

State of the nation and 2020 vision released

The Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council has released its final two reports — *State of the nation: Australia's public libraries*, and *2020 vision: Towards the libraries of the future*.

State of the nation provides a comprehensive overview of public library services throughout Australia. This includes data on the number of service points, levels of funding and levels of expenditure, and provides a breakdown of these figures into State and local library services. It also provides an analysis of current and emerging issues which have been identified by State and Territory libraries including technology and communications, funding, copyright, and the relationship between public libraries with other areas of the library and information sector.

The report is an addition to the growing body of statistical data avail-

able on the public library sector, including the Working Group's earlier report *Navigating the economy of knowledge* and reports by the Australian Bureau of Statistics such as *Attendance at selected cultural venues*.

2020 vision, prepared by Colin Mercer and Margaret Smith, provides a strategic agenda and policy framework for Australia's State and public libraries. It discusses indicators and trends within the library sector, outlines strategic responses and highlights opportunities which exist for libraries to capitalise on a rapidly changing environment.

The report states that public libraries are at the threshold of: entry to the knowledge and on-line economy; a competitive environment; new and multiple forms of citizenship; and a dramatic shift in the meaning and ethos of 'public service'.

The report suggests that in order to successfully deal with these issues in the future, libraries will require the ability to identify their product, understand the information market and their 'market share', recognise the changing needs and expectations of their current and potential client base, engage actively in the knowledge economy and its developments both nationally and globally, and re-invent their strategic position in the public and private sectors.

Both reports can be obtained from Ivan Catlin at the State Library of Queensland (ph 07 3840 7874). The work of the Libraries Working Group is currently being wound down and will be completed by June this year. A select number of its members, including the ALIA executive director, have been appointed to oversee this final phase of the Group. ■



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