

Tasmanian Government

Paula Wriedt, MHA, Minister for Education

The Tasmanian Government has a history of commitment to public library services and, in the year 2000, celebrated the 150-year anniversary of legislation providing for public libraries in the State. The current *Libraries Act 1984* enshrines in legislation that library services are offered free of charge.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to making information accessible to all Tasmanians and has a number of strategies in place to accomplish this.

The State Library of Tasmania provides all Tasmanians with access to information through its integrated public library network of 54 libraries throughout Tasmania, comprising seven city libraries, 41 branch libraries and six reference and specialist libraries. The State Library is an integral part of the information network of the State and is recognised as such by its role in providing leading edge services.

A key policy platform of the Tasmanian Government is within my portfolio of Education. *Learning together: a vision for education, training and information into the 21st century* is a vision that incorporates the notion of the information age as a stimulating and dynamic period giving Tasmania the opportunity to develop education, training and information systems which will be recognised as worldclass. This policy identifies five goals, underpinned by strategies and initiatives, to help Tasmania achieve this vision. Goal four of this policy is specifically related to the information needs of the community and strives to achieve an information-rich community with access to global and local information resources — so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society. Strategies to support this goal include the development of an informa-

tion plan to identify the availability of public information resources and so enhance access to these resources. The State Library is responsible for developing this plan in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. It will incorporate into it the critical elements of information literacy skills which are essential for the analysis and use of information.

The Intelligent Island concept is a goal of the Tasmanian Government and the Premier's statements in his speech 'A Plan for the Next Generation' to the House of Assembly on 6 September 2000 support that goal. The Premier stated that 'If we are to attain our goal of becoming the Intelligent Island we need to do more than just be good at information technology and communications. We need to invest in developing our intellectual infrastructure for the future ... The information age is right now impacting on all areas of government and business.'

Strategies to support this goal include: Service Tasmania Online — an online service providing access to the three tiers of government information — local, state and federal. The site is a whole-of-government initiative and is developed and managed by the State Library of Tasmania; Tasmanian Communities Online — a network of 64 Online Access Centres in rural and regional areas of Tasmania. Funding from the State Government has been provided to continue the development of these centres.; TALIS — the combined catalogue for the collections of the State Library network, TAFE and government school libraries.

The Tasmanian Government shows that it is taking positive steps, through these policies and existing services, to ensure that access to, and use of, information for all Tasmanians is recognised as a fundamental right for all members of the Tasmanian community. ■

Northern Territory Government

Peter Adamson, Minister for Corporate and Information Services

Smoke signals and morse code may be primitive forms of communication but they were designed for a purpose. That was to *inform* people when verbal communication was not possible and provide *information* allowing people or groups to make an educated decision and react accordingly.

While obtaining information has greatly progressed from this primitive form, the principle of the value of accessing information remains the same.

Access to valid information can benefit our lives and improve society overall and, for this reason, the Northern Territory Government upholds the right of Territorians to access information, literature and their documentary heritage.

Recent initiatives and programs for access to information in the Northern Territory include: active support for the NT library network through the provision of a \$3 million operational and developmental grants program; development of specific initiatives for remote and Aboriginal communities such as the Indigenous Knowledge Centres, community library officer training and support; support for the *KnowledgeNT* project to be developed in association with the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) to provide access and information on every

library and community in the Territory; active promotion and support of online initiatives such as the Electronic Outback project with the signing of a contract to supply fourteen remote communities with improved telecommunications and internet services by satellite; a 50 per cent increase in the number of public access terminals this year in NT libraries. A project funded through Northern Territory Library and Information Service Developmental Grants has put public access terminals for internet use in twelve remote area community libraries during the past two years.

The Territory's remoteness — where hundreds of kilometres may separate a person or organisation from the physical structure of a well-resourced library — places extra demands on the Government.

But the Northern Territory is tackling these issues head on. Progress has been made to use more online technology to allow access to information. Information is no longer just 'books on shelves'. It also involves embracing new technology.

The Northern Territory Government is a proud participant in the inaugural Information Rights Day and commends ALIA and library and information services throughout Australia on this initiative to protect people's right to access information. ■

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