ORDINARY MEETING 1 MAY 2024	**13**

CAIRNS LIBRARIES – KEY BENCHMARKING OUTCOMES

52/4/4-01 | #7357543

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the key benchmarking outcomes of Cairns Regional Council's library services 2022-23 and the positioning of Cairns Libraries across benchmarked Queensland libraries.

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Nil.

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides a high-level update of Cairns Libraries' achievements and positioning in relation to benchmarked library services across Queensland. The State Library of Queensland (SLQ) releases a statistical bulletin each year containing data related to the Public Library Funding (PLF) and relevant Service Level Agreement (SLA) with councils. The Statistical Bulletin is collated through an annual statistical return completed by all Queensland public libraries. The data is then ordered by SLQ and released to the public several months later. Data presented in this report is collected from the recently released *Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin 2022-2023*[i]. The Bulletin provides statistics on outcomes such as library membership, collections, loans, technology provision and other recorded transactions.

Key Points:

- **Membership 45,554**
  The number of library members represents approximately 27% of the Cairns population (168,853)[ii] benchmarked against an average Queensland membership rate of 38.8%.
- **Physical visits 699,458**
  The number of physical library visits equates to 4.1 visits per capita, placing Cairns at number one against benchmarking libraries followed by Ipswich (2.7), Redland (2.5), Toowoomba (1.9), Townsville (1.7).
- **Total loans/collection usage 965,057**
  The number of total loans includes all physical and digital loans and equates to 5.72 loans per capita placing Cairns fourth against benchmarking libraries, preceded by Toowoomba (9.25), Redland (8.11) and Ipswich (6.02), followed by Townsville (3.67).
- **Total physical stock items/collections 165,552**
  The number of physical stock items in the collection per capita equates to 0.98 items per capita. Cairns sits fourth across the benchmarked libraries in this category,

preceded by Toowoomba (1.21), Redland (1.13), Ipswich (1.01) and followed by Townsville (0.73). The number of physical items account for 68% of the total collection whilst digital items account for 32% of the total collection.

- **Physical items acquired 41,985**
  41,985 new physical items were acquired during the reporting period. This equates to 0.25 items per capita, placing Cairns first in the number of items acquired per capita, followed by Redland (0.19), Ipswich (0.18), Townsville (0.14) and Toowoomba (0.12).

- **Program and event attendance 43,799**
  The number of attendees at programs equates to 0.26 per capita, placing Cairns second in this benchmarking exercise, preceded by Ipswich (0.33) and followed by Townsville and Redland (0.15) and Toowoomba (0.11). Additionally, Cairns' total program attendance is represented by 55% onsite/in-person attendance across eight libraries and 45% outreach/offsite attendance.

- **Internet usage (hours) 441,778**
  The number of internet usage hours places Cairns first in this benchmarking exercise, followed by Ipswich (51,072), Townsville (32,716), Toowoomba (19,630), and Redland (13,018). Cairns has a high number of internet device accessibility in the libraries with 1.45 internet devices per 2,500 LGA population.

- **Wi-Fi usage (hours) 104,426**
  The number of Wi-Fi usage hours places Cairns second in the benchmarking exercise, preceded by Ipswich (231,236) and followed by Redland (73,959). Townsville and Toowoomba hours were not stated.

Areas for Further Enhancement:

Key areas identified that could be explored to further enhance Council's library services include:

- Implementation of the new library management system (LMS) scheduled for June 2024. Implementation will involve configuring the software, migrating data, conducting testing, and training employees to ensure a smooth transition and optimal functionality for patrons and staff.
- Investigation of a mobile app for library patrons and staff that offers features such as digital library card, event notification and resource recommendations.
- Prioritisation of digital inclusion initiatives and strategies to empower the community to fully participate in the digital society, fostering lifelong learning, economic opportunities and social inclusion.
- Assessment and planning for the future of Edmonton library.
- Design and construction of a refurbished Smithfield library against capital works funds allocated.

BACKGROUND:

Public libraries play a crucial role in fostering community engagement, promoting literacy and providing access to information resources to citizens. Recognising their significance, the Queensland government allocates grants to local councils to support the operations and development of public library services across the state. State Library of Queensland administers annual PLF to local councils to enable the delivery and development of high-quality library services, programs and collections that meet the diverse needs of their communities.

Methodology:
The PLF methodology determines the annual subsidies to councils that operate public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres and how SLQ invests funds to enable the statewide model. This includes direct allocations and subsidies.

The PLF is calculated in 'tiers' based on regional classifications which are defined by Remoteness Area (RA) values from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Tier 1 – Major Cities of Australia
Tier 2 – Inner Regional Australia
Tier 3 – Outer Regional Australia
Tier 4 – Remote Australia
Tier 5 – Very Remote Australia

Cairns LGA is defined as 'Tier 3' – Outer Regional Australia.

The PLF methodology is in place for two years - 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024. The PLF provides fixed and guaranteed funding levels for two years to provide councils with financial certainty and an ability to plan for the delivery of high-quality information, collections, resources and/or library priority projects.

A new Service Development Subsidy (SDS) was also applied for outer regional, remote and very remote councils to replace the previous Local Resources Grant (paid to Rural Library Queensland and Indigenous Knowledge Centre sites).

Benchmarking Methodology
A total PLF amount of $21,669,714 has been allocated to Independent Library Services (such as Cairns). Except for Brisbane, Gold Coast, Logan, Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast councils, the remaining 28 councils operating Independent Library Services receive funding under $1M each. The five councils receiving the highest level of funding under $1M across Queensland are in order of value:

Council	$
Ipswich	948,178
Townsville	890,166
Cairns	**841,639**
Toowoomba	811,125
Redland	721,829

Table 1

The PLF is conditional upon the receipt of annual statistical reports required under the SLA. Upon receipt of the annual reports, SLQ compiles all data relevant to the SLA and produces the *Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin*. For the purposes of the benchmarking exercise, data reported within the Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin for the five councils listed above is used.

COMMENT:

1. Library Membership Percentage of Population:
Library membership is free to Cairns residents and visitors. Library membership can be considered a measure of the value of the community because it provides access to

knowledge and information, supports education, promotes community engagement and ensures equal access to resources.

Cairns Libraries' total library membership percentage of population (26.98%) currently falls below the state average of 33.8%. Cairns, however, ranks second in the members-to-population ratio across benchmarked libraries. These outcomes may be due to a combination of factors. For example, Cairns Libraries membership management program (whereby members are considered active if they have transacted with Cairns Libraries over the past three years), allows for a more accurate representation of the membership database than library services that have not cleansed their data or do not cleanse their data regularly.

Cairns Libraries continues to actively encourage the community to become library members through its "Return to Your Library" marketing campaign. A successful membership drive strengthened Cairns Libraries' role as a vital hub for lifelong learning, literacy and social connection within the community.

Council	Percentage of Population	Total Membership	New Memberships
Toowoomba	41.66	71,287	7,102
Cairns	**26.98**	**45,554**	**6,137**
Townsville	22.98	45,489	5,442
Ipswich	21.68	51,316	14,043
Redland	18.28	29,523	6,779

Table 2

2. Total <u>Physical Visits Per Capita:</u>
Visitation data is an important metric for measuring Cairns Libraries' success, indicating that the community is actively using Cairns Libraries and taking advantage of resources and services offered. It also reflects Cairns Libraries' ability to serve the needs and interests of its patrons.

Cairns ranks highest in terms of physical visits per capita across benchmarked libraries. This result is a positive indicator demonstrating Cairns Libraries is meeting the needs of the community and fulfilling its mission of providing free and accessible information and resources.

Council	Visits Per Capita	Total Physical Visits
Cairns	**4.1**	**699,458**
Ipswich	2.7	645,948
Redland	2.5	404,442
Toowoomba	1.9	317,482
Townsville	1.7	399,874

Table 3

3. <u>Total Loans/Collection Usage Per Capita:</u>
Loan data is a valuable tool providing Cairns Libraries insight into patron behaviour and preferences and helps inform decision-making and planning such as resource allocation.

Cairns Libraries continues to record consistent physical loan figures. Physical loans account for approximately 78% of Cairns Libraries' overall loans. This indicates that

members prefer borrowing the physical collection rather than digital resources. This could be for various reasons including a personal preference for a more tactile reading experience, limited access to technology, the digital divide and/or access to a physical library.

Council	Total Loans/ Collection Usage Per Capita	Physical Loans	Digital Loans	Total Loans
Toowoomba	9.25	905,371	678,210	1,583,581
Redland	8.11	1,059,666	250,087	1,309,753
Ipswich	6.02	1,177,601	246,823	1,424,424
Cairns	*5.72*	*742,407*	*222,650*	*965,057*
Townsville	3.67	523,371	204,187	727,558

Table 4

4. Stock Items (Collections) Per Capita:

The number of stock items represents the total number of materials available for borrowing by library users. This can include physical resources such as books, magazines and DVDs, and digital resources such as e-Books and e-Magazines. Having many stock items can be an important measure of the resources and services that Cairns Libraries offers. It allows patrons to have a wide range of materials to choose from, which can assist in promoting literacy, education and life-long learning.

In 2021, Cairns Libraries *Voice of Our Customer*[iii] survey respondents indicated that accessing the physical book collection is of the highest importance, therefore indicating that the physical collection is the most used service.

While Cairns sits fourth in comparison to the other benchmarked libraries, it meets minimum standards set by *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines* (physical collection items per capita ratio of 0.85-1.5)[iv]. This demonstrates that Cairns Libraries provides a comprehensive service to users, meets the needs and expectations of the community, and ensures that there are a consistent number of resources available for borrowing.

Council	Physical Items Per Capita	Physical Collection	Digital Collection	Total Collection
Toowoomba	1.21	206,996	108,793	315,789
Redland	1.13	181,810	52,932	234,742
Ipswich	1.01	283,063	291,236	529,299
Cairns	**0.98**	**165,552**	**78,775**	**244,327**
Townsville	0.73	145,506	33,339	178,845

Table 5

5. Physical Items Acquired Per Capita (Acquisitions):

The number of physical acquisitions is important in assisting Cairns Libraries to ensure services are meeting the needs of the community, providing free access to information and supporting literacy and lifelong learning.

Across benchmarked Councils, Cairns ranks first. Cairns Libraries has performed strongly in this area due to its focus on collection growth (increasing the number of physical items

per capita) and responding to *Voice of Our Customer* feedback. The data signifies that Cairns Libraries continues its commitment to providing comprehensive access to information by supporting diverse needs, facilitating research and study, promoting literacy and engaging with the community.

Additionally, acquiring a high number of physical resources means that Cairns Libraries is maximising value for money and being cost-effective in the procurement of its collections and management of supplier shelf ready contracts. By effectively managing these resources and prioritising patron needs, Cairns Libraries can optimise the value delivered to the community.

Cairns Libraries also performs favourably in terms of "currency" of its collection with 73% of the collection purchased within the last five years. An up to date collection is important for ensuring that Cairns Libraries is meeting library standards, the needs of the community, and providing patrons with access to the most relevant and timely information available.

Council	Items Acquired Per Capita	Physical Collection	% Physical Collection Items Purchased <5 years
Cairns	**0.25**	**41,985**	**73**
Redland	0.19	30,810	86
Ipswich	0.18	41,574	73
Townsville	0.14	27,969	66
Toowoomba	0.12	20,928	54

Table 6

6. <u>Programs and Events:</u>
Library programs and events are an integral part of Cairns Libraries' services, providing a wide range of opportunities for patrons to learn, engage with others and access resources that promote lifelong learning and community development. In addition to lending and visitor data, programs and events are important to the community and play a major role in Council's community engagement efforts.

Cairns ranks second across benchmarked Councils. A combination of factors including program variety, community engagement, marketing efforts, accessibility and staff expertise have contributed to this result.

Council	Program Attendance Per Capita	Total Number Programs - Sessions	Total Attendees
Ipswich	0.33	2,456	77,589
Cairns	**0.26**	**1,105**	**43,799**
Redland	0.15	834	24,322
Townsville	0.15	628	29,581
Toowoomba	0.11	998	19,301

Table 7

Information Technology:

Cairns Libraries expands its reach in the community by offering free access to PCs and Wi-Fi services, thereby aligning to SLQ's strategic document *Realising our potential: a vision for Queensland Public Libraries*[v]. The provision of these resources and services facilitates community access to information, knowledge and resources online and in digital formats.

Cairns ranks highest in provision and engagement across these digital technologies across benchmarked Councils. High community utilisation of Cairns Libraries' internet and Wi-Fi services is a positive indicator of Cairns Libraries' role as a community hub, and a vital resource for community access to technology and information.

Council	Annual Hours of Usage-Internet Devices	Internet Devices Per 2,500 Population	Annual Hours of Usage Wi-Fi
Cairns	**441,778**	**1.45**	**104,426**
Redland	13,018	0.67	73,959
Ipswich	51,072	0.81	231,236
Townsville	32,716	0.97	N/A
Toowoomba	19,630	0.93	N/A

Table 8

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (recommended)

That Council notes the key benchmarking outcomes of Cairns Regional Council's library services 2022-2023 and the positioning of Cairns Libraries across benchmarked Queensland libraries.

Option 2:

That Council requests officers provide additional information.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Financial funding - Queensland public libraries are funded through the PLF. In accordance with the SLA, Council must have management and operational practices which align with and are aimed at meeting or exceeding the *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines*. Inability by Council to meet conditions set in the SLA may significantly impact Council's budget and ability to provide library services to the community.

Operational - Business Continuity and Risk Management Plans are in place to mitigate known risks.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The costs to Council of operating Library Services in 2022/2023:

	2022/23 Actual $'000	2022/23 Budget $'000	Variance
Operating Revenue			
Fees and charges	98	76	22
Other income	0	-	0
Grants, subsidies, contributions and donations	1,102	1,045	57
Total Operating Revenue	**1,201**	**1,121**	**79**
Operating Expenditure			
Employee benefits	3,816	3,999	- 183
Materials & Services	2,140	2,014	126
Depreciation & Amortisation	281	738	- 457
Total Operating Expenditure	**6,237**	**6,750**	**- 513**
Net Operating Position	**- 5,037**	**- 5,629**	**593**

Council received the following grant funding from State Libraries Queensland to purchase books and products, run the First 5 Forever and maintain services.

	Operational Grants $'000
SLQ Book Grant	- 842
First 5 Forever	- 241
Service Development Subsidy	- 23
Total Grant Funding	**-1106**

Maintenance costs in 2022/23 for the branches:

Branch	Maintenance $'000
Babinda Library	15
Cairns City Library	145
Earlville Library	33
Edmonton Library	16
Gordonvale Library	16
Manunda Library	36
Smithfield Library	57
Stratford Library	31
TOTAL	**348**

Capital expenditure in 2022/23:

Capital Expenditure	Actual $'000	Budget $'000
Library Refurbishment Projects	94,632	50,000
Total Capital Expenditure	**94,632**	**50,000**

Community and Cultural Heritage:

Cairns Libraries Strategic Plan 2018-2023 was adopted by Council. Cairns Libraries is an essential local cultural institution that plays an important role in:
- Providing community gathering spaces.
- Providing access to technology.
- Promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Supporting lifelong learning and access to knowledge and information.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

- Focus 3: Design for Liveability
- Focus 4: Community and Culture
- Focus 5: Focussed Council.

Statutory:

- *Libraries Act 1988*.
- *Service Level Agreement for Public Library services (Independent Library Services) between Library Board of Queensland and Cairns Regional Council*.

CONSULTATION:

Stakeholder consultation is ongoing between Cairns Libraries and patrons via several methods including:

- Social media.
- Comment/feedback forms.
- Online feedback and enquiries.
- Face-to-face staff interaction.
- Hosting of community events.
- Collaboration with community organisations and service providers.

Consultation regarding library trends, contemporary collections services and facilities is ongoing with Council management, Australian Library and Information Association, National Library of Australia, State Library of Queensland and other libraries nationally.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Queensland Public Library Operating Expenditure Per Capita Graph
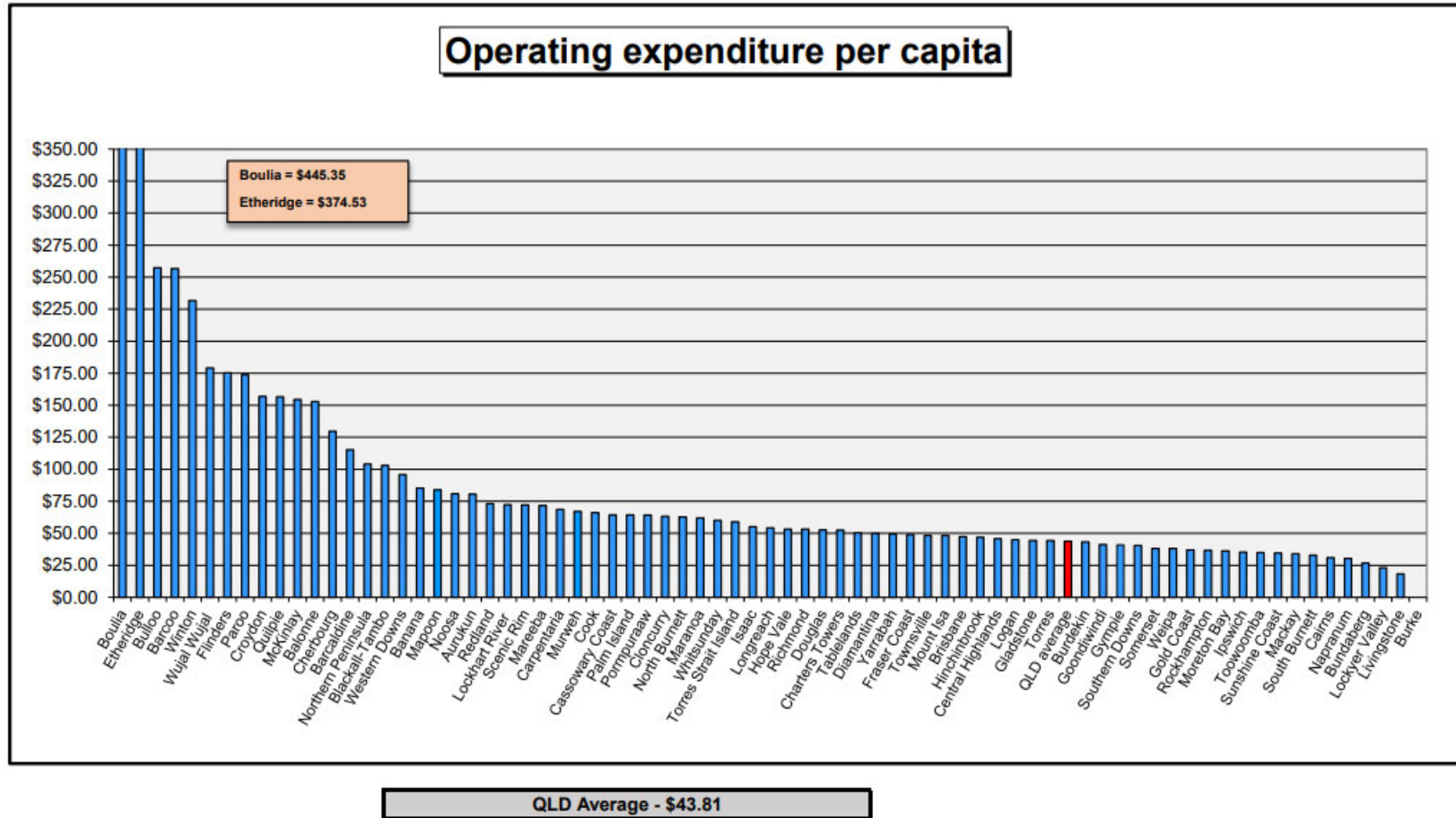Attachment 2 - Queensland Public Library Total Expenditure Per Capita Graph

Katrina Mills
A/ Executive Manager Creative Life

Destry Puia
Director Lifestyle & Community

Attachment 1 - Queensland Public Library Operating Expenditure Per Capita Graph 2022-2023
Cairns Regional Council - $31.01

Attachment 2 - Queensland Public Library Total Expenditure Per Capita Graph (Includes Collections) 2022-2023
Cairns Regional Council - $37.74.

Total expenditure per capita

Boulia = $454.33
Etheridge = $374.53
Flinders = $314.97

QLD Average - $55.90
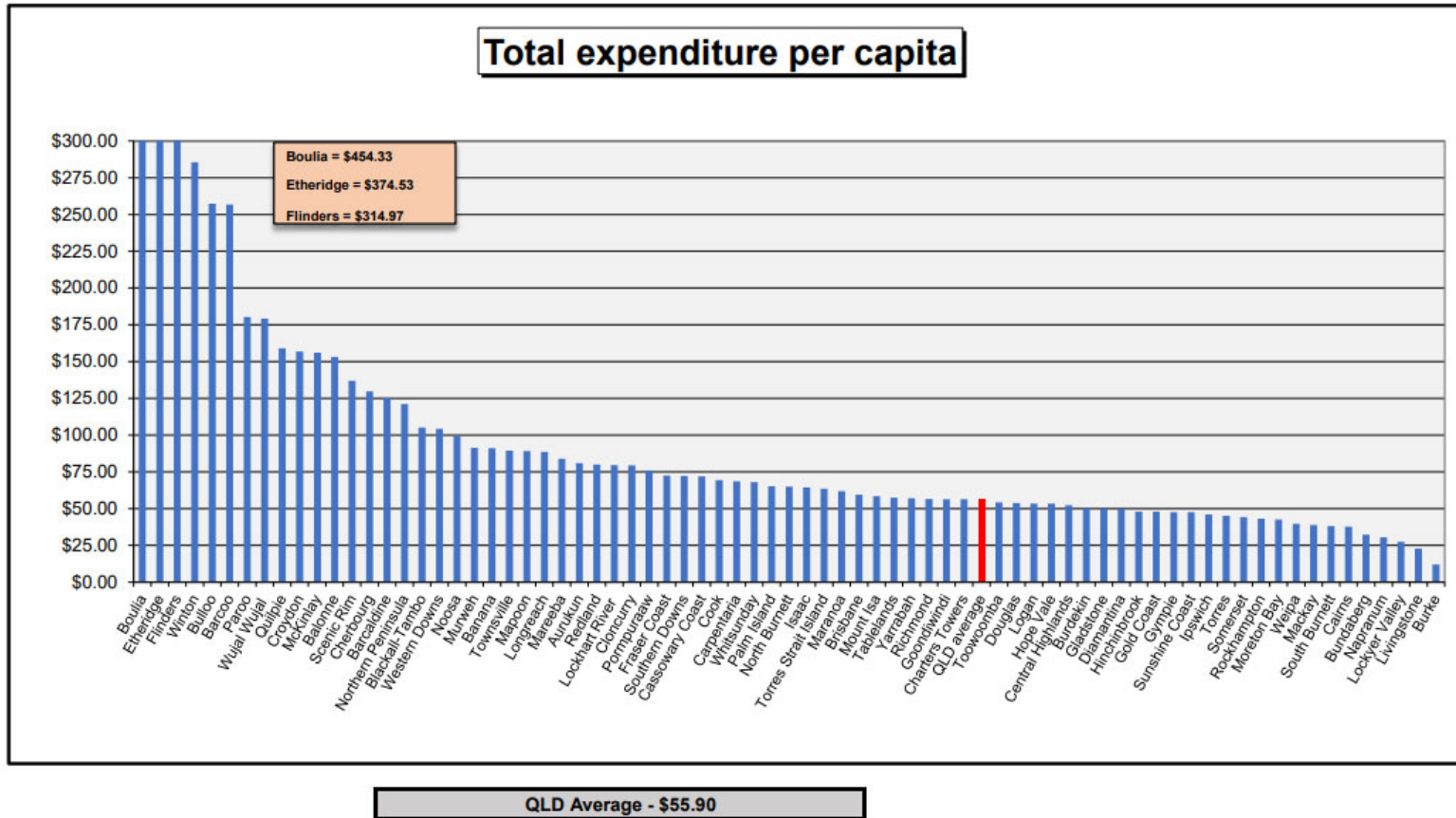
[i] Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin 2022-23 (Revised: February 2024)
[ii] Population Used for 2022-23 grant calculation
[iii] Voice of Our Customer – External #6639299
[iv] Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines 1 July 2020
[v] Realising our potential: A vision for Queensland public libraries