

Submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Inquiry into the effects of the ongoing efficiency dividend on smaller public sector agencies

The National Library of Australia and the efficiency dividend

It is a concern to me as Chair of the Libraries Australia Advisory Committee that the efficiency dividend is now beginning to impact on the National Library of Australia as an 'inefficiency' dividend.

The National Library of Australia has been working in the environment of an annual efficiency dividend since 1987-88 and has been reporting the impact of this to the Libraries Australia Advisory Committee. It is clear that these claw-backs have gone far enough. To impose an additional 2% dividend for 2008-2009 is inappropriate.

Libraries Australia, previously Kinetica and the Australian Bibliographic Network, has been in operation since 1980. It is used by over 1,400 libraries in the management of their collections, and in the support of interlibrary loans. The service provides an avenue for cooperation for libraries throughout Australia and internationally. It is a national asset that provides access to the nation's collections. With new services introduced in 2006, all Australians now have access to the database, and can 'find' and 'get' books from libraries throughout Australia. Libraries Australia provides significant efficiencies for libraries in sharing cataloguing data and facilitating interlibrary loans. It is the basis of a Distributed National Collection. If it did not exist then there would be a need for more duplication of collections in libraries and duplication of effort. All Australian libraries and their clientele benefit from this service. Their costs would increase substantially if these services were not available from the National Library.

The National Library is committed to the continued development of the Libraries Australia system to deliver new and improved services to its customers. For example, Libraries Australia is dependent on keeping abreast of digital technology to ensure a strong environment for access to collections throughout Australia. The National Library reports that its ability in this area will be significantly reduced with the proposed efficiency dividend.

Libraries Australia staff visit libraries throughout Australia and advising them on how to use the services effectively. It holds an annual forum for librarians to maintain their currency and share professional knowledge. These key activities, which support librarians throughout Australia to be more efficient, are jeopardised by the continuance of the efficiency dividend.

Libraries Australia is a cooperative venture, with libraries throughout Australia contributing financially to the running of the service on a subscription basis. We rely on the National Library of Australia to provide the coordination and professional leadership for the service. Through this coordination, libraries and their clients all benefit.

I urge you to remove the requirement of an annual 'efficiency dividend' from the National Library of Australia.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Linda Luther'.

Linda Luther

Chair, Libraries Australia Advisory Committee
University of Tasmania Library
Private Bag 25
Hobart
Tasmania 7001
Phone 03 6226 1793

30 June 2008