



07 September 2020

**Submission to the Wellington City Council  
Future of the Central Library  
Based on feedback from the public consultation session  
“What Wellington Womxn Want 2020” on Thursday 03 Sept 2020**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 Branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ’s vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
- 1.2. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Wellington Branch after consultation with women in Wellington at a public session titled “What Wellington Womxn Want - Sept 2020”. The session had 15 women in attendance, including two Wellington City Councillors and one staff member.
- 1.3. Attendees to the session split into small Zoom breakout room groups on Zoom and discussed the concepts and key areas of consultation questions. The summary of the discussions has been prepared in bullet-point format to indicate individual submissions/main ideas that arose.
- 1.4. **This submission is not a reflection of or aligned with NCWNZ policy. Views expressed here are based on feedback from attendees at the “What Wellington Womxn Want Sept 2020” Zoom session.**

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE BASED ON THE “WHAT WELLINGTON WOMXN WANT SEPT 2020” SESSION

2. **We don't have a functioning Central Library building - what do we do?**
  - 2.1. **Redeveloping the Central Library building for the next 50 years presents many opportunities. What could the Central Library be like, and what could it provide to support the community? This could include anything from physical spaces, services, programmes or partnerships with other organisations.**

Participants at our session provided feedback under the following themes:

**Creative & learning culture** - they described a place that enables people to become professionals and explore their creativity, with spaces that resource their editing, writing, filming and meetings with others. Some see the specific need that libraries are places to provide training when thinking about What Wellington Kids Want. The Johnsonville Library was recently redone and was described as more of cultural and community space which is captivating and what people like.

**Internal space design** - they wanted to see a place that not only focuses on upskilling people how to read, but also enabling audio-visual reading through earphones or in reading groups. Many talked about the various people that come to the library and the variety of needs to be catered for. It was suggested to create specialist zones that cater for different needs, e.g. computers for students, child-friendly environments while parents can work; soundproof meeting spaces for one or two person meetings (especially now we're all on Zoom). An example mentioned was the 'BizDojo' co-working space for collaborative working - with whiteboards, working spaces. It recognised alternative competing interests and separate spaces would require panels etc, with different configurations. Having facilities available to book, like projectors should be considered, and will require 'space-booking' capability to help organise and offer these options. A daily time offered to take people through how to use the facilities could help facility use alongside offering other skills classes (digital literacy e.g., how to use zoom). If skill session options are on offer, it can bring people together, by learning together and from one another.

**Connecting communities and community groups** - it was mentioned that the pandemic has taught us the issues of loneliness, isolation, and the value of social connections. There is a need for a central hub in which groups of faith, advocacy and culture are fostered. The Central Library should find ways to connect with a wide range of community and cultural groups, pathways to connect with like-minded, faith groups, hobbies etc. It was described that we think about the library as a community centre, as we don't have one in the city, like other cities do. Groups in the NGO space can't book rooms easily, some may not be aware of what they could use, because they don't have access to the possibilities. Many agreed and appreciated the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to be relocated back with the library - describing it as a nexus as a place of learning and connections. A

multifunctional space which includes the CAB, Community Law Centre, crisis support facilities and a cafe is missing today in the capital.

Wellington needs more 'positive spaces to go', offering different options by showcasing and hosting different groups. It was noted that libraries double as a place for work for nannies (bringing kids they look after) and tutors, people need quiet space in the city. Access to bus stops and longer opening hours were both mentioned as important access needs for this public facility.

## 2.2. **There are several different options to deliver a functional Central Library building. Which of these is your preferred option?**

The vast majority of those that attended the session were in favour of Option C. Most were concerned with costs to ratepayers, noting if we want a safe future-proofed library that retains the heritage value which does not take too long then option C would fit that preference. The importance of heritage due to the existing surrounding architecture was discussed as paramount. Some noted that option C has the opportunity to do some re-design/remodelling internally.

The two people that were in favour of option D were keen to see the building stronger for longer and wanted to ensure the style was in keeping with architecture. They shared concern with the strengthening work that would happen in option C, but more may need to be done. One cited it as an opportunity to re-design what libraries do and mean for future generations of our residents, with sustainable building design being the forefront to ensuring our city remains a cultural capital.

## 2.3. **What don't you like about other options? Why?**

Those in favour of option C were concerned about the sacrifice of having no Central Library for 10-15 years, waiting for the ultimate 'nirvana library' to be built. They agreed strengthening the library building so that it can get back up and running is more important.

Investing in a "wow new child-centred design" was discussed, and agreed that it was vital that a process of evaluation approach towards the interim libraries should be in place, and keeping good feedback loops about who is using which library site, and for what purpose, so improvements over time meet the needs of specific users - while everyone waits for the 'nirvana library'.

An interesting idea cited was for innovation to be built in to take books to people - books on buses and book swaps. The library could be the hub where mobility of library resources is organised. Wellington could be more proactive in this space.

2.4. **Thinking about your preferred option for the central library building, what factors were most important in your decision? Please rank your top 5 in order of importance, with '1' being most important through to '5' for the fifth most important.**

The highest scoring factors appeared to be in this order:

- Scoring 5
  - Cost to ratepayers
  - Accessibility including transport - no point having a beautiful library if not accessible for all. There must be easy access via public transport, not necessarily by cars.
  - Climate change - was very important to some participants
- Scoring 4 or 5
  - Making the building safe - discussed in the context of all aspects of the space (building, no areas where people can do illicit activity, sexual harassment, safe for employees)
  - Heritage (as the library should be an advocate for heritage and its studies, and showcase Aotearoa history, culture and art)
  - Opportunities for partnership
  - Te Ngākau Civic Square connections
- Scoring either 3 or 4
  - Making the building resilient
  - Future proofing the library service.

2.5. **Thinking about how the Central Library building connects with the Te Ngākau Civic Precinct how appealing or unappealing would you find the following?**

Having multiple entrances to the building from the Civic Square, the Precinct, and/or surrounding streets at ground level -

- Scoring 1, unappealing - 1 person
- Scoring 5, appealing - 4 people
- Scoring 4, somewhat appealing - 3 people
- Scoring 6, don't know - 2 people.

More windows to connect the library visually to the square and surrounding streets

- Scoring 1, unappealing - 1 person
- Scoring 3, neutral - 1 person
- Scoring 5, appealing - 9 people
- Scoring 6, don't know - 1 person.

2.6. **Te Ngākau Civic Precinct has traditionally played an important role in Wellington, both as a public space in the central city and as the home of the City Council Chambers and the Library. Is there anything you would like to share with us about the role Te Ngākau Civic Precinct has or could have in terms of a public and democratic space in the central city?**

Participants reflects of the role of the precinct under three key themes:

**A space for play and creativity** - Consider keeping it play-based, art-based to cultivate a culture of learning for play and art. It was noted and agreed to see more cultural activities in the area, bringing more cultural awareness, as close to the library. Its vibrancy should be utilised and used for its potential. Many liked the more recent addition of the green space as a place for sports and recreation, fitness and movement.

**Communal space for key events** - it's a good communal space for a lot of different events, and a place people gravitate toward. It's a space often used to start or end marches, rallies, and celebrations. It's a go-to space for moments of advocacy, for moments of coming together to celebrate or commemorate.

One participant shared that the space is used with peers for language groups - they meet in the library to practice language. As we move to be a country (and city) becoming serious about learning Te Reo, that use should be encouraged.

**Iconic and memorable to the city** - it's highly photographed, and well-known. The space holds a lot of memories for people and is used for important iconic space for events like graduations, and was described as an, "important integral space of the city".

### 3. About us

#### 3.1. On average, how often have you accessed library services in Wellington in the past 12 months (in person or online)?

The participants use of the library services was:

- Weekly - none
- Monthly - 6 people
- One every few months - 5 people
- Once or twice a year - 1 person
- Less than once a year - 1 person
- Never - none.

#### 3.2. There are interim CBD libraries in Manners St, National Archives and on Brandon St. Which of the following have you visited in the past 6 months?

The participants use of the interim library services was:

- Arapaki Manners Library and Service Centre - 8 people
- He Matapihi Molesworth Library - 7 people
- Te Awe Library Brandon and Panama Streets - 4 people
- I have not visited an interim library - 2 people; 1 who used her local suburb library most often, the other who had rarely left her home due to COVID-19 Alert Levels.

#### 3.3. What do you like about the interim CBD branches? Is there anything you would improve or change?

Most agreed the interim libraries were not creating a 'cultural centre', and they do not substitute for a larger library.

Some participants liked the concept of multiple locations and noted that offering multiple options and variety is positive from an accessibility point of view. Those that were supportive of the interim libraries approach thought the locations were good.

There was strong feedback on the lack of resources available for researchers, with books spread across locations. Each smaller library lacks a variety (good range) in books because resources are spread out. Someone mentioned it was difficult to get access to devices easily due to fewer options, including the lack of printers available one day in Manners Street.

There was mixed feedback on the Manner Street library, with one person citing staff as problematic as they don't seem to take into account that there are people in there using the facility and the staff are quite loud; with another person who shared they thought the customer service has been outstanding on Manners Street.

There was a positive mention for the cafe in the library on Brandon Street.

#### 3.4. **Location, age and gender**

These questions were not asked in the session; however, we confirm all participants at the session were women.