



Lee Mathers
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Dear Lee

Library assessment report Tenterfield Shire Council

The State Library has prepared the attached report based on a visit in August 2023. The report includes discussion and analysis of your library's data with reference to statistics and the NSW Public Library Standards (*Living Learning Libraries*) benchmarks.¹ Some of the library service's usage indicators are lower than the median, and this is the main area for addressing over the medium term.

The library service has lower than median membership with 35.16% of the community who are members of the library. It is noted that this is an increase from the 2018-19 membership of 33.91% of the community which is an achievement. The Tenterfield Library membership level of 35.16% indicates that close to 65% of the community, as non-members, miss out on the many benefits that library membership brings including access to collections, resources and programs.

It is acknowledged that Tenterfield Shire is large with isolated populations, and there are national parks and wilderness areas separating small towns and villages. For people in some parts of the Shire their closest library services will be provided by Southern Downs Regional Council in Queensland, for example at Stanthorpe, or Warwick rather than Tenterfield. It may be that some of the residents are members of Queensland public libraries rather than at Tenterfield. However, a membership campaign and regular outreach services are recommended to ensure that the community is aware of library services and how to access them. A medium sized metropolitan library recently ran a membership campaign and has achieved membership of over 50% of its population. This library service has an annual membership drive to encourage connection and engagement with the library. -

Tenterfield Library could consider a membership promotion, however, a challenge for Tenterfield would be the time required for undertaking the outreach to the community to raise awareness of the library. It is important for the library staff to be able to go out to smaller

¹ *Living Learning Libraries* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries> [accessed 11 March 2024]

communities to show what the library has to offer and, provided there is sufficient internet connectivity, demonstrate the content that the community can access without leaving their community. Any outreach needs to take place at locations and times which suit the community, so it may be at weekends for sport, or at other local events. The outreach should also take place regularly, every few weeks, with different groups and in different locations. As part of the outreach up it should be possible for people to join the library and potentially borrow straight away, so including a Wi-Fi hub as part of an outreach program is to be considered. It is acknowledged that this will be a challenge with current staffing. Having a library presence at events like the Tenterfield Show and community barbeques can help to raise awareness of the resources and programs provided by the library.

Staffing levels are 2.8 equivalent full-time staff for Tenterfield Library. The number of staff makes outreach and extended hours for the library difficult. It is noted that in 2018-2019 Tenterfield Library had 4.55 equivalent full-time staff. The current number of staff means a significant reduction in what it is possible for the library to provide for the community.

Visits to the library for 2022-2023 are 14,601 which is 2.12 visits per capita. In 2018-2019 there were 3.15 visits per capita. This could be impacted by the time the library was closed for renovations; however, this should increase as people come into the renovated library. Statewide there are still some impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic library closures and restrictions. Locally this data may also be impacted by the decrease in staff numbers at Tenterfield Library.

As the library has information provided on the Tenterfield Shire Council Facebook page, it is recommended that a link to this Facebook page is placed on the library part of the council website, and that there is information about this in the library too. As well as promoting the Council Facebook page it will help people to find out about Council programs and services.

In 2023/2024 Tenterfield Shire Council received \$86,912 in library subsidy payments. This is an increase from \$34,617 in the 2018/2019 funding. It is noted that while Tenterfield Shire Council has maintained expenditure on the library, as shown in the table below, operating costs have increased. There may need to be some analysis of these figures to ensure they are comparable, given that there were more library staff in 2018/19.

	Total 2018/2019	Total 2019/2020	Total 2020/2021	Total 2021/2022	Total 2022/2023	Total 2023/2024
Library subsidy	\$34,617	\$80,693	\$81,245	\$81,576	\$82,961	\$86,912
Operating expenditure	\$487,355	\$543,175	\$543,616	\$586,067	\$545,681	\$533,563

Please feel free to contact the State Library to discuss any aspects of the attached report, and to assist with planning future library strategies.

Yours sincerely

Ellen Forsyth
Consultant, Public Library Services

G1. Library management

To provide the community with a library service that is equitable, accessible, cost effective and efficient

It is noted that a library service is a core service for Tenterfield Shire Council given that the council adopted the Library Act 1939 and undertook to operate free public library services.²

The adoption of the Library Act 1939 is of significance because there are conditions connected to this. To revoke the adoption of the Library Act there must first be a poll or referendum of the community, and it must pass by a majority, see ss8(2) and (4) below:

(2) A local authority which has adopted this Act may, by resolution passed by the local authority after a proposal in that behalf has been approved by a poll of electors, revoke the adoption of this Act.

(4) Where a local authority revokes the adoption of this Act an adjustment shall be made of the interests of the local authority and of the Crown in any property to the provision of which subsidy under this Act has contributed.³

G2. Opening hours

To open at times which enable the community to make the most effective use of the library service and to ensure that the library's resources and services are as widely available as possible.

The library is open 10.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. It is unusual for a public library not to open at the weekend, however, to extend the library opening hours there would need to be additional staff employed for the library, or a redistribution of opening hours. From the recent survey it appears there is interest in a later closing time for the library at least once a week. Some libraries open later one or two days a week so they can close later in the day. This would retain the same number of opening hours but provide an evening where people could borrow from the library, and possibly allow for events or programs in the library such as a reading group.

Some libraries are implementing unstaffed after-hours access for members. This may be worth investigating.

G3 Library buildings

To provide a physical facility which will serve the identified needs of the community. The building should be attractive, designed for efficiency and sustainability, flexible and functional.

To provide libraries that are convenient and accessible to the public.

In 2021-2022 Tenterfield Shire Council received a Public Library Infrastructure grant of \$196,886 for the refurbishment of the library. This was to improve access in the library, maximising space for the collection, providing space for people to use the collection as well as to be able to spend time in the library with different kinds of seating. The library looks

² The Library Act 1939 was adopted by Tenterfield Shire Council 21 May 1951. The library service was started 8 July 1952.

³ Library Act 1939 Division 1 <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1939-040#pt.3-div.1> [accessed 12 February 2024]

appealing after the renovation. It is suggested that library staff monitor the self-check kiosk so that it can be restarted after power or internet outages. Self-check kiosks can be very useful as part of library service delivery.

It is understood that Urbenville, opens three hours a week, and has 500 items which are rotated quarterly with stock at Tenterfield. More regular rotation may increase loans, although it is acknowledged that current stock rotation takes one day of staff time. It is suggested that as well as the quarterly stock rotation that there stock top-ups when other council staff are in Urbenville as part of their work. Being able to run library programs at Urbenville as well as in the smaller settlements may be helpful for the community.



Photograph 1 Showing refurbished library with comfortable seating and excellent natural light.



Photograph 2 Showing reading nooks

G4. Mobile libraries

To provide a public library service via a specially designed and equipped vehicle to those people who cannot reach a normal branch or central library.

The library does not have a mobile library. A mobile library van may be worth investigating for outreach and access to the many villages and isolated communities across Tenterfield Shire.

G5. Marketing and promotion

To ensure that all members of the community are made aware of library services and programs. To facilitate easy access to library facilities, services and programs for all members of the community.

Because of staffing levels there is limited capacity to provide programs for the community. It is noted that there are weekly story times during school terms. The library could consider providing programs in partnership with local organisations or other groups, however not having access to a dedicated meeting room is potentially a problem for this. Events could be run in the library during opening hours.

Library programs are promoted on the council Facebook page. A link to this should be visible on the library part of the website. It should be easy to find on the council website too. Often councils have a link to their Facebook page on each page of their website. It is suggested that this is considered.

It is recommended that as well as the library having an alphabetic listing of online resources and ebooks on the website, that there is an option to look at the ebooks and comics together,

as this could help people find the resources. It is suggested that these are promoted on the council Facebook page as well as in the library.

G6 Information and readers' advisory services

To offer information and readers' advisory services to all library customers. To ensure that these services provide customers with the information and/or reading materials that suit their requirements in an appropriate time frame. To offer education programs to support information and digital literacy, and effective use of library resources and facilities.

Tenterfield Library has been collecting data for the enquiry completion rate. This demonstrates that there are a mix of information requests and customer service requests undertaken by library staff.

For displays in the library it is recommended that new titles from language collections from the State Library's collection are included. It will raise an awareness of collections available with a minimum time investment. This can be done as part of every library display at each branch to improve visibility and awareness of multilingual collection items.



Photograph 3 Carlingford Library new book display

We suggest including items in languages other than English in each display to be welcoming and to promote the availability of these collections to people who may not have been aware that they were looking for them. The recent research by Dr Jane Garner for *First language reading and the role of public libraries* highlights that it is an emotional and an important cultural experience to be able to read in your first language. As one of the people interviewed for the research stated:

Because it's my first language so I really – very relaxed when it come to the book, I know every word meaning, I know ever sentence's meaning, and I don't need to guess. I don't need to read the dictionary⁴.

While Tenterfield has lower numbers of people who speak additional languages to English, this is a simple way to be welcoming for them.



Photograph 4 Service desks at Tenterfield Library

The service desks at Tenterfield Library are attractive and enable roving services so that staff can assist people wherever they are in the library. It is suggested that staff at Tenterfield Library undertake the self-paced *Reference excellence* training.⁵

G8 Library staffing

To ensure that the size and mix of library staff support a range of services and programs which meet the needs of the community.

Each public library must have paid qualified staff of one or more persons, including a suitably qualified library manager.

The staffing levels have declined from 4.55 staff in 2018-2019 to 2.8 equivalent full-time staff in 2022-2023.

If the library had the recommended amount of staff for the population, then types of services such as participation engagement/libraries as creative spaces could be possible.

⁴ Garner, Jane *First language reading and the role of public libraries* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/first-language-reading> February 2022 [accessed 7 August 2023]

⁵ Reference excellence https://wiki.libraries.nsw.gov.au/doku.php?id=reference_excellence_-_self_paced_reference_and_information_services_training [accessed 19 January 2024]

G9 Collection development and management

To develop and manage a broad collection which meets the needs of the community, inspires intellectual curiosity and anticipates future need.

To provide information and reference resources, recreational reading, literacy development and education support materials. A public library collection should comprise a rich and diverse mix of content.

Access to library collections and the physical experience of interacting with them remains a fundamental role of public libraries. Recent research found that the main reason library members visit their local library (80%) is to browse and borrow collection items⁶. When libraries were closed to the public during the COVID-19 lockdown periods, the thing library members reported missing most was access to the library collection, and the ability to browse and borrow material⁷. It is important that libraries continue to fund and build collections for their communities.

Tenterfield Library has 27,605 items which is 4.01 items per capita. Smaller libraries like Tenterfield need to have a higher number of items per capita than larger communities to ensure enough range for readers. The State Library considers that 4.01 items per capita is a solid fit for the community. The number of items per capita should not further decrease as this would provide little choice for the community.

Ideally the library would be acquiring more items per capita than the 1,255 it acquired in 2022-2023, however that is dependent upon the budget. The acquisitions per capita have declined from 0.24 reported in 2018-2019 to 0.18 in 2022-2023. This is a low rate of acquisition, and work should be undertaken to source funding to be able to at least return this to 2018-2019 level. This is likely to have impacted the turnover of stock which has declined from 0.75 to 0.70 as well as the circulation per capita which has significantly declined from 4.55 per capita in 2018-2019 to 2.75 loans per capita. It is acknowledged that the COVID-19 years will have affected these figures to an extent.

With 25.23% of the collection acquired in the last 5 years and 30.63% in the last 10 years it shows that Tenterfield Library has an older collection in comparison with other NSW public libraries. Work has been done on the age of collection with a significant weeding project in the last 12 months.

Tenterfield Library submitted their data to the adult fiction stock quality health check which was undertaken by the State Library of NSW in 2023. The complete report for the statewide data will be available later this year. Tenterfield, as a smaller library held 19.4% of the titles on the list. Its holdings across the areas of representation were higher for titles written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (26.73%), while they were lower for people who are LGBTQIA+ (7.89%) and who are culturally and linguistically diverse (4.55%). The library had significantly higher holders for Australian authors and holds many authors from different countries as well, including some titles in translation. For the genres, there were higher holdings for *action adventure*, *crime mystery* and *science fiction* much higher holdings

⁶ NSW Department of Planning and Environment *Project report: Using behavioural insights to increase access to public libraries* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/using-behavioural-insights-to-increase-access-to-public-libraries.pdf> [accessed 7 August 2023]

⁷ Charles Sturt University Libraries Research Group *The importance of the physical spaces of NSW public libraries: What users miss, and why.* [accessed 7 August 2023]

for *historical* (38.18%) and lower holdings for *contemporary*, *horror* and *thriller suspense* while *fantasy* and *romance* were close to the over all holdings percentage.

G10. Local studies collections

To collect resources that document, illustrate and record the history and cultural heritage of the local area. To provide access to, preserve and maintain a collection that relates to the history and development of the local community.

One of the important areas for a local studies collection is of collecting current and historic material about the area, including local publications. The local museums have a role in providing information about the area, but there is an important role for the library and council staff as well. The library could be the place to bring the information together through the library catalogue. As well, Tenterfield Shire Council staff are photographing parks, building sites, streets and events and these would all make excellent local studies material as these photographs can be used to document the area. Collecting this digital material now helps to manage digital preservation better. As these photographs are likely to be taken by Council staff this means that they can be made available on the library catalogue, or Flickr or another service using a Creative Commons attribution license. Ideally, they would be catalogued as part of the library collection. The library could consider working with the Moombahlene Land Council to include information about the local Aboriginal people in the local studies collection too.

G14. Services for culturally diverse communities

To meet the library needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD)

While the Tenterfield local government area has low numbers of people who speak additional languages to English, there is still a role for the library in serving the culturally and linguistically diverse people in the community. As mentioned earlier it is suggested that the library borrow display collections of items in languages other than English. These items can be used both in displays in the library and made available for loan. Given the information in the Census it is suggested that the library request a display box containing books in German, Italian, Punjabi and Filipino. The State Library of NSW does not hold any titles written in Afrikaans. Having these items for display and loan may prompt further discussion and lead to requests in additional languages.

G15 Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

To engage and consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to ensure the library provides a welcoming and safe cultural space, services and collections, representative of their needs and aspirations.

The State Library's *Indigenous Spaces in Library Places: Building a Vibrant Public Library Network Inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and Communities*⁸ provides guidance on how libraries can enhance services dedicated to the local Indigenous population even if population figures are small. Tenterfield has 7.5% of the community who are Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people.

⁸ *Indigenous spaces in library places* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services/indigenous-spaces-library-places> [accessed 19 January 2024]

It is recommended that the library include an Acknowledgement of Country in the library. There is a downloadable and customisable sign available through the *Indigenous spaces*⁹ website. It is suggested that this is discussed with local Aboriginal Elders.

G17. Services for young people

To provide access to materials and services which meet the identified needs of children and young people in the community. For the purposes of this guideline and program delivery the following definitions are used:

- children (0–12 years)
- young adults (13–18 years)



Photograph 5 Refurbished area for children at Tenterfield Library

The refurbishment at Tenterfield Library has provided attractive spaces for children and young people. As shown in the photograph above there is easy to browse shelving for children, as well as beanbags and other comfortable seating for children.

The weekly children's story time is key programming for the library as this helps children develop pre-literacy skills which are critical for their ability to learn to read.

For slightly older children it may be possible to run Code Club.¹⁰ This would be dependent on partnerships and or an increase in staffing.

⁹Create welcoming and trusted environments for Indigenous peoples in library places
<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services/indigenous-spaces/welcome-indigenous-peoples-your-library> [accessed 19 January 2024]

¹⁰ Code Club Australia <https://codeclubau.org/> [accessed 23 January 2024]

G18. Services for older people

To ensure that older members of the community can access and use library collections, services and programs.

While there are collections for older people, there are currently few services targeting older people. This is an important area of the community to serve given that the median age for Tenterfield is 55 years of age. Tenterfield has significantly higher percentages of people in the 60-64, 65-69, 70-74 age groups than either NSW or Australia.

With increased staffing the library could consider participating in Tech Savvy Seniors.¹¹ Even with varied connectivity throughout the Tenterfield area, this could assist ageing members of the community.

G19. Home library services

To provide access to library information and resources for those community members who are unable to physically access their local library for any reason.

Home library services are provided for people who live in the town of Tenterfield. The possibility was discussed of being able to provide a home library service by mail to other sections of Tenterfield Shire. As well as staffing costs, this would include postal costs. It is suggested that costs of providing this are estimated for inclusion in future budgets.

G20. Programs

To provide the community with a range of activities related to library services and collections that enrich the lives of community members who choose to attend. A library program is an ongoing series or sequence of activities provided by library staff or library staff in partnership with other community or business organisations and usually related to a particular library service, library collection or population demographic. Library programs are usually delivered in library buildings but can be conducted in other community spaces, e.g. schools; senior citizen centres

Library programs can be an excellent way to help connect the community to the collections and to other information as well. The programs may be provided by a library or run in partnership with other organisations with the library as a trusted and safe space. Both methods of providing these programs take time, as both require time to organise even if some are being run by other organisations. As well there is the option to pay for programs to be provided. This requires a dedicated budget for this to be possible.

Tenterfield Library runs regular storytime programs for children, with few other programs. The current staffing levels make running extensive programs difficult.

Tenterfield has higher percentages than both NSW and Australia of people whose highest education attainment was completing school in year 9 or completing school in year 10, while it has less than half the statewide percentage of people who completed a Bachelors degree or higher. This may mean that there may be opportunities for working with people on literacy and numeracy, although in smaller communities this is going to be complex because of issues of privacy. The library could consider working with *Reading writing hotline*¹² or other literacy providers.

¹¹ Tech savvy seniors <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services/information-working-groups/older-peoples-services/tech-savvy-5> [accessed 23 January 2024]

¹² Reading writing hotline <https://www.readingwritinghotline.edu.au/> [accessed 23 January 2023]

The Tenterfield Library has the potential, although it would need additional staffing to consider information-based programs. For example, some other councils provide information sessions through their library services, for example about composting, or providing fire awareness sessions in partnership with the Rural Fire Service¹³. Some of the work that BackTrack¹⁴ is undertaking could potentially involve a partnership with the library.



Photograph 6 This shows when the local RFS visited Kiama Library for storytime¹⁵

Follow up required	Follow up done
BIU report	https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/research-projects/using-behavioural-insights
CSU research reports	https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/research-projects

¹³ NSW Rural Fire Service has a list of books for children which provide information about bush fires and fire safety in the home see <https://nswrfs.intersearch.com.au/cgi-bin/koha/opac-showpage.pl?pageid=Children+Bush+Fire+Collection> [accessed 23 January 2024]

¹⁴ BackTrack <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/department-of-regional-nsw/news-updates/backtrack-recovery-team-rolls-up-its-sleeves-following-tenterfield-fires> [accessed 19 January 2024]

¹⁵ RFS visiting Kiama Library for storytime for bushfire awareness <https://www.instagram.com/p/CywwQRhNbGf/> [accessed 23 January 2024]