “Design the box” pitches, workshop participants talked about open and transparent libraries that were there for the whole community:

- [N]o matter where you come from in the universe or wherever you go, your friendly public library/Tardis is there for you.
- We’ve tried to kind of break down all the walls and make it as transparent and open as possible, so that everybody feels welcome and kind of knows what goes on at the library.
- We decided that we’d have... no doors, ‘cause we want barrier-less access for people, whether that be physical, time, demographic, anyone can come in.
Welcoming, supporting and valuing all members of the community means identifying and proactively engaging those groups who are identified as having particular needs, whether that means a community subculture, homeless library users, LGBTIQ community members or new arrivals to the community. Being deeply local also means valuing local Indigenous culture, heritage and language.

A deeply local public library is part of the community it serves. A number of workshop groups talked about being the heart of the community, using hearts in their box designs to denote this, or including lots of windows or no walls to illustrate the accessible, central nature of the library.

*It was really important for us to be part of the community, and to be visible to and from the community. So we want to feel like, when you’re inside or outside, you’re actually already part of what’s happening... When you see [the library] at night, and it’s all lit up, it actually glows like a heart and it really feels like it is the central point of the community.* (“Design the box” pitch transcript)

A number of groups featured the word ‘Library’ prominently on the building/box to make the library visible in the community.

5.8 Community needs

*My vision, the future public library in my context, is one that’s even more engaged with and aware of community needs.* (Interview 2)

The future public library is deeply connected to its community and their needs. It focuses collections, programs and services on the needs of the community and takes a customer-centric view of its operations. Library staff know their community well, both formally and informally. They are well acquainted with evidence, data, and demographics, but their work goes beyond transactions to develop meaningful and lasting relationships with the people they serve.

A focus on community needs allows the future public library to push forward with new initiatives while still acknowledging that some customers value the traditional library offer. The future public library says to its community “Just because we’re embracing the new, we’re not forgetting that many of you are still very attached to the services we’ve had traditionally and the products that we’ve had” (Interview 7). The library service of the future is one that “both responds to community needs, but is also brave in suggesting or pushing things like setting an agenda” (Interview 2).

Being focused on community needs means identifying specific segments of the community and tailoring programs, collections and services to them. The future public library makes good use of its resources and its deep knowledge of community needs to identify its audience, identify their needs, and build services to suit them (Interview 7). Identifying and meeting community needs is critical because people are at the heart of what libraries do.
5.9 Creativity and innovation

Supporting and nurturing creativity and innovation was a strong theme across the consultation. Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate which theme they would retain from the previous vision, assuming the current themes would be rolled over. Creative community spaces and Incubators of ideas, learning and innovation were identified as the theme to retain by 43% and 24% of respondents respectively. When asked to what extent the existing themes were still relevant

- 77% of respondents indicated that Creative community spaces is still very relevant, and 15% indicated it is still relevant
- 65% indicated that Incubators of ideas, learning and innovation is still very relevant, with 22% indicating it is still relevant.

In workshops, participants told us that libraries provide pathways to innovation and creation. They support personal creativity as well as entrepreneurship.

Library managers echoed these sentiments, telling us that libraries

- need to provide physical places where people can discover and create (Interview 1)
- are creative community places (Interviews 8, 12)
- are welcoming spaces where people can create and be inspired (Interview 12).

Further, public libraries should celebrate the creativity of their communities. One workshop group articulated this in their box design: “the creative expression, the artwork at the front, as you can see... showcase and reflects what’s going on in the local community” (“Design the box” pitch transcript).

It is clear that the sentiment around creativity and innovation in The Next Horizon is still resonant for Queensland public libraries. This should be acknowledged in the new vision through updating, consolidating and building on the relevant themes from the last vision.

5.10 Critical engagement with information

The future public library plays a strong role in encouraging critical engagement with information. At a time where there is significant rhetoric in the media around fake news and ‘alternative truth’, the role of the public library in information literacy development, provision of trusted information sources, and provision of advice to assist with navigating complex information landscapes will only grow stronger.

The following quote from a library manager highlights the critical importance of the public library in fostering critical engagement with information:

“I would see that the public libraries of the future would be a place of trusted enquiry... I think it’s becoming more important, especially in information overload, which is the world we’re in and the prevalence of fake news etc. that we have to nurture critical thinking in our community.... people have been swamped by information of all levels, types, quality, both good, bad and horrific, and so, trusted enquiry, that’s the future... (Interview 1)

5.11 Collections

Collections are still and will continue to be one of the library’s most important offers. It is the magnet that brings a significant proportion of the library’s customers into the building. Once they are in the building, those customers go on to make use of the library’s other services and programs.

[W]e need to not miss the opportunity, while the collection is still such a strong point for library attendance. We are using that magnetism of the collection to actually make all of these other
needs thrive – whether we know it or not, we are doing that... I think, given the number of people that actually go to the library, primarily to borrow a book or to use the content of the collection, it’s still the mainstream. (Interview 18)

Just as collections continue to be an important part of the offer, the collection grant continues to support libraries in building the collections their communities need.

Overall, explicit reference to collections and related concepts like ‘provide books’, ‘provide information’ and ‘lend books’ was not as strong in the workshop brainstorming activities as might have been expected. This was somewhat surprising, given that collections are such an important part of the library’s offer and that they continue to drive library visits. Experiences, programs and services had a more significant presence in workshop brainstorming. In the whiteboard consolidation activity, participants often struggled to find where to put collections in their final four categories of ‘things the library does’. In some workshops, collections ended up being a category on their own partly because staff struggled to put the concept elsewhere.

The apparent underrepresentation of collections is arguably not because they are unimportant. Rather, the opposite is probably true. Collections are a given, a core part of what the library does, and a silent achiever of sorts. The lower frequency of collection related concepts in the brainstorming data is also attributable to the fact that participants tend to talk about the collection in broad terms – ‘provide books’ – rather than specific terms – ‘provide books for kids’, ‘provide books for students’, ‘provide books for adults’.

When managers spoke about collections in their interviews, they tended to talk about the challenges of juggling a hybrid print and electronic collection. Issues include:

- problems with eContent models
- ensuring customers are aware of what is on offer with online collections
- working out how much to invest in eContent: “it’s working out what’s the happy medium, you know. I don’t ever think we’ll have fifty-fifty but while it’s continuing to grow, then that’s where I’m developing those online collections” (Interview 4)
- managing customer demand including for:
  - range of electronic content, including managing expectations “that they can get anything” (Interview 7)
  - instant access and navigating what that means for managing holds for eContent: “If you’ve requested it, you want it now. So, there’s that very expedient urgency with those platforms that we don’t necessarily have with the more traditional library services”. (Interview 4)

While issues related to managing electronic collections surfaced strongly in the interview data, as one interview participant highlighted, community expectation for hardcopy items is still strong, and working out the best way to manage carrying the same content in hardcopy and electronic format is challenging (Interview 7).

5.12 Our people are our greatest strength

Across the consultation, there was a strong sense that a passionate, skilled and knowledgeable workforce will be the public library’s greatest strength moving forward. Even when managers mentioned staffing issues as barriers to realising their vision for the future public library in their context, this only confirmed that there was a strong feeling that library staff are the network’s greatest asset.

In Interview 9, the participant talked about this in the context of her library service’s recent planning activities.

[W]e had kind of come up with the themes around the spaces and the services and the programs, and we were really happy with that. And we went to our client focus groups, and without exception, what they were saying was the most important thing about coming into the library was the staff and the interaction they had with the staff. That was the biggest
influencer of what they thought about our service and what they liked about our service. And so we actually added it back into the strategy, and it was really deliberate to say, “Well, actually, the library is not about the building, the space. It is about that, but it is as much about the people working within that space that help people, and guide them, and assist them and all the rest of it”… You know, we can do so much with the collection, we can do so much with displays, but when someone walks in and the staff member is happy and knowledgeable and friendly, then the rest of it doesn’t matter so much to the client, it seems. So, you know, we’ve had issues with the computers and we’ve finally got them upgraded, but people are more… they didn’t talk about that. They didn’t talk about the new computers; they talked about the staff and the helpful, knowledgeable, friendly, smiling, willing to take time… [W]e can’t always build flashy new buildings, but it seems like that’s not really what people are always asking for – the clients, I mean. That’s not always what the clients want. There’s always things we can do differently, but the investment in the team seems to be something – for us, anyway – that’s key for us to actually address, to deliver on our overall vision.

Staff also emerged strongly as a theme in the workshops. During the whiteboard consolidation activity, one of the workshop locations delivered the following statement as their complete, final output:

**Professional staff, who:**
- Provide library services and spaces
- Value all peoples, cultures, and the environment
- Foster partnerships and economic development, with council and external partners
- Provide an ethos that values and promotes literacy & learning
- Build excellent & relevant physical, virtual, and local collections

This framing – where the staff are the foundation for everything the library service does – clearly demonstrates the centrality of staff. In this statement, the library is the staff; it is the staff’s professionalism that ensures the library fulfils its function.

In their “Design the box” pitches, several workshop groups talked about the centrality of effective, professional staff:
- *We have trained and professional staff here, that will actually deliver excellence in customer service... and attitude.*
- *Our best features are us. We’re what actually makes it work.*
- *They have qualities of being fun, friendly, engaging... Information experts... literary experts... tech experts.* (“Design the box” pitch transcripts)

**5.13 Technology**

The final theme, technology, is notable in that it did not emerge as a strong strategic priority across the consultation. Almost half of questionnaire respondents indicated that, if tasked with removing one theme from the current vision, they would remove *Technology trendsetters*. In workshops, technology surfaced in brainstorming activities, but there was a balance of attention paid to other programming foci. Given the focus on technology across the life of the current vision, it was somewhat surprising that it did not have a stronger presence.

Technology programming and digital literacy activities continue to be key activities for the public library of the future, and the library will continue to play a critical role in digital inclusion and in exposing customers to emerging technologies and technology concepts. However, the focus in the consultation data was different to that described in *The Next Horizon*. The focus seems to have shifted from trendsetting to meeting community need. For the future public library, technology is an enabler, rather than an end in itself. As one workshop group suggested, the future public library needs “the technology to support what we’re trying to do” (“Design the box” pitch transcript). This is not to say that future public libraries should not be exposing customers to emerging technologies or supporting skill development. Rather, the focus should be on identifying needs in the community, and designing solutions to meet those needs, which may or may not include use of technology.
5.14 Summary
This section identified and discussed a number of key themes related to what the future library is, what it does, and how it operates. The public library of the future must be agile. It is a place of connection and learning, both inside the library walls and beyond, using alternative delivery models to provide customers with the services, programs and collections they need and want. It also has a robust online branch to serve members of the community who would prefer to engage online. It is deeply local, and welcomes, supports and values all members of the community, having a strong focus on community needs. It supports creativity, provides inspiration and fosters critical engagement with information. Its greatest strength is its skilled, passionate workforce.

6 Related themes from the data
Across the interviews with library managers, there was a strong sense of the inter-related nature of the standards, grants, regional program initiatives led by State Library (for example, robotics and coding kits), and the vision. For some participants, these are all part of what State Library does in the public library space and they cannot be separated. As a result, some data related to the standards, grants and regional program initiatives was also gathered.

The following sections provide a summary of themes that are not specific to the vision, but that relate to the standards, grants and regional program initiatives, because these have the potential to impact on the enactment of the vision.

6.1 Sustainable programming
When asked about issues they are facing, many library managers raised concerns about programming sustainability. This came up in reference to:

- major programming initiatives like First 5 Forever (Interview 2; Interview 4)
- grant funded projects, for example Tech Savvy Seniors (Interview 17)
- projects driven by statewide programming initiatives like robotics and coding programs (Interview 12).

There is strong demand and community need for these programs. In cases like First 5 Forever, there is evidence to support the efficacy and impact of the program (Interview 2). Library managers are also concerned about the expectation that is created as a result of these fixed term programming initiatives. However, they simply do not have funding to sustain them:

- What do we do when that extra funding stops? How do we keep that sustainable? (Interview 2)
- [W]e have had heaps or requests to come and do outreach to the schools... we then don’t have the staffing to back that up. (Interview 12)
- [A]fter the funding finishes, what are we going to do? We need to sustain it because it’s something our community needs. But how? (Interview 17)

Given that State Library-supplied grant funding allows libraries to pursue initiatives they might not otherwise be able to pursue, some support around managing community expectation, finding additional funding sources, and transitioning grant-funded activities to business as usual could be built into the application and execution process to help with managing sustainability.

Some participants acknowledged that grant-funded programming activities might justifiably have a short shelf life (for example, a robotics program may have a short life because the technology becomes out of date quickly) (Interview 2). In these instances, long term sustainability may not be the aim, and as such, community expectations related to ongoing availability of the program need to be managed. To address this, libraries could be encouraged to think about short term aims versus long term aims as part of their planning for programs. Where programs are intended to run for a short time, there needs to be some consideration for managing community expectation and developing exit strategies.
6.2 Grants and grant management
Participants in the interviews identified some issues related to State Library’s grant programs. For many libraries, the grants are critical to innovation in programming and service delivery, however, there are some issues that need to be addressed in order to support libraries in making best use of those grants.

Participants indicated they would like to see more structure around the grant program. Specifically, they would like to know what grants will be available and what the timelines are, well in advance, so that they can plan ahead (Interview 8).

Additionally, some libraries have difficulty with executing grants once they receive them. Applying for grants is appealing because it allows the library to achieve things it would otherwise not be able to achieve. Once the grant is awarded, however, the reality of trying to execute the project sets in. “We think we’ve got the capacity to do it, and then we realise that we can’t maintain it ourselves” (Interview 17). In regional areas, finding staff to employ for short term opportunities – either to undertake project work or backfill library staff while they undertake project work – can be very difficult (Interview 17). Additionally, council processes may make it difficult to get staff appointed in a timely manner (Interview 17). A lack of experience with managing grants can also impact on a library’s ability to execute the grant, and in turn, a negative experience of managing a grant may deter staff from applying for future grants. There is a real need for support for grant planning and execution to ensure libraries are able to maximise the benefit of the grants.

Libraries sometimes find it difficult to align the programming and innovation they want to pursue, or that their community needs, with the grant funding priorities.

> [S]ome of the funding that they put out is so difficult to apply for. And trying to relate it to our community and get buy-in with our community for some of the products that they offer is just... yeah, it just doesn’t align very well. It makes it very difficult. (Interview 10)

There is a real sense that libraries are deeply connected to their communities and they want to undertake activities that meet community need. This focus on the community and their needs is commendable, however, with funding aligned to the themes in *The Next Horizon*, some managers felt it is not always possible for libraries to maintain that community needs focus if they want to take advantage of the funding. Providing a funding stream that is focused specifically on projects that are deeply grounded in community need would address this issue. In addition, or as an alternative, State Library could provide clearer direction around an ‘innovation’ grant stream, demonstrating the types of projects libraries could seek to have funded as ‘innovation’ projects.

6.3 Marketing libraries to non users
Many library managers talked about the need to promote libraries to non-users, grounded in a sense that the general public may not be aware of the library’s offer: “I guess the people who use libraries love libraries. The people who don’t, quite often go, ‘Oh, I haven’t been to the library since I was a kid. I wouldn’t know what’s there’” (Interview 9). Building on this, when consulting with the public about what they want, sometimes the library’s offer is mirrored in a list of wants: “whenever we do surveying about what people want, we’re like ‘Well we’re already doing that’” (Interview 4). This suggests that people are unaware of what is already on offer.

Several managers suggested that they would like to see a statewide marketing campaign, funded and run by State Library, as part of the communication for the vision. Suggestions included

- a media campaign including social media advertisements and television commercials (Interview 1)
- a campaign focused on marketing electronic collections – “Don’t buy your eBook, borrow it from the library” (Interview 4) – using media like YouTube and television advertisements
- a campaign that communicates that the library is about more than books (Interview 3)
- a campaign “around the value of libraries” (Interview 18).
One participant’s council had run a successful television advertising campaign and felt it is “way past time that State Library did a bit of an advertising campaign of their own” (Interview 3).

There was some variation in sentiment about marketing and promotion. For example, one participant felt that a statewide marketing campaign may not be appropriate, but that libraries need some kind of support with marketing: “[We need] some kind of ongoing sort of... not campaign, but material or some messaging or some branding that we can promote our services across the state, maybe” (Interview 9).

Many library managers are looking to State Library for guidance, support and leadership in this space. It is recommended that State Library explore ways to support public libraries in communicating their offer with potential customers. This might include creation of a toolkit focused on low cost marketing. It could also include a statewide marketing campaign.

6.4 Need for advocacy support

One of the primary functions of the vision is to support advocacy to a variety of stakeholders, including council. Advocacy to council was a significant issue across the interviews with library managers, with many participants articulating a need for support in this area.

Some managers are looking for a toolkit to draw on that allows them to demonstrate the value of libraries:

I don’t think State Library does enough work on proving that, or justifying that... [to help people] like myself, who have to go in and beg for money from councillors every twelve months to support the library programs. I don’t have a lot of tools that allow me to do that. (Interview 3)

While the vision explains the ‘why’ – the reasons public libraries do what they do – and sets a direction for what they should or could be doing next, it does not demonstrate impact in real terms. To advocate effectively for the value of libraries, managers need evidence of impact, and they need support to do to gather that evidence and tell the story.

Return on investment in real dollar terms is a powerful argument for the value of libraries, and an argument that councils understand. The Library Dividend Report, released in 2012, is an excellent example of a resource that managers can draw on in their advocacy to council (Interview 3). Some managers would like to see more work from State Library in this space.

Managers recognise that local statistics, evaluations and user surveys are important in telling the story of local impact, however, they may need support to work with this data and translate it into a story of impact. Some tools may already be available, for example, the Creative Spaces Impact Framework. However, these existing tools may need to be promoted or positioned differently, or may need to be redeveloped to fit a broader range of activities. In terms of positioning, the Creative Spaces Impact Framework is a good example of how positioning and promoting a resource differently might result in more use. It currently sits under ‘Research’ on the Public Libraries Connect site, not under a section focused on evaluation, impact, advocacy or even the existing section ‘Championing your library’. Taking the Creative Spaces Impact Framework as an example again, managers may need support to understand how they can extrapolate on the guidelines provided there to assess the impact of other types of activities.

Some managers also want SLQ to advocate directly to council (Interview 3; Interview 15; Interview 2).

I want to see State Library work on elected members. I think that’s their biggest responsibility [in terms of communicating the vision]... (Interview 3)

Direct advocacy from SLQ would lend authority to the advocacy work managers are already doing (Interview 15). That authoritative voice might be useful at key times, for example, when there has been significant staffing change in council, or after an election (Interview 2). These are key moments at which some managers felt that direct advocacy to council by State Library might be helpful.
However, this desire for SLQ to advocate directly to council is not universal. Some managers indicated they did not need support for advocacy because they have strong support already and are working closely with councillors and the mayor (Interview 4). Other managers would value some direct advocacy, but feel that a combined approach with local advocacy supplemented by direct advocacy would work best (Interview 16). Other managers believe that direct advocacy to council by SLQ could undermine the manager and the relationships they have built with council, and are opposed to the idea of State Library advocating to council on their behalf (Interview 18).

The need for advocacy to council was a strong theme across the consultation, as was the idea that library managers – particularly those from smaller libraries – need support to effectively advocate. That support might come in the form of an advocacy toolkit that helps libraries to understand, articulate and demonstrate impact. The toolkit might also include options to bring State Library in to assist by providing direct advocacy to council where needed.

6.5 Assessing performance against the vision

In their interviews, some library managers raised the idea of developing a mechanism to allow libraries to assess or evaluate their library’s performance against the vision. This might take the form of a ‘check list’ (Interview 17) that libraries can use to assess how they are progressing with addressing the different parts of the vision. It would also create “a rich annual picture of what libraries are doing, as an impact and as an outcome” (Interview 2). This could be aligned to the annual priority updates proposed in the recommendations, or it could be aligned to the vision more broadly.

Evaluating performance against the vision would have other benefits, beyond providing a picture of what is happening around the state. It may also assist library managers to raise the profile of their service with council, as they would collect evidence of impact. It would also provide an opportunity to remind them to periodically ‘check in’ with the vision: “I think, you know, like I said referring back to the analogy of the roadmap, if periodically you put a signpost up that said, ‘We’re doing this, how fantastic is that?’, or ‘We’ve achieved that and with your help, we’ve done this’.” (Interview 6)

6.6 Professional networking

Due to their isolation, staff and managers from regional libraries could benefit from opportunities to network with their peers:

- it would be nice to feel as if you’re connected to the community... Maybe we could, you know, every couple of months or every six months, we could have a teleconference or something whereby we get together and, “Hey, I’ve done this and this is fantastic” and “Look what I’ve done here” (Interview 6)

SLQ could take a lead in supporting networking by organising teleconferences or videoconferences, implementing a peer mentoring program, or facilitating staff exchanges.

6.7 Sharing resources to support programming

Some library staff would like to see more support for programming, particularly technology programming. Regional and remote libraries find it difficult to take technology kits and design programs around them. In some cases, they simply do not have time to work out how to use the technology and then design programs around it. They want – and more importantly, need – support to design and deliver technology programs.

- [W]e got a gadget kit the other day.... Now, it was great to get it... but there was no instruction. And it would be really good to just find four things again that work for a beginner and intermediate level – “This is what works. We’ve tried this and it works.” You know, try and make it easier for the people on the ground level... (Interview 8)

Time and resources are an issue for all regional and remote libraries, and sharing “tried and proven” (Interview 8) programming ideas would assist them to make better use of things like technology kits, and in turn, to deliver on the vision. Funding for or access to equipment is not the only barrier to technology
programming. “[I]t is not always the money; it is, you know, give us the money to buy the gadget or whatever – it is the time and it is, who does that? Who’s been proven to do that? Who can connect it all up?” (Interview 8) Developing programs takes time, and there may not be a significant return on investment if every library service develops their own programming around a kit that is distributed statewide. As one library manager put it, “I’m always thinking what’s value for the buck. If I have to spend 30 hours to get six people, I ain’t interested” (Interview 8).

While some library staff would like to see State Library provide programming ideas and resources as part of statewide programming initiatives, this is not the only solution. Libraries – particularly smaller services with less staff – are likely to benefit significantly from resource sharing amongst libraries. One way to address this might be for State Library to facilitate such sharing by establishing a repository for programming ideas and materials.

### 6.8 Summary
This section outlined a number of themes that, while not directly related to the vision, may impact on the enactment of the vision. To support State Library in addressing some of these issues, recommendations related to them have been prepared and are detailed in Section 10: Recommendations.

### 7 Barriers to realising the vision
This section outlines potential barriers to realising the vision for future public libraries across the state. These findings are primarily drawn from interviews with library managers, but are also drawn from and supported by data from the questionnaire, provided in response to the question: What are the four most significant issues facing your library service in the next 3 to 5 years?

Our understanding of these barriers has influenced the shape and content of the vision. They should also be taken into consideration when implementation plans for the new vision are formulated.

#### 7.1 Budget
Unsurprisingly, a majority of library managers (but not all) indicated budget was a potential barrier to implementing the vision. Budget concerns related to
- staffing, including lack of staff, and capacity to pay competitive salaries (and related recruitment issues)
- physical spaces, including working with buildings that are not fit for purpose, need for new buildings either to serve new areas or to replace existing buildings, and issues related to refurbishing existing buildings
- the collection, in particular, juggling both electronic and hard copy collections, and lack of capacity to build online collections to meet demand for volume of content.

#### 7.2 Staffing
Managers articulated several issues to do with staffing that represent a barrier when it comes to realising their vision for their libraries. These include: low staffing levels; recruitment of suitable candidates; staff skills, particularly related to technology and programming; and “apathy” (Interview 2) or an unwillingness to engage with new initiatives or technology.

Some rural libraries simply do not have enough staff to allow managers to pursue the activities they would like to see happening in their libraries: “we’re basically a one-staff library. So I’m here by myself most of the time” (Interview 11).

For some library services, attracting the right staff – particularly staff with librarianship qualifications – can be a challenge. This is an issue for regional and remote services, however, it can also be an issue for some (but not all) larger, city-based library services. There are issues with disparity in pay rates that impact on
the capacity of some services to attract qualified staff (Interview 7). Some managers indicated that qualified candidates may not be willing to move to regional areas. A small number of participants indicated that senior roles at a branch management or program leadership level sometimes need to be advertised multiple times to fill the position.

Attracting staff with the skills and knowledge to support the range of programming and service activities that public libraries now deliver is also a challenge that was articulated by a number of library managers, as illustrated by the following quotations:

- “I don’t see the skillset there that I’d like to see... I still see a fairly traditional... style come through which just isn’t prepared for what a current contemporary library service is about.” (Interview 7)

- “[R]ecruiting staff into [programming and experience] roles is a bit challenging as well... And I think that the libraries need to embrace the fact that they’re changing, and maybe the way that we staff them needs to change as well” (Interview 12)

Modern libraries need staff with a diverse skill set, and some managers feel that graduates of library and information studies programs do not have the skill sets they are looking for. If library and information studies (LIS) programs are truly not delivering graduates with the skill sets that public libraries need, this needs to be raised with LIS educators. Negative perception of graduate librarians’ capability has the potential to erode the value of professional librarian skills and the standing of public libraries.

- “I think, you know, probably not so much of an issue for my library service now, but I know certainly for many library services, is maintaining the level of skilled staff on board. So, particularly professional staff, because without that, the libraries are very, very exposed to being downgraded to being, you know, a reading corner.” (Interview 7)

As suggested above, the shift to a greater focus on experiences as opposed to transactions has impacted on the skillset library managers see as critical for their staff. In addition to impacting recruitment, this also has a significant impact on the existing workforce.

- “[A] lot of people have come to this very late in life and work really hard to get up there, but we are just that one step ahead of showing people how to do things. And to get to the next couple of steps as the young people advance, is going to be a real challenge for our workforce...” (Interview 4)

When discussing staff skills and knowledge as a barrier, technology and program delivery skills surfaced most frequently across the interviews. However, one manager highlighted a need for stronger project management and leadership skills (Interview 9).

A number of managers highlighted staff willingness to engage in particular activities or to innovate more generally as a significant barrier. One library manager is frustrated by staff “apathy”, which manifests as staff not being willing to take on the challenge of new approaches or services, or feeling new initiatives are not their responsibility or not the remit of their library service: “it’s someone else’s job. Like ‘Oh, that’s for State Library to do, or that’s for a big service like Brisbane or Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast to do. That’s not for us’.” (Interview 2). This sentiment was echoed by a number of other managers. In some services, none of the staff are willing to engage with “the digital stuff” (Interview 5). Likewise, some staff are unwilling to “get on board” and “move into the programming space” (Interview 12). Staff interest in upskilling, as well as willingness to do so, is also an issue in some services (Interview 10). For many of the managers interviewed for this project, motivating staff to step out of transactional roles and into the programming realm is a real challenge.

Effective communication around the vision document may empower library managers with tools to motivate their staff. However, this is a significant, complex issue that will not be easy to address.

While issues to do with staffing presented as potential barriers to enacting the vision, it is important to note that the consultation also strongly emphasised the critical, positive role staff play in delivery public
library services. To effectively deliver on any vision for the future public library, it is critical that the library workforce is supported to develop their skills and knowledge; that their potential is nurtured, their passion harnessed, and their creativity encouraged. Staff are an enabler for the goals and aspirations of the future public library, however, there are issues that need to be addressed to ensure the workforce is optimally skilled and highly engaged. It is recommended that the new vision celebrates the library workforce while simultaneously providing a strategic imperative for continued investment in workforce planning and development.

7.3 Space
Many of the managers who were interviewed have major refurbishment projects planned for the near future. These managers – and others who may not have refurbishment projects on the horizon – talked about space issues as potential barriers to deliver on their vision for their libraries. Many libraries are too small and not fitted out appropriately to support the community hub, programming-focused future managers envision for their libraries. While refurbishment of spaces might improve issues related to space, having too little space to run programs or meet demand for seating cannot be easily remedied.

Space was more often a barrier for regional and rural and libraries.

7.4 Internet connectivity
Internet connectivity is a major issue for many libraries, and not only the rural or regional libraries. Connectivity is an issue for city-sized councils as well as the smallest, most remote councils. The NBN has not delivered the expected benefits in some areas, and in other areas, there have been implementation issues (like a library being completely disconnected as a product of NBN rollout in the area). Connectivity issues impact on delivery of programs of any type, but particularly technology-focused programs. It also impacts on the provision of internet access to customers, and on efficient operation of the library.

7.5 Summary
A number of barriers to realising the vision came up across the consultation, but primarily surfaced via interviews with library managers. Budget, particularly as it impacts on staffing, physical spaces, and the collection was a theme across many of the interviews. There are also a number of barriers related to staffing, including low staffing levels, difficulty with recruiting suitable candidates, skills and knowledge of existing staff, and staff engagement. A lack of spaces suitable to support the current focus on experience rather than transaction was another issue for many library managers, more often for regional and rural libraries. Finally, internet connectivity is a significant barrier to program and service delivery in a number of areas around the state.

Given the critical role played by library staff in delivering on the vision, barriers related to staffing need particular attention.

8 Communicating the vision
A communication strategy should be developed to ensure library staff, key council staff, councillors and other relevant stakeholders are informed of the new vision. The communication strategy should also address ongoing promotion of the vision across the life of the document.

This section outlines recommended approaches to communicating the vision.

8.1 Staff awareness
Overwhelmingly, library managers felt it was their responsibility to ensure staff were aware of the new vision. However, only 34% of respondents to the survey indicated they are familiar or very familiar with the existing vision. This indicates that communication of the vision to library staff could be improved. As managers see communication to staff as their remit, SLQ should support managers in this by providing
resources that introduce staff to the vision on launch, and continually bring the vision back into their line of sight throughout its life.

Based on feedback across the consultation, in addition to the communication that already happens via Public Libraries Connect, the following awareness activities are recommended, at a minimum.

### 8.1.1 Roadshows or visits
A number of library managers indicated that roadshows, where State Library staff members visit councils across the state to promote the vision, would be a highly effective means of connecting with library staff, as well as council executive and councillors. As participants noted (Interview 2), roadshows are expensive and logistically challenging, but having a State Library staff member visit libraries and speak with staff can have a ‘profound’ impact.

It is recommended that State Library undertake roadshows or other activities that take State Library staff to the councils. One alternative might be to send a staff member to spend a number of days in libraries around the state, working with the local staff. However, this may not have the same benefits as a roadshow, in terms of impact on council and council staff.

If roadshows are undertaken, feedback on the consultation process indicates libraries need significant lead time to free up staff to attend events and to secure attendance by councillors and council executive.

### 8.1.2 One page mini poster
A one page ‘mini poster’ that provides an overview of the vision should be created for library staff. This version is intended to keep the vision within sight across its life. This should be designed as a resource that staff can display at their desks. It needs to be visually appealing and concise.

### 8.1.3 Launch videos
A launch video based on the one page version of the vision should be prepared and distribute widely across social media, elists and direct email to library managers.

It is recommended that a short, conversational video report on the consultation and the vision development process be created and distributed, to accompany the launch video. This will help with acceptance by providing insight to library staff about how their views were incorporated into the document.

### 8.1.4 Case study video series
To reduce the risk of the vision being shelved, SLQ needs to constantly communicate successes and innovations across the network in the context of the vision. It is recommended that State Library create an engaging case study video series. This might involve creating a video or a number of videos each month that highlight a best practice example from across the network, linked to one of the aspirations from the vision document. It needs to be made clear how the example relates to the vision document in a way that encourages staff to think about what is in the vision.

The case studies need to be diverse: they should feature examples from libraries of different sizes, showcasing initiatives of varying complexity, from inexpensive innovations to large scale programs. Relatability is key to make the case studies have impact.

### 8.1.5 Training
When providing training opportunities for public libraries, State Library should explicitly link learning outcomes to the vision wherever possible, to reinforce the content of the vision and demonstrate commitment to it.
8.2 Communicating the vision to councils
As previously noted, advocacy to council was a concern that many library managers raised in their interviews. The launch of the new vision represents a significant advocacy opportunity. In the interviews, library managers were asked how State Library could assist them with raising awareness of the vision across council. They indicated roadshows and direct engagement with LGAQ at LGAW events would be helpful. State Library should build on recent success working with LGAQ to promote the vision to its members.

9 Implementing the vision

9.1 Getting the basics right
Across the interviews, there was a strong sense that libraries must simultaneously push forward in new areas while continuing to work on getting the basics right. There were strong themes across the consultation on the pivotal role of staff in delivering effective public library services, the role of technology as an enabler, the need to build and maintain partnerships, and work libraries need to do around spaces. Attending to these enablers is critical to realising the more aspirational elements of the vision.

While the vision itself needs to be aspirational, libraries also need a strategic resource that supports them in getting the basics right. It is recommended that State Library consider other ways to acknowledge these themes and assist libraries to set goals related to these enablers.

9.2 Tools to support the new vision

9.2.1 Strategic planning training
There is evidence to suggest that some library managers would value mentoring or guidance through the process of translating the vision into their context. This is particularly true in smaller library services and services where the manager does not have a library background.

We recommend that State Library designs and delivers a workshop for library managers on strategic planning, that looks at how various strategic tools – from the vision to local Council strategic documents – can be brought together to provide a foundation for a strategic plan for the library service. The training should cover strategies for mapping various strategic tools to a single strategic plan for the library service.

9.2.2 Templates for taking action
To assist library managers in planning how they will take action on the vision, we recommend State Library develop two templates.

9.2.2.1 Self assessment worksheet
A self assessment worksheet should be designed to help library managers and leadership teams think critically about the vision and how it applies in their context. It should ask managers to think through relevance, progress to date, and priority level for each of the strategic aspirations / focus areas in the vision. It should also prompt library managers to think about the overall priority of each of the strategic aspirations and how they map to local strategic plans. For each of the strategic aspirations / focus areas in the vision, it should ask questions like:

- How relevant is this aspiration / focus area in my context?
- To what extent have we already realised this aspiration / addressed this focus area?
- To what extent is this aspiration / focus area a priority for my library service?

9.2.2.2 Action planning worksheet
An action planning worksheet should be designed to help libraries translate and apply the vision by articulating activities, projects or actions that relate to the strategic aspirations / focus areas. It should be
both a practical and a strategic planning tool. Practically, it should ask managers to articulate specific activities or projects and an associated concrete step that can be taken to get started on them. Strategically, it should ask managers to consider how the activities, projects or actions identified fit with library and council strategic plans.

9.2.3 Supporting library staff to understand how they contribute to the vision
To maximise engagement with the vision and increase its relevance to library staff, it is important to help library staff across the state understand how they contribute to the delivery of the vision.

In an interview, one library manager explained a strategic mapping activity undertaken with library staff at her library service:

\textit{we've done activities as a library team about line of sight. So looking at what outcomes and goals we have in the library and looking at all those different strategic documents that we might have, and how what we do, reflects those documents. We put all the plans up on the walls and then get them to articulate how what they do reflects each of those plans... You know, there's nothing like that practical, “How does what I do, fit into this document, you know, this library document?” And, setting them that document to read beforehand, and then they can sit there and they can say, “Yes, well, I deliver programs like story time. So that fits into this outcome”. And some discussion then around that, so they can see that. (Interview 14)}

This activity has been successful with staff at various levels who fulfil various roles.

It is recommended that State Library explore ways to deliver or support this kind of activity for public library staff across the state. This might be done through:

1. Development of a toolkit to support library managers’ local delivery of this strategic mapping activity.
2. Direct delivery of this activity by State Library.
3. A combination of these two options.

9.2.4 Implementation checklist
We recommend that State Library develops an action check list that encourages library managers around the state to pick up the new vision and begin the process of translating, contextualising and acting on the vision. Such a check list might include suggested activities like:

- Revisit local strategic planning documents to look for areas of alignment
- Share the vision with library staff
- Share the vision with councillors and key council staff
- Share the vision with external stakeholders
- Add relevant standing agenda item/s to team meetings
- Work through self assessment and action planning worksheets.

9.2.5 Evaluation and assessment tool or process
As noted in \textit{Section 6: Related themes from the data}, some library managers expressed interest in having a tool they could use to assess or evaluate their library service’s performance against the vision. It is recommended that State Library explore options for implementing an evaluation process (see \textit{Recommendations} for further detail).

10 Recommendations
It is recommended that State Library develops a vision that is grounded in the findings from this consultation. It should be based on the vision of the future public library presented in \textit{Section 5: The future public library}. It should be framed in a way that supports managers to overcome the barriers outlined in \textit{Section 7: Barriers to realising the vision}. 
It is recommended that the vision
  • be substantial enough to allow managers to quote and cite it when applying for grants and arguing strategic imperative for activities
  • include good practice examples, which managers appreciate in the current vision.

In addition, the research team makes a number of recommendations related to communication of the vision, implementation of the vision, and associated issues.

10.1 Communicating the vision
  • Consider creating multiple versions of the vision to meet the unique needs of target audiences:
    o Managers want a substantial vision that they can draw on to support funding applications and argue strategic imperative. They value being able to quote the vision.
    o Managers also felt that a shorter version of the vision would be useful as a tool for communicating the vision to council and front line staff.
  • Keep the vision relevant and current year-on-year by identify, creating, and disseminating annual updates that
    o provide guidance around interpreting the strategic aspirations / foci in the coming 12 months, in light of trends and emergent issues
    o provide updated good practice statements where needed
    o includes case studies of good practice examples, with examples that are relevant to libraries of all sizes.
  • Develop a robust communication strategy to ensure library staff, key council staff, councillors and other relevant stakeholders are informed of the new vision. The communication strategy should also address ongoing promotion of the vision across the life of the document. The strategy should employ multiple approaches, including print and video artefacts, as well as library visits, as outlined in Section 8: Communicating the vision.

10.2 Implementing the vision
  • Design and deliver a workshop on strategic planning for library managers.
  • Design a toolkit to support library managers’ local delivery of a strategic mapping activity for library staff, to allow them to explore how their work contributes to the vision. Alternatively, State Library could deliver this activity directly.
  • Develop action planning and self assessment worksheets to assist library managers in operationalising the vision.
  • Develop an implementation check list that encourages library managers around the state to undertake practical actions that will allow them to begin the process of translating, contextualising and acting on the vision.
  • Consider providing a lightweight mechanism via which public libraries can regularly evaluate how they are traveling against the vision. This should be done in consultation with public libraries. It is recommended that this evaluation is recommended to libraries, rather than required of them, and/or that the level of investment required of public libraries to undertake the reporting is low. To be effective in capturing stories and achievable for libraries to execute, this should be a low workload task, and should be framed as an opportunity to celebrate successes.

10.3 Related recommendations

The following recommendations relate to issues discussed in Section 6: Related themes from the data.

10.3.1 Supporting libraries to deliver on the vision
To assist library staff to deliver on the vision, it is recommended that State Library consider the following:
  • Create infrastructure that supports sharing of ideas and programming resources across the state.
• Explore ways to support public libraries in communicating their offer with potential customers. This might include creation of a toolkit focused on low cost marketing. It could also include a statewide marketing campaign.
• Develop an advocacy toolkit that draws together resources and tools that managers can use to demonstrate impact and effectively advocate for their library service, particularly to council. The toolkit might include the option to bring State Library in to provide direct advocacy where needed.

10.3.2 Grants
While the grant scheme is beyond the scope of this project, participants see the grants as inextricably linked to the vision, and as such, they provided some comments about the grant programs that identify some issues. The following recommendations are made to assist with addressing these issues:
• Consider offering grant-based funding for programming or other initiatives that are driven by community need.
• Build consideration for sustainability into the grant application and execution process. This could include
  o training or support resources to help libraries plan for sustainability
  o mentoring to help libraries transition grant funded activities into business as usual or abandon where appropriate.
• Assist libraries with grant execution through a mentoring program that pairs less experienced staff with staff who have successfully executed grants. The mentoring program would:
  o help libraries to plan activities that are achievable in their context prior to applying
  o support libraries in executing the grant by providing ongoing mentoring throughout the life of the grant.
Appendix 1: Interview discussion guide

Setting up for the interview

- If face to face, do location-specific housekeeping – offer drink of water, cup of tea; advise location of toilets and evacuation process; clarify max time 60 minutes.
- If online or phone, check the participant is comfortable to start and clarify expected max time 60 minutes.

At the start of the interview

- Turn recorder on
- Greeting
- Restate purpose of the project
- Restate consent parameters and clarify agreement to participant.
- Remind participant that the questions are meant to stimulate their thinking. They can answer or not as they wish.
- They can add to or address aspects not directly in answer to the question but which come to mind.
- Remind the participant they will have the opportunity to verify/edit their transcribed interview before it is used in the project/provided to the funding agency.
- Advise the participant that the funding agency will not know names of participants.
- Check the recorder is working properly.

Interview questions

The following are indicative questions that may be asked during the interview.

- How does The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries impact on: your work; strategic planning; advocacy; operational planning; funding applications; day-to-day business
- How have you used The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries? Can you tell me about a time when you used the document?
- To what extent do you think your staff are aware of/use the existing vision document?
- To what extent do you think councilors/council executive officers outside the library are aware of the vision?
- What does the vision document mean to you?
- Describe your vision of the future public library in your context.
- How might this differ from a generalised vision for the future public library?
- How might we allow for multiple visions?
- In the context of your library service, what barriers are there to realising that vision?
- What barriers exist for the sector more broadly?
- What are the key issues for your library service in the next X years?
- What do you think are the key issues for the sector?
- How can the vision document help address these issues?
- What would motivate you to use the vision document?
- What would make the new vision document useful to you?
- What don’t you want to see in the new vision document?
- How can we make sure that all staff are aware of the document?
- How can we make the renewed vision meaningful for all library staff?
  - How can SLQ contribute to that?
How can you / your library service contribute to that?
• How can we make sure the document is meaningful to councilors / council executive officers outside the library?
• What tools could SLQ provide to help you translate / operationalise the vision in your context?
• Is there anything you would like to add?

Probe questions
These are indicative of further questioning which may be useful, at any point of the interview, to clarify, extend or deepen the nature of responses:
• Could you explain what you mean by that?
• Could you tell me more about that?
• Do you have an example of that?
• Could you explain what would have countered that?

Conclusion
• Ask the participant if there is anything they wish to add.
• Thank the participant for their time and contribution to the project.
• Remind the participant of next steps:
  o Interview will be transcribed and de-identified
  o The transcript will be sent to the participant for verification, at which time they can edit responses if desired
• Remind the participant of the contact details on the information sheet should they have any queries or concerns in the future.
• If face to face, show the participant out.
• If online/phone, wish the participant a nice day and close down the Skype or other application.

After the interview
Ensure the sound file is saved as soon as practicable to the agreed online repository for safe keeping.
Appendix 2: Questionnaire instrument

Q1 What Local Government Area (LGA) is your library part of?  
(Please note: data from this question will only be used to determine participation rates by LGA size, and to provide generalised analysis by LGA size. Your response to this question will be removed from the dataset before it is given to the client.) 
Select from drop down list: (List of all LGAs)

Q2 What type of role do you hold?  
Library assistant  
Library technician  
Librarian  
Branch manager  
Senior management

Q3 What is your position title?

Q4 Are you aware of the existence of the statewide vision for public libraries, called The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries?  
● Yes  
● No (go to Q13)

Q5 How familiar are you with The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries?  
1 - Not familiar  
2 - Slightly familiar  
3 - Fairly familiar  
4 - Familiar  
5 - Very familiar

Q6 To what extent does The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries impact on your work?  
1 – No impact  
2 – Slight impact  
3 – Moderate impact  
4 – High impact  
5 – Very high impact

Q7 The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries helped my library service’s position with council.  
1 - Strongly disagree (go to Q9)  
2 - Disagree (go to Q9)  
3 - Undecided  
4 - Agree  
5 - Strongly agree

* Q8 The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries has helped our position with council through: (Choose all that apply)  
● Use as an advocacy tool  
● Highlighting opportunities for private sector partnerships  
● Increasing council’s understanding of the role of libraries
Promoting the value of libraries
Other (please specify)
I don’t know

Q9 The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries helped my library service’s position with the community.
1 - Strongly disagree (go to Q11)
2 - Disagree (go to Q11)
3 - Undecided
4 - Agree
5 - Strongly agree

* Q10 The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public has helped our position with the community through: (Choose all that apply)
- Use as an advocacy tool
- Highlighting opportunities for private sector partnerships
- Increasing the community’s understanding of the role of libraries
- Promoting the value of libraries
Other (please specify)
I don’t know

Q11 How have you used The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries? (Choose all that apply)
- To justify relevance of a project in a funding application
- To inform strategic planning
- To inform operational planning
- For advocacy within the library service (e.g. to staff, to management)
- For advocacy within council (e.g. to council, to other business areas within council)
- For external advocacy (e.g. to community, the media)
Other (please specify)

Q12 Please give us an example of a time when you have used The Next Horizon: VISION 2017 for Queensland public libraries.

Q13 The Next Horizon sets out four themes that explain what 21st Century libraries are:
1. creative community spaces
2. connectors — physical and virtual
3. technology trendsetters
4. incubators of ideas, learning and innovation

To what extent are each of these themes still relevant?

Q13a Creative community spaces
1 - Not relevant
2 - Of little relevance
3 - Moderately relevant
4 - Relevant
5 - Very relevant
6 - I’m not sure

Q13b Connectors - physical and virtual
1 - Not relevant
2 - Of little relevance
3 - Moderately relevant
4 - Relevant
5 - Very relevant
6 - I’m not sure

Q13c Technology trendsetters
1 - Not relevant
2 - Of little relevance
3 - Moderately relevant
4 - Relevant
5 - Very relevant
6 - I’m not sure

Q13d Incubators of ideas, learning and innovation
1 - Not relevant
2 - Of little relevance
3 - Moderately relevant
4 - Relevant
5 - Very relevant
6 - I’m not sure

Q14 Assume some of the current themes will be rolled over into a renewed vision. If you had to choose one theme to retain in the renewed vision, which would you choose?
   1. creative community spaces
   2. connectors — physical and virtual
   3. technology trendsetters
   4. incubators of ideas, learning and innovation

Q15 Assume some of the current themes are being rolled over into a renewed vision. If you had to remove one theme from the existing set of themes, which would you remove?
   1. creative community spaces
   2. connectors — physical and virtual
   3. technology trendsetters
   4. incubators of ideas, learning and innovation

Q16 Assume the current themes are being rolled over into a renewed vision. If you had to add one new theme to the existing set of themes, what would it be?

Q17 The Next Horizon sets out four priority areas or industry issues that are of concern for Queensland public library.
   1. The library workforce
   2. Leadership
   3. Partnerships
   4. Collections

To what extent are each of these still important for your library?

Q17a The library workforce
1 - Not important
2 - Of little importance
3 - Moderately important
4 - Important
5 - Very important
6 - I don’t know

Q17b Leadership
1 - Not important
2 - Of little importance
3 - Moderately important
4 - Important
5 - Very important
6 - I don’t know

Q17c Partnerships
1 - Not important
2 - Of little importance
3 - Moderately important
4 - Important
5 - Very important
6 - I don’t know

Q17d Collections
1 - Not important
2 - Of little importance
3 - Moderately important
4 - Important
5 - Very important
6 - I don’t know

Q18 What are the four most significant issues facing your library service in the next three to five years?

Q19 How can we best communicate the renewed vision to ensure maximum awareness across the state?

- Short promotional video/s
- Regional workshops
- Public Libraries Connect website
- Public Libraries Connect newsletter
- Other - please specify