

Review of Queensland public library standards and guidelines: a collaborative success

The Challenge

The Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines, <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>, were originally published by the Library Board of Queensland in 1986 and again in 1997. They are frequently used in the planning and development of library services and are regarded as a comprehensive Australian resource. In 2007, a new revision was commenced to ensure their relevance in the rapidly changing current environment, and to develop standards for new service areas.

There was a strong desire to ensure the new standards would be developed within a collaborative framework to meet the needs of Queensland public libraries and their local governments in the 21st century. The challenge was to find a means of reviewing the standards effectively, within a reasonable time frame and with active involvement by public library staff.

The Approach

To meet this challenge, the Public Library Standards Steering Group was convened in May 2007 to oversee the ongoing review of the standards and to identify service areas requiring new standards. To ensure good representation, expressions of interest were invited for membership from Queensland libraries serving various population ranges. A group of 8 was formed with representatives from libraries serving a range of populations, the Queensland Public Libraries Association (QPLA), a local government councillor, and State Library. Leona Jennings from Gold Coast City Council Libraries was appointed Chair of the Group. Other locations represented include Goondiwindi, Redland, Mackay, Townsville, Fraser Coast, Logan, and State Library.

A forward timetable for review or development of individual standards was drawn up, based on urgency of need. Around this time, the Queensland Government announced the imminent local government amalgamations which would greatly increase the size of many library services. This meant the highest priorities were standards for key management areas directly affected by population, such as staffing. A consistent format was chosen including standards, guidelines, performance indicators, and key references.

A process was devised and streamlined to optimise turnaround time while ensuring high local content. Small groups of key library staff and other experts were formed for each standard in turn, and were asked for initial input. State Library staff further researched each topic and drafted initial reviews which the groups and Standards Steering Group edited. The drafts then went to the public library network for comment for a 4 week period. Final drafts were then submitted to the Library Board of Queensland for approval.

The Results

All the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines have now been reviewed using this approach. New standards were developed for Shared Facilities, addressing issues associated with the co-location of libraries with other council or community functions, and Operational Services, covering opening hours and standard library policies and procedures. The suite of current public library standards totals 16, and covers topics ranging from Library Buildings to specialised areas such as Library Services for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The standards are accompanied by a resource list of key titles on library standards and related ALIA resources.

The standards have been well received with positive feedback from libraries about the important role they play in the planning and benchmarking of library services, particularly in relation to an advocacy and forward planning role with councils. The collaborative approach to their development has enabled ample input from those who will use the standards,

helping to ensure that they are highly relevant and applicable in the current Queensland library environment.

The standards are closely linked to the Service Level Agreements between State Library of Queensland and each local government, and councils regularly report on their compliance with key standards. They contain specific targets for performance which are also being incorporated into a proposed public library performance management framework for service assessment and continuous improvement.

The standards have also enjoyed wider use with enquiries from around Australia and overseas and a positive acknowledgement of their value in the recently published *Living Learning Libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries*.

The Chair of the Public Library Standards Steering Group, Leona Jennings, is now representing Queensland on the ALIA and Public Library Associations National Standards and Guidelines for Public Libraries Reference Group. This group, working with consultants Libraries Alive! will help to develop national standards for public libraries.

In summary, the collaborative review of the standards has been a very rewarding experience for those involved and the result of the project is a highly useful planning and advocacy tool which reflects the range of library services and types in Queensland and the issues they currently face.

Links

The Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>.

The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group progress can be found at <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/networks/standards>.

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Freedom of access to information: Family Planning Victoria's new teaching resource, Not So Straight

Reflecting its commitment to improve access to information, Family Planning Victoria (FPV) has released a new DVD teaching resource for schools and youth organisations.

Not So Straight is tailor-made for use in a wide range of existing health and human relationships education and student wellbeing and support programs.

Developed by members of FPV's same sex attracted support group for young people, YAK, *Not So Straight* raises awareness of the issues facing same-sex attracted youth.

The DVD covers a broad range of topics such as sexual identity, roles, and responsibilities in sexual relationships, practising safer sex, cyber safety, support strategies, and homophobia.

The user-friendly format allows educators and group facilitators to screen the 60-minute documentary as a whole or as individual segments on HIV, relationships, acceptance, moving out of home, etc. to suit their particular program needs.

This resource reflects FPV's goal of sexual and reproductive health care for all Victorians and its mission to provide leadership in public policy, advocacy, education and clinical care in sexual and reproductive health.

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