

Extended Enquiries Service Policy

1. Introduction and Definition

- The services referred to in this policy are enquiries which are variously known in the State Library of Queensland as 'Advanced', 'Deferred' or 'Extended'. These descriptions encompass extended enquiries received by email, fax, web form, conventional mail and through public library services as well as enquiries taken at service points when they cannot be completed immediately. These enquiries often require significant time and expertise to complete.
- Applicability: All State Library staff handling enquiries fitting the definition above.

2. Service Goals

- Quality Service: The extended enquiries service is a necessary component of the State Library's focus on equity and access. Given the resource intensive, one-to-one nature of the service it is intended to meet the needs of clients whose needs *cannot otherwise* be met. In practical terms, a free equitable and basic library service means that where possible we focus staff resources on those services which increase the number and range of connections between Queenslanders and resources.
- Delivery of Appropriate Mediated/Unmediated services and Value for Money: Equitable access, value for money, overall benefit and responsiveness to individual client needs are considerations factored into decision making on the resourcing of products and services. Enquiries services (in particular the 'Extended' service) are for the most part one-to-one interactions and as such, are relatively expensive, highly individualised and exclusive. Activities involving resource packaging and description, finding aids, client education and the exploitation of communications technologies can deliver valuable standardised one-to-many products and services to larger numbers of people across a greater area.
- Client Empowerment: Services should, where possible have client empowerment and self-sufficiency as goals - imparting the skills and knowledge to enable clients to act alone, minimising mediation and reliance on library staff. One outcome of our interactions should be an increase in the ability of our clients to conduct research independently.
- A whole of State Library approach ensuring that the collections and staff best suited to meeting client needs will be used to provide that information.
- Where possible, the service should be used strategically and practically by enquiries coordinators and/or supervisors to build subject expertise in collections by:
 - routing enquiries to particular staff
 - alignment of enquiries service with collection development duties
 - reuse of information and research already undertaken

3. What we can and cannot do (extended enquiries).

All Queenslanders and Queensland Public Libraries are our principal clients and have access to the service. Please note the following points:

- Queensland Business clients may access the service with the same conditions as other Queenslanders.
- Students may access the service with the same conditions as other Queenslanders. In the case of assignment questions, the policy focus on client empowerment is especially relevant.
- Clients in the Brisbane area should be strongly encouraged to use State Library locations to take advantage of onsite services and to reduce demand on the enquiries service.

3.1. We can:

- Assist clients with finding information from various sources, including the State Library's collections and resources and alternative collections and resources outside the library.
- Spend a maximum of 2 hours responding to a particular enquiry. This time should include all research, correspondence and administrative work undertaken as part of the enquiry. Please note: Collection Preservation services are an exception to this.¹
- Provide up to 10 copied pages free of charge. Clients should be advised that the provision of additional materials from the State Library is possible through the State Library's loans and maintenance services and may incur a fee.
- Refer clients to an appropriate resource when:
 - our own resources do not meet the clients requirements
 - the enquiry is more appropriately answered by a private researcher or agency, for example - overseas clients
 - the stipulated time for State Library acting on the enquiry has elapsed
- Undertake to provide a response within 10 working days (see section 6)

3.2. We can not:

- Respond to enquires which do not include an address and one other form of contact
- Undertake free in-depth research beyond the specified time. Clients may be referred to the materials developed by the State Library's specialists (online and hard copy), to an appropriate research organisation or individual.
- Spend more than 12 hours (or six 2 hour enquiries), responding to enquiries from any individual during any single calendar year. Public Libraries access to the service on behalf of clients collectively is unlimited, but individual Public Library clients are included in the limit.
- In the event of overuse of the service, a letter informing the client of the intent and constraints of the service should be sent asking the client to resubmit their enquiry at a later date. Such letters should be sent by the relevant Executive Manager and use a standard GECCO based template.

¹ Specialist Advice Service – Preservation

Conservation and Preservation staff provide a 'specialist advice service' to members of the public, regional libraries, local history groups, university libraries and government agencies. Staff may spend up to 15 minutes per enquiry. Enquiries beyond this service level may be carried out as a fee based consultation with Collection Preservation staff.

4. Response/Turnaround time

- The completion time for an enquiry is not guaranteed. High demand may result in turnaround times of several weeks. To minimise disappointment we undertake to notify clients within a reasonable time of the enquiry receipt, if a significant delay is anticipated.
- State Library staff will answer enquiries as soon as possible. Clients can expect to receive a response within 10 working days.

5. Strategies promoting unmediated access

- Clients are encouraged to utilise resources available to them which do not require the direct intervention of a library staff member. This encouragement can be achieved:
 - directly in face-to-face interactions through the provision of education and resources (in print and online) such as finding aids, subject guides, tutorials and educational materials
 - by the high-profile provision of alternatives and suggestions on the State Library website
 - in general, by influencing client expectations at all entry points to the service by clearly defining the service and its appropriate use
 - in publications describing State Library services (in print and online)
 - through marketing and communications strategies
- Resources developed both within and outside the State Library should be considered when responding to clients.
- Clients should also be made aware of and referred to their public library network or where appropriate, other information centres such as school or university libraries

6. Service Guarantee

- We are committed to providing a free service
- We are committed to deliver timely, relevant, accurate and courteous responses to enquiries. Client requests are answered with available State Library resources where possible, while being mindful of the resources available in other libraries, institutions, organisations and online should they be required.
- Clients are encouraged to bring to our notice any suggestions, complaints and appreciations regarding this and other services offered by the library

7. Deviations from this policy

- In the event that enquiries take longer than the specified time, the reasons for this should be explored with Team Leaders/Managers and team members. It may be that additional resources, approaches, tools or training needs can be identified in this process.
- In the event that staff feel it necessary or desirable to deviate from the conditions of this policy, the case for extending the service should be made to Team Leaders/Managers.