



OFFICIAL

City and Environment Directorate

Ministerial Brief

To:	Minister for City and Government Services	Tracking No.: 26/0029737
Date:	19/03/2026	
From:	Head of Access Canberra	
CC:	Deputy Director-General, Transport, Territory and Municipal Services	
Subject:	Libraries ACT – public operating hours	
Critical Date:	26/03/2026	
Critical Reason:	To enable implementation of a new staff rostering model and public messaging	

Recommendations

That you:

1. **Note** the information contained in this brief and the data provided in Attachment A;

Noted / Please Discuss

2. **Agree** to the proposed Libraries ACT opening hours; and

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

3. **Sign** the letter to the Chief Minister requesting agreement to the proposed new operating hours.

Signed / Not Signed / Please Discuss

Tara Cheyne MLA

14/4/26

Minister's Feedback

Background

1. The Libraries ACT (LACT) Independent Working Group (IWG) Report recommended that LACT undertake a strategic review of operating hours to better align with community demand and workforce capacity.
2. In addition, the IWG report noted that LACT is facing sustained financial pressure due to rising employee expenses, culminating in a projected cash deficit of \$1.7 million in 2025-26.
3. The IWG concluded that late-night library hours were underutilised and that staffing pressures and unplanned absences compromised service reliability.
4. Of the 37 recommendations from the IWG, four related to the opening hours of LACT including that:
 - a. Recommendation 5: That a complete review of staffing and rostering be undertaken in conjunction with the other recommendations of the IWG report.
 - b. Recommendation 13: LACT should undertake a strategic review of operating hours to better align with community demand and workforce capacity.
 - c. Recommendation 14: LACT branches be closed for the Christmas/New Year stand down period to align with the current practice for other frontline services, effective from December 2025.
 - d. Recommendation 15: Consideration be given to the removal of late-night opening hours at Dickson Library until the service delivery model review is completed.
5. In October 2025, authority was given to you as the Minister for City and Government Services to settle the public opening hours with the Chief Minister prior to a public announcement.
6. Over the past seven months, LACT has been the subject of an improvement and change agenda to implement the recommendations of the IWG. The objective is a sustainable and consistent service model that meets community needs through the efficient allocation of resources.

Issues

7. As at February 2026, LACT operates to the below hours. These hours have applied (outside of the summer period) since 2013.
 - a. Town Centre branches: Belconnen, Woden, Dickson, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong.

- i. 10am – 5:30pm Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm Saturday and 12pm – 4pm Sunday.
 - ii. Additionally late nights are offered until 8pm on Monday (Woden), Wednesday (Gungahlin) and Friday (Dickson).
 - b. Community Branches: Civic, Erindale, Kippax.
 - i. 10am – 5:30pm Monday to Friday and 10am – 4pm Saturday.
 - c. Neighbourhood branch: Kingston.
 - i. 10am – 5:30pm Tuesday to Friday and 10am – 4pm Saturday.
- 8. Adjusting opening hours to better reflect visitation and staffing capacity, especially with known budget constraints will improve service reliability. This aligns with Recommendations 5, 13 and 15 of the IWG.
- 9. Access Canberra proposes the standardisation of opening hours commencing from 1 May 2026.
 - a. Town Centre branches: Belconnen, Woden, Dickson, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong.
 - i. 9am – 5pm Monday to Saturday.
 - b. Community Branches: Civic, Erindale, Kippax.
 - i. 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.
 - c. Neighbourhood branches: Kingston.
 - i. 9am – 5pm Tuesday to Saturday.
- 10. The proposed changes standardise and extend typical Library operating hours by 30 minutes each weekday, shifting opening times one hour earlier reflecting skewed visitation rates. Late-night trading and Sundays will cease in favour of full days on Saturdays in Town Centre branches aligning with visitation patterns (see [Attachment A](#) for analysis).
- 11. On average on a Sunday across the city, less than 100 (96) Canberrans visit each of our libraries per hour of operations. This totals 1,920 average visits across all open branches on a Sunday.
- 12. By comparison, on a Saturday a total of 3,180 Canberrans attend the same libraries.
- 13. Queanbeyan, Goulburn and Yass Libraries also close on a Sunday. Opening days and times at other libraries across jurisdictions (such as SA, Vic and NSW) vary considerably, depending on location/services.
- 14. It is proposed that Kingston branch remains open on a Saturday and is considered a neighbourhood, rather than community branch. It is closer to an 'express model' with significantly less floor area and books on the site to be browsed like a traditional library and requires less staff to operate (3, compared to 4-5 in Community Branches).
- 15. Kingston Branch is well used on Saturdays, due to its location (close to local shops/cafes) and its design. Data from July 2024 to February 2026 indicates there is

an average of 33 customers per hour attending on Saturdays at Kingston Library (compared to average of 21-23 customers per hour on other days of the week).

16. This large increase in customers on a Saturday is not reflected in community branches.
17. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) national standards for operating hours provide a goal for which libraries should strive for to ensure community needs can be met.
18. Based on the ALIA–APLA benchmark of 64 opening hours per week per 100,000 population, a forecast population of 500,000 would require LACT to provide 320 opening hours per week. LACT currently delivers 411.5 total opening hours per week across the network, which is 28.6% above the APLA standard.
 - a. Gungahlin Library (Yerrabi) and Woden (Murrumbidgee) are each below the ALIA–APLA goal by six hours per week.
19. These proposed hours reduce the total opening hours across the Libraries network by only 11.5 hours per week, meaning the ACT still exceeds the ALIA–APLA benchmark by 25%.
20. The revised hours will not affect:
 - a. Core programs (such as Giggle and Wiggle) as these are only scheduled on weekdays during business hours.
 - b. Community room hire as afterhours availability and access will be retained as per the current policy.
21. LACT will remain flexible and responsive to community need including activation of public libraries as heat refuges by the Chief Health Officer or hosting ad-hoc programs and events such as Author Talks. Flexibility is a guiding service delivery principle of Access Canberra.
22. The changes to LACT opening hours achieve consistent hours across the LACT network which will now align with Access Canberra Service Centre opening hours.
23. Access Canberra will continue to explore additional service models as part of the LACT improvement and change agenda. Lockers providing 24/7 convenient resource collection and return, and unstaffed library hours have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions to further improve customer access. These options will need to be explored further to fully assess the associated financial and procurement implications and to ensure these service models are fit the ACT context.

Financial Implications

24. Closing Sunday openings and reducing late-night trading would save the Territory over \$950,000 in staffing costs in 2026-27 through reduced FTE, leave liabilities and penalty rate payments.
 - a. Sunday trading requires 23 staff shifts per week, equivalent to 2.7 FTE, contributing to more than \$900,000 in annual staffing and penalty-related costs.

- b. Shifts extending past 6:00pm attract a 15% penalty loading. Existing late-night shifts total around 15 per week, with penalty payments exceeding \$50,000 annually.
 - c. Sundays attract penalty rates of an additional 100% of an employee's ordinary rate of pay and workers accrue up to five additional days of annual leave at a rate of 0.5 days per Sunday worked as per clause C8.6/E7.8 of the ACT Public Sector Administrative and Related Classifications Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026 (the EA).
25. While not proposed by Access Canberra, further efficiencies could be found by shifting the operating model to weekday only. Saturday shifts attract 50% penalties and may be underutilised.

Consultation

Internal

26. The mandate of the improvement and change journey is "with, not to, staff". There is ongoing genuine commitment to ensure that all actions taken in response to the IWG are socialised with staff prior to implementation.
27. The changed opening hours will affect the rostering system, requiring formal consultation with staff as per the following:
- a. Libraries branch staff are classified as Shift Workers under the EA and under the ACT Public Sector Technical and other Professional Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026.
 - b. Clause B15.7 of the EA outlines that requirement to consult with employees affected and the employees' representatives to introduce a new roster. Additionally, rosters setting out the start times, finish times and rotation of shifts must be posted at least 14 calendars prior to the commencement.

Cross Directorate

28. Access Canberra has liaised with the Education Directorate as two libraries are co-located with college campuses (Erindale and Gungahlin). Upon approval, work will continue to ensure smooth transition and there are no adverse logistical implications.
29. Infrastructure Canberra will be informed about changes to the opening hours to inform after hours security protocols.
30. Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate will be consulted regarding the Heritage Library. The Heritage Library currently operates from the Civic branch whilst works are undertaken at 255 Canberra Avenue.

External

31. As per paragraph 17, the Community and Public Service Union (CPSU) will need to be consulted. The Union have been involved in rostering working group discussions to date and remain engaged in supporting staff through the improvement agenda.
32. The co-located café at Gungahlin Library will be advised of the change, however the café only operates Monday-Friday so impacts from these changes are not expected.

Work Health and Safety

33. Nil.

Benefits/Sensitivities

34. Longer term and sustained benefits with the shift in operating hours include:

- a. Better alignment of staffing with demand, ensuring resources are concentrated during peak service times and efficient and effect government service delivery.
- b. Consistency with Access Canberra service models, supporting smoother collaboration and enabling opportunities for future co-location (a recommendation of the IWG and ACT Government MoG Taskforce Report – July 2025).
- c. Standardised shift structures across LACT, increasing staffing flexibility and improving access to leave, and work life balance (Recommendation 5 of the IWG).
- d. Reduced perceptions of inequity in shift allocation, particularly regarding the additional benefits associated with Sunday work (addresses adverse finding of the IWG).

35. Despite the long term and sustained benefits, there may be initial dissatisfaction amongst staff who will have a reduced number of available penalty shifts largely affecting those who regularly work Sundays or late nights.

36. Reducing LACT opening hours may attract public commentary which can be framed around supporting efficient service delivery, ensuring libraries remain open when public most attend, ongoing improvement and the ongoing value of public institutions.

Communications, media and engagement implications

37. The amended opening hours will require a media and stakeholder communications plan to ensure the community are appropriately notified of the changed hours.

- a. Communications will promote that supporting services are unchanged including access the digital catalogue anywhere, anytime and the reserve functions were resources can be picked up from a convenient location across the network.

38. A Communications Plan and talking points will be provided prior to public announcement.

Signatory Name: Josh Rynehart

Phone: MS Teams

Action Officer: Emily Springett

Phone: MS Teams



Attachments

Attachment	Title
Attachment A	Letter to the Chief Minister



Tara Cheyne MLA

Manager of Government Business
Attorney-General
Minister for Human Rights
Minister for City and Government Services
Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Member for Ginninderra

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
ACT Legislative Assembly
barr@act.gov.au

Dear Chief Minister

I am writing to seek your agreement to change Libraries ACT public opening hours as per the authority granted to us by our cabinet colleagues in October 2025.

The proposed changes are set in the context of the Libraries ACT (LACT) Independent Working Group (IWG) Report delivered to government in late June 2025 as well as sustained budget pressures.

The proposed changes standardise and extend typical Library operating hours by 30 minutes each weekday by shifting opening times from 10:00am to 9:00am. Late-night trading and Sundays would cease in favour of full days on Saturdays in the main town centre branches aligning with visitation patterns (please refer to attached data snapshot). Neighbourhood branch Kingston would also open on a Saturday, noting it sees an increase in visitation this day. The proposed changes result in only a net loss of 11.5 hours per week across the public libraries network however equates to a saving of approximately \$950,000 in 2026-27.

Importantly, the changes do not impact on programs delivered by libraries, many of which are held regard by our community and support inclusion practices. Such programs are delivered in core business hours on weekdays.

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) national standards for operating hours provide a goal for which libraries should strive for to ensure community needs can be met. Based on the ALIA–APLA benchmark of 64 opening hours per week per 100,000 population, a forecast population of 500,000 would require LACT to provide 320 opening hours per week. LACT currently delivers 411.5 total opening hours per week across the network, which is 28.6% above the APLA standard. These proposed changes will see the ACT still exceed the ALIA–APLA benchmark by 25%.

Despite the change in ordinary hours, libraries would remain flexible and responsive to community need including activation of public libraries as heat refuges by the Chief Health Officer or hosting ad-hoc programs and events.

As the responsible Minister, I remain committed to delivering a sustainable and consistent service model that meets community needs through the effective and efficient allocation of resources.

act.gov.au

Access Canberra will continue to implement the significant change and improvement agenda resulting from the findings of the IWG. Different service models are being explored to complement service offerings to better suit the needs of an evolving community. Updates can be provided as they materialise.

I therefore seek your agreement to implement the proposed hours effective from 1 May 2026.

Staff will need to be consulted on the changed hours as it will affect rostering arrangements. Public communications will be proactively developed in case of early media interest, in a partnership between CED and CMTEDD media. The readjustment of opening hours and reallocation of resources provides avenues to relieve pressures in other parts of government.

Sincerely



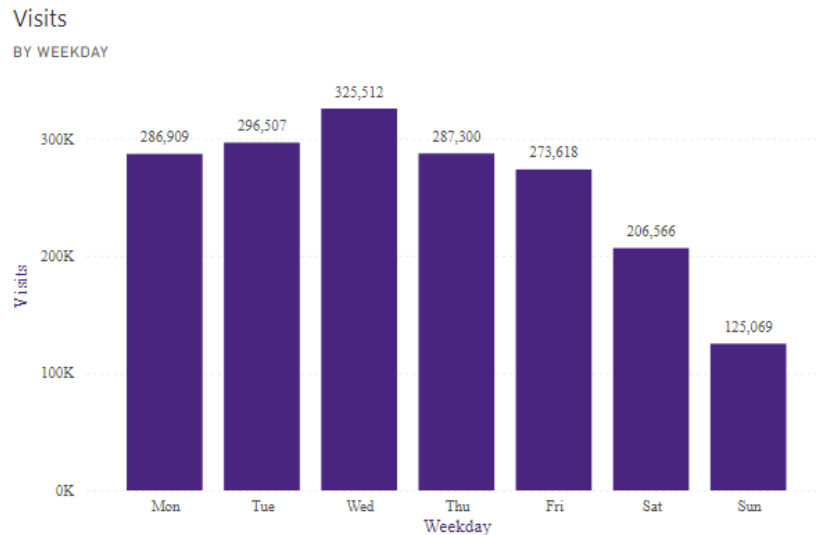
Tara Cheyne MLA
Minister for City and Government Services

14 April 2026

Attachment A

Libraries ACT visit data

The period examined was 2024-25 and 2025-26 to 11 February 2026. The shape of the week during this period across the network indicates that Tuesday and Wednesday have the most visitors. The type of user (regular user, infrequent users and one-off user), cannot be differentiated in the data. Saturday and Sunday have the least number of total visitors. Visits during usual business hours accounted for 96% of all visits.



Total visits to Town Centre Branches 01 July 2024 – 11 Feb 2026

Sunday

Sunday is the least utilised day of the week on average with 96 visitors an hour attending a library across all open branches, or about 1,920 attendees total for the day. By way for comparison, total attendees across branches on a Saturday is 3,180. Sunday opening comes at significant cost. Sunday trading requires 23 staff shifts per week the equivalent to 2.7 FTE resulting in annual staffing and penalty related costs of more than \$900,000 per year.

Saturday

Neighbourhood branch, Kingston, is well used on Saturdays, due to its location (close to local shops/cafes) and its more 'express' design. Data from July 2024 to February 2026 indicates there is an average of 33 customers per hour attending on Saturdays at Kingston Library (compared to average of 21-23 customers per hour on other days of the week). This increase in customers on a Saturday compared to other days is not reflected across community branches.

Late Nights

Late night trading is significantly underutilised with an average of 30 visits at each branch between 6:00pm and 8:00pm. These hours attract 15% penalties and at approximately 15 shifts per week the annual cost exceeds \$50,000. After hours attendance is usually by users seeking to collect books they may have reserved for borrowing. It is proposed that over the next 12-24 months that 24/7 lockers for pick up of reserved items will be installed at key ACT Library branches.