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Library Board of Victoria and  
Victorian Public Library Network

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**FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

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## Preface

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This document is a revised version of the *Framework for Collaborative Action* published in June 2004. It is for all Victorian public library services and the State Library of Victoria, the operating agency of the Library Board of Victoria.

The Board, the State Library and public libraries have many things in common, particularly a shared commitment to delivering excellent information services to all Victorians. More can be done to advance our common aims by working together rather than separately. The *Framework* clarifies how we will work together. It was revised between December 2005 and April 2006 by representatives of Victoria's public libraries, the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Library Board of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria. This revised version is more succinct and reflects a stronger relationship between the Board, the State Library and public libraries. All constituents will receive a printed copy, and it is available on the State Library of Victoria and Victoria's Virtual Library websites. The *Framework* will be reviewed again in 2008. Comments on the *Framework* are welcomed, and may be submitted via a representative on the Library Board of Victoria's Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, or emailed to [drosenfeldt@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:drosenfeldt@slv.vic.gov.au) at the State Library of Victoria.

## Achievements

In the 20 months since the *Framework for Collaborative Action* was first published much has been achieved by the Collaboration, including:

- a three-year plan for projects funded by the Board and valued at over \$4 million to help develop Victoria's public libraries, focusing on the critical areas of collections and access, libraries' community-building role, and future leadership (April 2005);
- publication of the landmark *Libraries Building Communities* research reports, the most comprehensive Australian study of the contribution of public libraries to community capacity building (February 2005);
- the launch of PictureVictoria, a website of over 8000 images from local history collections held by Victorian public libraries and historical societies (June 2005);
- improvements to the profile and image of public libraries through eight @yourlibrary promotional campaigns, publication of the *Public Libraries Image Handbook* (February 2005), and development and implementation of the First Impressions Strategy;
- development of public library staff through training programs for over 2000 participants, awarding of the Board's Margery C Ramsay and Barrett Reid Scholarships, and subsidising of places in the Aurora Leadership Institute.

# 1. Introduction

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The *Framework for Collaborative Action* defines the way in which the Library Board of Victoria, through the State Library of Victoria, works with the public library network to deliver improved library services to Victoria's communities.

The Board's Advisory Committee on Public Libraries comprises representatives of the Board, the State Library, public libraries and the Municipal Association of Victoria. The Advisory Committee has created the *Framework* to support the Collaboration by:

- developing a shared vision for improving access to public library services;
- specifying values and protocols to guide collaborative action and support cohesive, consistent and confident decision making;
- identifying how the Collaboration will achieve its goals;
- providing a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the Collaboration's constituents.

The *Framework* is reviewed every three years to ensure that it continues to meet the Collaboration's requirements.

## 2. Purpose and scope

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### 2.1 Vision

The Collaboration delivers enhanced library services to Victorians, through partnership between the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian public library network.

### 2.2 Key areas for collaboration

In determining its goals and priorities the Collaboration considers the priorities of the State Government, the Library Board of Victoria, local government and Victorian public libraries.

The Collaboration helps to achieve:

- enhanced library collections;
- improved access options;
- 'seamless' service and access for users;
- better-skilled staff;
- increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries;
- greater efficiency and effectiveness of library services through collaboration and sharing.

Building on the achievements of its first phase, in the 2006–08 triennium the Collaboration will focus on:

- the Statewide Public Library Development Projects funded by the Library Board of Victoria;
- initiatives coming out of the State Library of Victoria's digital strategy, *slv21 – Creating the Library of the 21st Century*;
- promotion of the State Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries vision for Victorian library services, *The Library*;
- issues related to how to best manage the growing range of joint initiatives.

### 2.3 Challenges and opportunities

The external environment in which the Collaboration operates provides many challenges and opportunities. Chief among these are:

- the State Government's increasing emphasis on 'joined-up' government services, building local community connections to deliver services, and better supporting provincial areas;
- the interests of stakeholders such as the Department for Victorian Communities and the Municipal Association of Victoria;
- the Library Partnering Agreement signed by bodies represented on the State Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries;
- national agendas and initiatives of the Commonwealth Government and bodies such as the Council of Australian State Libraries, the Australian Library and Information Association and Public Libraries Australia;
- resourcing issues affecting sustainability of services.

## 3. Values

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A common set of values and principles guides the activities and behaviour of the constituents of the Collaboration.

The Collaboration values:

- communities that are informed, engaged and empowered;
- libraries, for the role that they play in providing their communities with information, opportunities for lifelong learning, a sense of 'connection' and enjoyment;
- partnership, because more can be done for the community through sharing of resources than can be done by library services acting alone;
- innovative approaches to challenges, problems and issues;
- honest communication, which is fundamental to building trust;
- trust, as the cornerstone of effective partnerships;
- respect for the knowledge, expertise and points of view of all parties.

# 4. Action plans

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## 4.1 Statewide Public Library Development Projects

The Statewide Public Library Development Projects, which are funded annually by the Library Board of Victoria, are the main focus of the Collaboration's actions. These projects complement strategic planning for libraries and support efficient management of shared resources.

Over the 2006–08 triennium the Collaboration will focus on three project areas:

- public library collections and access to collections
- workforce sustainability and leadership issues in public libraries
- the community-building role of public libraries

The following guidelines are used to determine the Statewide Public Library Development Projects.

These projects must:

- deliver statewide benefit to the Victorian community;
- increase the capability of the public library network to deliver services;
- increase interaction, partnering and collaboration between public libraries, and between the State Library of Victoria and the public library network;
- avoid duplicating the work of other organisations or project funding;
- offer innovative approaches to challenges, problems and issues.

Projects must support one or more of the goals of the *Framework for Collaborative Action*, which are:

- enhanced collections;
- improved access options;
- 'seamless' service to users;
- better-skilled staff;
- increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries;
- greater efficiency and effectiveness in library services through collaboration and sharing.

Projects must:

- have the commitment and involvement of public library staff;
- achieve their outcomes within the timeframe of the funding.

In any year, the Library Board of Victoria's Advisory Committee on Public Libraries may choose to give priority to projects that advance one goal of the Collaboration ahead of others.

At the end of the triennium the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries will review the Statewide Public Library Development Projects. In developing projects for the next triennium it should not be assumed that previously funded projects will be funded in the next round.

The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries is responsible for monitoring the Statewide Public Library Development Projects and for dealing with any issues that may arise. The Advisory Committee is also responsible for reporting to the Library Board of Victoria on these projects as its Board representatives deem appropriate.

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### 4.1.1 Process for determining Statewide Public Library Development Projects

The process to gain approval of a three-year cycle of projects by the Library Board of Victoria is as follows:

- The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries agrees to the overall model and criteria for Statewide Public Library Development Projects and seeks approval of the Library Board of Victoria to proceed.
- The Advisory Committee then defines the process for developing project proposals; Viclink and the Country Public Libraries Group gather ideas from public libraries for projects; and the Advisory Committee reviews all of the ideas for development into full project proposals.
- The Manager, Public Libraries manages development of full project proposals, which are then presented to the Advisory Committee for its sign-off.
- Statewide Public Library Development Project proposals for the triennium are recommended to the Library Board of Victoria for approval.

### 4.2 Other collaborations

Increasingly the Collaboration will focus on issues, actions and initiatives beyond the Statewide Public Library Development Projects. Currently these include:

- the PictureVictoria database of local history images held in Victorian public library collections;
- the Statewide Training Consortium providing training to public library staff;
- the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries;
- the SWIFT consortium of public libraries operating a shared Library Management System;
- the MyLanguage portal, developed by a consortium of state and territory libraries.

# 5. Roles, responsibilities and contributions

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This section establishes what the various constituents bring to the Collaboration and what each is expected to contribute to achieving the shared goals.

## 5.1 Governance and coordination

The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries and the constituents its members represent are the 'owners' of the *Framework*.

The Advisory Committee members are the custodians of the *Framework for Collaborative Action*, and are responsible for promoting the *Framework* and its outcomes to the Library Board of Victoria.

The State Library's Manager, Public Libraries is responsible for enacting the *Framework's* goals on a day-to-day basis.

## 5.2 The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries

The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, the body responsible for directly linking the Library Board of Victoria with the Victorian public library network, was established in July 2003. The Advisory Committee consists of the following members:

- two members of the Board (one of whom is the Chairperson of the Committee)
- the Chief Executive Officer of the State Library of Victoria
- two representatives of Viclink (including the President)
- two representatives of the Country Public Libraries Group (including the President)
- one representative from the Municipal Association of Victoria

The Advisory Committee works on a representative model. Viclink, the Country Public Libraries Group, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Library Board of Victoria are responsible for communicating and consulting with their constituents about the *Framework* and for providing feedback to the Advisory Committee.

The State Library of Victoria assists the Advisory Committee's representatives to consult with their constituents by providing a facilitator as and if required.

Terms of reference define the Advisory Committee's objectives, functions and powers, structure, terms and conditions.

## 5.3 The Library Board of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria

The Library Board of Victoria exercises its responsibilities in relation to public libraries through the State Library of Victoria. These responsibilities are defined in the *Libraries Act 1988*:

- *to oversee cooperation in programs with libraries and information organisations to promote access to library and information resources*
- *to exercise leadership and promote high standards in the provision of library and information services*
- *to provide advice and information to the Minister on any matter concerning libraries and information organisations*

The State Library's Manager, Public Libraries:

- communicates across the public library sector and its stakeholders;
- coordinates industry knowledge, research and innovation;
- develops and delivers projects that meet statewide public library sector needs;
- facilitates strategy development.

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## 5.4 Viclink and the Country Public Libraries Group

Viclink (Victorian Public Library and Information Cooperative) is the peak body for Victorian public libraries, comprising representatives of every public library service in the state. Viclink is incorporated under the *Associations Act* and its duties and obligations are set out in its constitution. Membership is institutional.

The Country Public Libraries Group is an incorporated body that represents the 19 rural and regional library services in Victoria. It is a forum for the issues that are particular to country libraries, such as shrinking populations and rate bases, low population densities and distance. Viclink and the Country Public Libraries Group work together to assist, encourage, protect and promote the interests of those who use Victorian public library services and the staff of public libraries.

Viclink partners the Library Board of Victoria in meeting its responsibilities by:

- promoting access to library and information resources;
- informing it on issues as appropriate;
- providing advice to ensure there is network-wide support for issues within its sphere of influence and agreement on standards for provision of library and information services.

Viclink and the Country Public Libraries Group bring extensive knowledge, expertise and skills to the collaborative process. Further, because they are the representative bodies through which the outcomes of the collaborative action are implemented, they contribute the experience of the libraries that deliver services at a local level to Victoria's communities.

## 5.5 The Municipal Association of Victoria

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is the legislated peak body representing the 79 Victorian councils,

which are the owners, operators and majority funders of public library services in Victoria. Two key roles of the MAV are as the lead negotiator between local government and other spheres of government, and as the advocate for councils on policy, funding and program priorities. The MAV is the communication and information hub for and about Victorian local government, and facilitates councils' capacity development. On behalf of Victorian local government the MAV negotiates broad policy and funding arrangements with the state and Commonwealth.

## 5.6 Dispute resolution

The *Framework* is in itself a mechanism for minimising potential areas of conflict. In the event of any conflict or disputation arising among parties in the Collaboration, it will be resolved:

- in accordance with the *Framework's* values of trust, open communication, and respect for the knowledge, expertise and points of view of all parties;
- by focusing on the issues and on the best outcomes for the Collaboration rather than on individual interests;
- by seeking a consensus solution.

Specific steps for dealing with disputes are as follows:

- The issue or difficulty should be made explicit at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries.
- The matter may be referred to the President of the Library Board of Victoria through the Advisory Committee's Chair.
- The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries may decide to avail itself of an external facilitator.

Every effort will be made to avoid withdrawal of any party to the Collaboration or member from the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, and to promote the continuing success of the Collaboration.

# 6. Evaluating the success of the Collaboration

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The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, on behalf of the Board, reviews the performance of the Collaboration annually in line with the budget process and as part of its review of itself. The success of the Collaboration in meeting its goals is gauged by the following indicators:

- the extent to which the Collaboration can demonstrate that its activities reflect the Collaboration's values and lead to better library services;
- the extent to which the Library Board is informed about, engaged in and actively working on issues related to public libraries;
- continuing integration of the *Framework* into future planning and operations.

These indicators will continue to be refined by the Collaboration.

Any party to the Collaboration may choose to develop its own indicators for evaluating whether its continuing membership of the Collaboration meets its objectives.

*The Framework for Collaborative Action* is reviewed triennially in line with the life cycle of the Statewide Public Library Development Projects.

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