

ITEM 4

POST EXHIBITION: WOLLONGONG CITY LIBRARIES STRATEGY - DISCOVER, LEARN AND CONNECT 2024-2028

On 27 November 2023, Council resolved to exhibit the draft *Discover, learn and connect* – Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 for a period of 14 days, after an initial 28-day exhibition and community engagement in August 2023.

This report provides an overview of the draft *Discover, learn and connect* – Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 (*Discover, learn and connect*) exhibition process and recommends that the draft strategy is endorsed by Council for adoption and implemented in 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

Council adopt the draft *Discover, learn, and connect* Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Bruce Macdonnell, Manager Libraries & Community Facilities (Acting)
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 WCC Library Strategy - Discover, Learn and Connect - 2024-2028
- 2 Community Engagement Report - Draft Library Strategy - 2024-2028 (August 2023)
- 3 Community Engagement Report - Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 - EHQ Data Report - 2nd Exhibition

BACKGROUND

Wollongong City Libraries (WCL) has prepared and implemented successive strategic planning documents to guide service direction and priorities since 2012. The draft *Discover, learn, and connect* Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 represents the next phase in Council's vision for and execution of, a quality, contemporary library service.

The new strategy is premised on a vision that libraries are 'the heart of our community where everyone can discover, learn, and connect' and on a purpose of 'empowering people through lifelong learning, resources, information, and experiences'.

The draft strategy includes four goals:

Our libraries will...

Goal 1 | Engage and connect with our community

Goal 2 | Inspire our community to learn, share and celebrate

Goal 3 | Develop customer-driven, dynamic, and sustainable collections

Goal 4 | Create welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive places and spaces

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the draft *Discover, learn, and connect*, Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 is adopted by Council following two public exhibitions (August 2023 and December 2023) that allowed community feedback.

It is intended that *Discover, learn and connect* will inform planning for the future of Council's library service.

The actions and deliverables within the strategy will be deployed via an annual business planning and reporting program.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The draft WCL strategy has been developed via analysis of data from a variety of sources to identify key areas of focus for future delivery of library services to the community. This includes: WCL's 2021 survey of 867 library members during Covid lockdown *We miss you and value you feedback*, the 2022 Wollongong Learning City community and stakeholder engagement project, where 1,970 members of the community provided input through focus groups, briefings, online survey completion and visits to the website; and data captured from WCL's ongoing program of online customer feedback surveys.

The draft strategy has also been informed by two separate community engagements completed across July and August 2023 (28 days) and November and December 2023 (14 days), where combined:

- 1,143 people visited the *Our Wollongong* webpage.
- 211 unique participants submitted their response to the survey live on the *Our Wollongong* webpage with 213 total survey responses received.
- 5 emails were received commenting on the strategy.
- 6 people participated in the library youth group.

Submissions and comments on the draft strategy document were largely in support of the proposed document. Many people described the points as easy to understand, wide reaching, aspirational, practical and supportive of everyone's needs. Some people requested small word changes in the proposed vision, purpose and goals, whilst others requested themes of inclusion and accessibility be referenced.

Amendments were made to the draft strategy document based on feedback from both community engagements, as outlined in the table below.

| Community Engagement Feedback | Revision |
|---|---|
| Request to change <i>customer</i> to <i>client</i> | No revision. <i>Customer</i> is the preferred term used at WCL when referring to library members. <i>Customer</i> is used interchangeably with <i>community members</i> across WCL. |
| Request to include actions specifically on themes relating to inclusion and accessibility | Revised. Addition of one action and four measures under Goal 2 – <i>Share and celebrate people in the LGBTQIA+ community</i> . Addition of one action and four measures under Goal 2 – <i>Empower, champion, and celebrate people with disability</i> |
| Concern raised that all actions were specific to Wollongong Library branch | Revised. Confusion in language used – Wollongong Library represents one of seven locations; vs Wollongong City Libraries is all seven locations. <i>Wollongong City Libraries</i> amended as <i>our libraries</i> in all mentions in the document. |
| Request to see the quantitative deliverables as a baseline to gauge progress to the library's commitments | Revised in final document. Infographic outlining key metrics and current results to be included in the final strategy document. Progress updates to be shared across general WCL marketing over the course of the strategy period. |

Additional suggestions on future library services, including types of programs and events, resources held in the collection, and volunteering opportunities have been taken into consideration and will be built into action plans for each functional area across the libraries.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2032 Goal 3 '*Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city*' and Goal 4 '*We are a connected and engaged community*'. It specifically delivers on the following:

| Community Strategic Plan 2032 | Delivery Program 2022-2026 |
|--|----------------------------|
| Strategy | Service |
| 3.5 Provide communities with access to quality local spaces and places to meet, share and celebrate. | Libraries |
| 4.1 Provide our community with equitable access to information and opportunities to inform decision making. | |
| 4.2 Improve digital access and participation across all communities. | |
| 4.3 Partner with First Nations People and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities on programs and projects. | |
| 4.4 Build awareness and understanding of Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage, and histories. | |
| 4.8 Council's resources are managed effectively to ensure long term financial sustainability. | |
| 4.9 Excellent customer service is core business. | |
| 4.10 Wollongong's role as a Learning City is supported by lifelong learning initiatives. | |
| 4.11 Quality services, libraries and facilities are available to communities to access and gather. | |

RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no identified risks associated with progressing *Discover, learn and connect* to adoption.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operational funding to deliver this strategy is part of the libraries business as usual operating model. Opportunities to apply for grant funding may be available to support delivery of key program and event deliverables across the life of the strategy.

CONCLUSION

The draft strategy presents the future of service delivery for Wollongong City Libraries. It reflects Council's values and supports the achievements of strategic outcomes outlined in Our Wollongong 2032 Community Strategic Plan. It outlines actions and clear measures of success that when achieved will fulfil the vision that libraries are 'the heart of our community where everyone can discover, learn, and connect'.



Wollongong City Council

Discover, learn and connect Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024 - 2028



Image: Artwork by Claire Harding,
Acknowledgment of Country Art Competition 2022

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our city is built, Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters and the greater community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call this city home. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to the city.

For more information on **Wollongong City Council's Reconciliation Action Plan**, visit www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/about/aboriginal-culture-and-communities/council-programs-and-support



Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Lord Mayor's Message | 2 |
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| About Wollongong City Libraries | 4 |
| Snapshot | 5 |
| Vision, Purpose and Goals | 7 |
| Goal 1: Engage and connect with our community | 8 |
| Goal 2: Inspire our community to learn, share and celebrate | 11 |
| Goal 3: Develop customer-driven, dynamic, and sustainable collections | 14 |
| Goal 4: Create welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive places and spaces | 16 |



Libraries are for everyone

Our libraries have come a long way from their humble beginnings in 1946, a time when smart phones, computer and the internet was the stuff of science fiction and not the reality of day-to-day life.

Over the past 74 years, Wollongong City Libraries have evolved from being a place to borrow books, to be a community hub. These days library members don't even have to set foot in a library to take advantage of our services, because with a smartphone, computer or tablet, you can access news, entertainment, books and learning resources 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Libraries are a safe and inclusive space and a place for learning, accessing resources and social connection. They play an important role in closing gaps in access to information, promoting literacy, fostering social inclusion and cohesion and preserving our local history.

Our vision for Wollongong is to be a city where *From the mountains to the sea, we value and protect our natural environment and will be leaders in building an educated, creative, sustainable and connected community.* Our libraries are a cornerstone in delivering on that vision for our community.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in Warrawong where, over the next few years, we'll deliver the new Southern Suburbs Community Centre and Library. This major, multi-million-dollar project for Council represents a significant investment and boost to services in the southern suburbs. It will ultimately see a state-of-the-art facility that meets the needs for residents in our southern suburbs now, and into the future.

We also continue to work towards delivering a new facility for the residents of Helensburgh and surrounding suburbs.

Discover, learn and connect - The Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024 - 2028 reflects the next phase of Wollongong City Libraries. It has been created with input from our community and customers and is designed to reflect their expectations and aspirations. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the libraries team, and everyone who contributed to the development of this plan.

Our goal is to create a truly world-class library service for our community, while contributing to the delivery of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. I'm confident that this strategy will continue to guide us in that direction as we meet new challenges, and explore new ideas brought to us by our diverse and growing community. Whoever you are, whatever your circumstances, libraries really are for everyone.

Wollongong City Lord Mayor Councillor
Gordon Bradbery AM

Executive Summary

Discover, learn and connect - The Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024 - 2028 outlines our shared vision for a world class library service in the Wollongong LGA.

In developing this strategy, we considered important demographic information about Wollongong and how our city continues to grow. We also listened to what the community told us about what libraries mean to them, and what they want from the service in the future.

A draft of this strategy was shared with our community in 2023, with over 200 people responding to our call for feedback. Most were supportive, describing the plan as easy to understand, wide reaching, aspirational, practical and supportive of everyone's needs.

Some people requested small word changes in the proposed vision, purpose and goals, whilst others requested themes of inclusion and accessibility be referenced.

This important feedback has been incorporated into the final strategy and will help guide Wollongong City Libraries as we evolve to meet the changing needs of our community.



About Wollongong City Libraries

Wollongong City Libraries consists of seven libraries located across the Local Government Area, with libraries in Corrimal, Dapto, Helensburgh, Thirroul, Unanderra, Warrawong and Wollongong.

The first Wollongong Free Public Library was opened by Mr John J. Cahill, State Minister for Local Government (and future NSW Premier) on 29 June 1946. By the mid-1950s, there were four branches of the Greater Wollongong Public Library in Balgownie, Bulli, Dapto and Port Kembla. Throughout the following decades, the service has continued to be widely regarded as one of the finest regional library services in Australia.

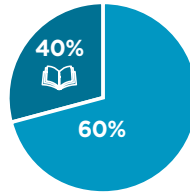


Snapshot



216,290

The population of Wollongong LGA



40% of the population of the Wollongong LGA, or 87,889 people are active Library Members (32.4% national average)



7 Locations



124 staff

81 permanent and 43 casual team members



65 Volunteers



407,283

Physical library collection items (books, DVDs etc.)



997,178

Physical item loans in 2022/2023



316,924

Digital item loans in 2022/2023



6,040

Wollongong City Libraries App users



199

Home Library Service customers



2,784

Programs delivered in 2022/2023



51,894

Total program attendees in 2022/2023

Sources:

iD Profile / ABS / 2022

Australia Public Libraries statistical report 2021 - 22 - National and State Libraries Australasia

Spydus Library Management System / 2022

SOLUS app / 2022

WCL program reporting

All statistics current at December 2022, unless noted otherwise





Vision, Purpose and Goals

Vision

We are the heart of our community where everyone can discover, learn, and connect.

Purpose

We empower people through lifelong learning, resources, information, and experiences.

Goals

Our libraries will...

Goal 1 | Engage and connect with our community

Goal 2 | Inspire our community to learn, share and celebrate

Goal 3 | Develop customer-driven, dynamic, and sustainable collections

Goal 4 | Create welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive places and spaces

Key actions and measurements

Library Strategy Actions 2024 - 2028

Goal 1 | Engage and connect with our community

| Action | | Measurement |
|---|-------|---|
| 1.1 Extend Wollongong City Libraries' (WCL) engagement with the community | 1.1.1 | Deliver one pop up library annually |
| | 1.1.2 | Deliver one new outreach experience annually |
| | 1.1.3 | Library membership increased by 5% annually |
| | 1.1.4 | Deliver one community-based program with a new partner non-government organisation annually |





| Action | | Measurement |
|--|-------|---|
| 1.2 Enhance focus on customer experience | 1.2.1 | Annual satisfaction rating greater than 80% for major library events |
| | 1.2.2 | Annual satisfaction rating greater than 80% for regular programming, including children, young people and school holiday activities |
| | 1.2.3 | Annual customer service satisfaction rating greater than 80% |
| | 1.2.4 | Wollongong City Libraries score greater than 3.75/5 in the Wollongong City Council Biennial Community Satisfaction Survey |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 1.3 Maximise membership, visitation and participation in WCL | 1.3.1 | Increase library visitation by 5% annually |
| | 1.3.2 | Increase number of physical loans 5% annually |
| | 1.3.3 | Increase number of digital loans 5% annually |
| | 1.3.4 | Increase website traffic by 3% annually |
| | 1.3.5 | Increase library app usage by 3% annually |



| Action | | Measurement |
|--|-------|--|
| 1.4 Cultivate a learning culture across the library workforce | 1.4.1 | Greater than 80% of all Library staff to achieve competency in Library Technical Skills |
| | 1.4.2 | Greater than 80% of all Library staff to participate in one Professional Development activity annually |
| | 1.4.3 | Greater than 80% satisfaction rating by staff for the biennial Staff Development Day |
| | 1.4.4 | Greater than 80% of all Library Staff to complete Council training when scheduled |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 1.5 Provide opportunities for our community to learn and connect by volunteering | 1.5.1 | Increase number of volunteers by 3% annually |
| | 1.5.2 | Increase total number of contributed hours from volunteers by 3% annually |
| | 1.5.3 | Greater than 80% satisfaction rating on annual volunteer survey |
| | 1.5.4 | Increase the number of volunteers with five years' service and above |

Goal 2 | Inspire our community to learn, share and celebrate

| Action | | Measurement |
|---|-------|---|
| 2.1 Create and deliver programs, events, and activities to enrich and empower our community | 2.1.1 | Annual satisfaction rating greater than 80% for major library events |
| | 2.1.2 | Annual satisfaction rating greater than 80% for regular programming, including children, young people and school holiday activities |
| | 2.1.3 | 60% of programs, events, and activities are evaluated annually |
| | 2.1.4 | Eight programs, events, and/or activities co-designed with community partners, are co-delivered annually |
| | 2.1.5 | 100% of staff delivering specialised programs and events to achieve competency in biannual upskilling and training |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 2.2 Establish Wollongong as a Learning City | 2.2.1 | Develop and deliver a lifelong learning strategy for Wollongong City Council by 2024 |
| | 2.2.2 | Gain accreditation from UNESCO as a Learning City in 2025/26 |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 2.3 Ensure that diversity and inclusion are at the core of all programs, events, and activities | 2.3.1 | Partnerships with diverse and inclusive community organisations to increase by 2%, annually |
| | 2.3.2 | Eight programs, events, and/or activities co-designed with community partners, are co-delivered annually |
| | 2.3.3 | 60% of programs, events, and activities are evaluated annually |

| Action | | Measurement |
|---|-------|---|
| 2.4 Share and celebrate the culture and history of First Nations people | 2.4.1 | Partnerships with First Nations community groups to increase by 2% annually |
| | 2.4.2 | Four programs, events, and/or activities that share and celebrate First Nations communities' culture and/or history, co-designed and co-delivered |
| | 2.4.3 | Content and visibility of First Nations communities on promotional material and our libraries website to increase by 5% annually |
| | 2.4.4 | First Nations communities' content in our library's collections to increase by 5% annually, subject to publication |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 2.5 Share and celebrate the culture and history of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities | 2.5.1 | Partnerships with CALD community groups to increase by 2% annually |
| | 2.5.2 | Four programs, events, and/or activities that share and celebrate CALD communities' culture and/or history, co-designed and co-delivered |
| | 2.5.3 | Content and visibility of CALD communities on promotional material and our libraries website to increase by 5% annually |
| | 2.5.4 | CALD communities' content in our library's collections to increase by 5% annually, subject to publication |

| Action | | Measurement |
|--|-------|---|
| 2.6 Share and celebrate people in the LGBTQIA+ community | 2.6.1 | Partnerships with community groups working with people in the LGBTQIA+ community to increase by 2% annually |
| | 2.6.2 | Four programs, events, and/or activities that share and celebrate people in the LGBTQIA+ community, co-designed and co-delivered |
| | 2.6.3 | Content and visibility of people in the LGBTQIA+ community on promotional material and our libraries website to increase by 5% annually |
| | 2.6.4 | Content representing people in the LGBTQIA+ community in our library's collections to increase by 5% annually, subject to publication |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 2.7 Empower, champion and celebrate people with disability | 2.7.1 | Partnerships with Disability community groups to increase by 2% annually |
| | 2.7.2 | Four programs, events, and/or activities that share and celebrate Disability groups, co-designed and co-delivered |
| | 2.7.3 | Content and visibility of people with disabilities on promotional material and our libraries website to increase by 5% annually |
| | 2.7.4 | Inclusive and accessible content in our library's collections to increase by 5% annually, subject to publication |



Goal 3 | Develop customer-driven, dynamic, and sustainable collections

| Action | | Measurement |
|---|-------|--|
| 3.1 Build dynamic, customer-driven collections | 3.1.1 | 85% of customer recommended titles are acquired |
| | 3.1.2 | 85% of customer "Suggestion for Purchase" are processed within four weeks |
| | 3.1.3 | Increase number of physical loans 5% annually |
| | 3.1.4 | Increase number of digital loans 5% annually |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 3.2 Maintain the openness, accessibility, and inclusiveness of our collection | 3.2.1 | Catalogue usage increases by 5% annually |
| | 3.2.2 | Increase library app usage by 3% annually |
| | 3.2.3 | 1,750 items digitised annually |
| | 3.2.4 | 25,000 titles catalogued annually |
| | 3.2.5 | 85% of new titles are on the shelves within seven working days from delivery |
| | 3.2.6 | Content related to First Nations, CALD, and LGBTQIA+ communities to increase by 5% annually in our library's collections, subject to publication |
| | 3.2.7 | Inclusive and accessible content in our library's collections to increase by 5% annually, subject to publication |

| Action | Measurement | |
|---|-------------|---|
| 3.3 Our collections are financially and environmentally sustainable | 3.3.1 | Turnover of stock is greater than 3.0 annually |
| | 3.3.2 | 100% of library materials budget is expended annually |
| | 3.3.3 | Implement resource recycling, end of life disposal and purchasing decisions by 2026, in line with Wollongong City Council's Sustainable Wollongong 2030 Strategy |
| Action | Measurement | |
| 3.4 Preserve and promote the Local Studies Collection | 3.4.1 | 1,000 items added to the collection annually from donations and other sources |
| | 3.4.2 | Digitise 500 local studies items annually |
| | 3.4.3 | Digitise and/or catalogue 1,250 items for the Illawarra Mercury Image Collection Project annually |
| | 3.4.4 | Capture 10 local stories annually |
| | 3.4.5 | Four Local Studies events programs, and/or activities are held annually |



Goal 4 | Create welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive places and spaces

| Action | | Measurement |
|--|-------|--|
| 4.1 Develop modern, inviting, and accessible spaces | 4.1.1 | Increase library visitation by 5% annually |
| | 4.1.2 | Greater than 85% of customers express satisfaction with library spaces |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 4.2 Plan and make sustainable choices for our spaces and resources | 4.2.1 | 50% of craft materials sourced for Wollongong City Libraries are made from recycled materials |
| | 4.2.2 | 80% of events are plastic free |
| | 4.2.3 | 80% of items purchased for library spaces are sourced from local suppliers |
| | 4.2.4 | Four engagements with social procurement |
| | 4.2.5 | Implement resource recycling, end of life disposal and purchasing decisions in line with Wollongong City Council's Sustainable Wollongong 2030 Strategy |

| Action | | Measurement |
|---|-------|---|
| 4.3 Provide spaces that are safe and enhance wellbeing | 4.3.1 | Zero incidents of injury to members of the public annually |
| | 4.3.2 | All libraries identified as <i>cool centres</i> by 2028, in line with Wollongong City Council's Urban Heating Strategy |
| | 4.3.3 | Greater than 85% customer satisfaction relating to library spaces measured annually |
| | 4.3.4 | Greater than 80% of library staff to achieve competency in creating welcoming spaces for people with diverse backgrounds |
| Action | | Measurement |
| 4.4 Plan and deliver library infrastructure that meets the needs of the community | 4.4.1 | Deliver afterhours access at Helensburgh Library in 2025 |
| | 4.4.2 | Greater than 80% customer satisfaction for those who use the library after hours self-access |
| | 4.4.3 | Deliver Southern Suburbs Community Centre and Library in 2026-2027 |
| | 4.4.4 | Continue planning for Helensburgh Community Centre and Library |
| | 4.4.5 | Deliver a refurbishment at Dapto Library in 2026-2027 |





Our Wollongong Our Future

From the mountains to the sea, we value and protect our natural environment and will be leaders in building an educated, creative, sustainable and connected community.

We value and protect our environment

We have an innovative and sustainable economy

Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city

We are a connected and engaged community

We have a healthy community in a liveable city

We have affordable and accessible transport



OUR WOLLONGONG JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028 Engagement Report

August 2023

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Background | 5 |
| Stakeholders | 5 |
| Methods..... | 6 |
| Communication | 6 |
| Participation..... | 8 |
| Submission results | 10 |
| Next steps | 18 |

The information in this report is based on data collected from community members who chose to be involved in engagement activities and therefore should not be considered representative.

This report is intended to provide a high-level analysis of the most prominent themes and issues. While it's not possible to include all the details of feedback we received, feedback that was relevant to the project has been provided to technical experts for review and consideration.

Executive Summary

Council asked the community to comment on the Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028. The Draft Strategy was developed as the previous strategy had reached the end of its timeframe. The new vision, purpose, goals and measures have been drafted to align the strategy to the changing community and the current Community Strategy Plan.

Engagement

Engagement was undertaken with key stakeholders and the community. Information was provided through email, media releases, newsletters, Illawarra Mercury Community Update, Council website and Council social media posts.

A project page was created on Our Wollongong webpage from 10 July to 6 August 2023. The page featured the Drafted Library Strategy 2024-2028, a survey, frequently asked questions, related projects and the key dates.

The survey was available by hardcopy at all 7 libraries, with posters and bookmarks with a QR code to the survey on display.

Targeted youth engagement took place on 24 August 2023. The engagement saw the group openly discuss what the library meant to them, why they went to the library, what they liked about the current offering and what they would like to see in the future.

Engagement participation

The community were invited to provide general feedback on the Draft Library Strategy and comment on the key actions.

- 1053 people visited the Our Wollongong webpage
- 197 unique participants submitted their response to the survey live on the Our Wollongong webpage with 199 total survey responses received.
- 3 emails were received commenting on the strategy
- 6 people participated in the library youth group.

What we heard

Submissions and comments on the Draft Strategy document were largely in support of the proposed document. Many people described the points as easy to understand, wide reaching, aspirational, practical and supportive of everyone's needs. Some people requested small word changes in the proposed vision, purpose and goals, whilst others requested themes of inclusion and accessibility be referenced.

For requests and concerns in other parts of the strategy, people offered both broad and specific suggestions. The most common sentiment was around people being unsure about what the outcomes measures referred to when measuring the progress of the strategy, and would like to understand it better.

On the topic of safety and inclusion, over 93 percent of respondents reported they felt safe and included. Those who responded differently comment on themes around their experience in the physical space, the library's culture and 'identity' and external factors out of the library's control.

Participants were asked to describe what inspired them to visit the library. The range of books and love of reading were highly mentioned, as well as library programs, children's activities and the sense of community the library creates.

Participants were also asked to report what they believed would enhance their experience at the library. The clear themes were around resources, service and creating community, with people suggesting items and actions they wished to see the library enact in the future.

Background

Wollongong City Council's existing 'Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2017-2022' has reached the end of its timeframe and requires a new five-year strategy. The Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 aims to communicate the goals, objectives, and deliverables of our libraries to the community for the next five years.

The 2024-2028 Strategy and accompanying vision, purpose and goals were developed through consultation with the established Project Working group, Libraries staff and internal Council staff. The draft strategy was informed by previous engagement from the 2021 survey '*We miss you and value your feedback*' consultation which took place during the Covid-19 lockdown. The previous consultation received 867 survey responses, allowing the Project Working Group to gain a lot of valuable information and insights. The Draft Strategy has also been informed by the Learning Cities engagement. The following engagements related to libraries have also been reviewed and considered in the development of this Engagement Plan:

- Libraries Strategy 2017-2022 - Beyond Books: Your Libraries' Next Chapter
- Helensburgh Library – Open for Lunch!
- Planning for a new Helensburgh Community Centre and Library
- Warrawong District Community Centre and Library

Stakeholders


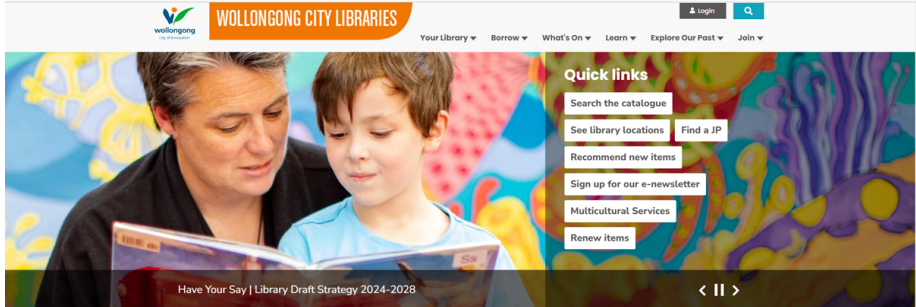
Stakeholders identified prior to the start of the engagement period included:

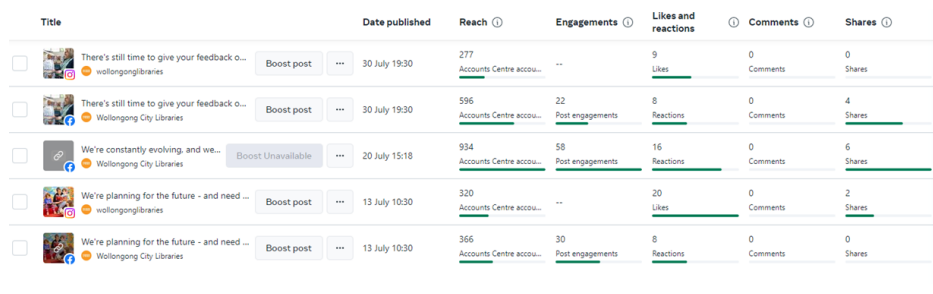


Methods

Communication

Communication of the Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028 document used a range of communication methods to target a wide-reaching audience. The following communication methods were used to promote the public's participation:

| Methods | Details of Methods |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Our Wollongong website | <p>The project webpage launched 10 July 2023 and hosted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information and supporting documents • Frequently Asked Questions (published from questions received by email) • Draft Strategy document • Online survey <p>1,355 participants registered on the Our Wollongong website with an interest in "Culture and Arts" were emailed a newsletter announcing the page.</p> <p>The majority of 'direct' visits (688) to the Our Wollongong website were generated via the Wollongong City Libraries email database.</p> |
| Email to library user's database | <p>An email was sent to the database of 'Library Lovers'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 058 emails were sent • 5 741 people opened the email • 688 unique clicks opened to the Our Wollongong survey. |
| Email signature banner | <p>A banner promoting the engagement was added to the email signatures of all Library staff.</p>  |
| Bookmarks, flyers and posters | <p>Bookmarks, flyers and posters were displayed at all libraries with each including an unique QR code linking to the online survey.</p> <p>Bookmark QR: 5 scans Flyer: 6 scans Poster: 5 scans</p> |
| Advertised on Libraries website | <p>A banner ad linked directly to the survey.</p>  |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Social media | <p>Six social posts promoting the exhibition was published on:</p> <p>11 July - City of Wollongong Facebook</p> <p>13 July - Wollongong City Libraries Facebook and Instagram</p> <p>20 July - Wollongong City Libraries Facebook</p> <p>30 July - Wollongong City Libraries Facebook and Instagram</p>  |
| Media release | A media release on 25 July 2023 provided a statement on the Draft Library Strategy and how people could provide feedback. |
| Community Update – Illawarra Mercury | The 2 August 2023 Council community update promoted the Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028 exhibition. |

Engagement Measures

The following engagement methods were used to record data:

- Our Wollongong website
 - An online survey was used to capture participants' comments
 - A printed hardcopy survey was available at all libraries.
- Phone calls
- Emails
- Letters
- Targeted Youth Group

Participation

All stakeholders and the wider community were invited to provide feedback on the Draft Library Strategy 2023-2028 from 10 July 2023 – 6 August 2023. A youth engagement workshop was hosted on 24 August 2023. The results of the engagement participation and the responses received are as follows:

Engagement Participation

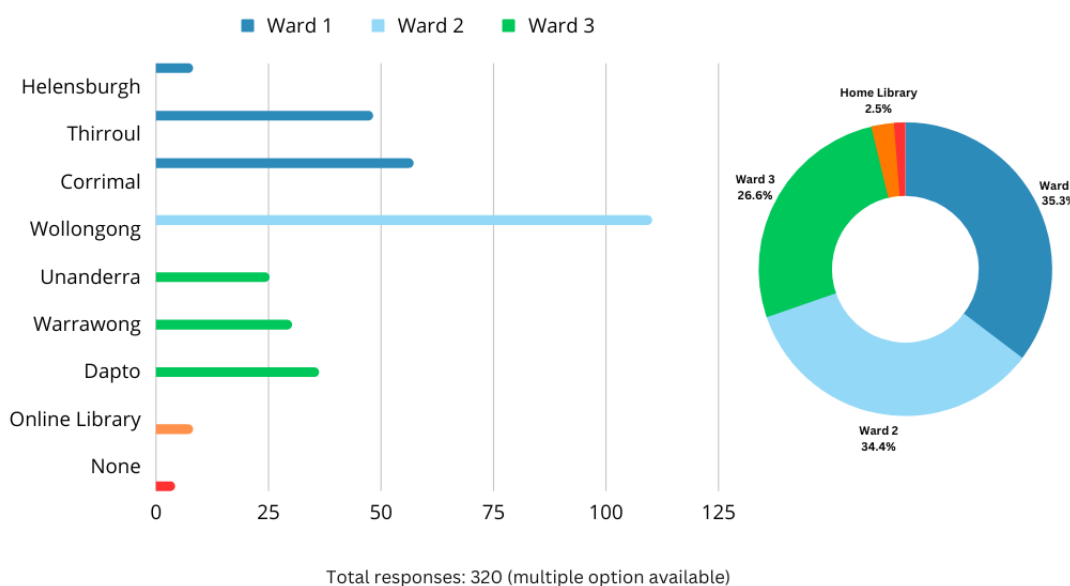
The number of participants for each engagement activity were:

| Engagement Activities | Participation |
|--|--|
| Online survey Printed hardcopy survey | 197 unique participants (199 total responses) |
| Emails | 3 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Internal staff sessions + online survey | 6 sessions with 15 attendees 7 survey responses |
| Youth group | 6 |
| Online Participation | |
| Aware – Total number of unique visitors who viewed the project webpage. | 1,053 |
| Informed – Total number of people who clicked a hyperlink, e.g. to download the draft Strategy. | 670 |
| Engaged – Total number of people who actively contributed to the project, e.g. by submitting comments via the survey | 197 (199 total responses) |

Demographics

What library do you usually visit?



The location recorded for 187 people across the engagement activities included:

Ward 1: 65 people

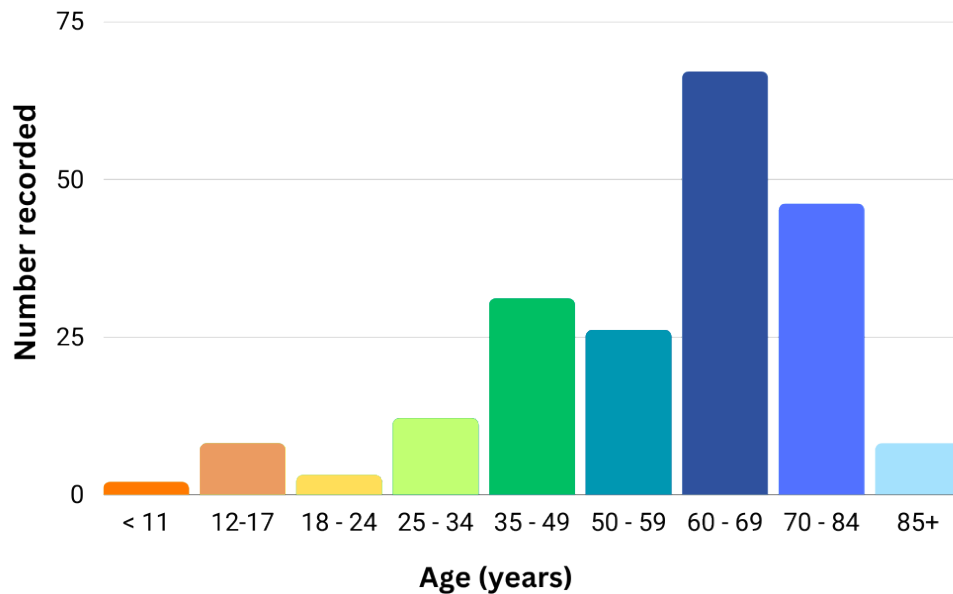
Ward 2: 64 people

Ward 3: 52 people

There was five people who reported they were out of area. One person via the Our Wollongong survey recorded 'skipped' as their answer.

The age of participants was recorded in the Our Wollongong survey and at youth group.

Age of Participants



The three emails received did not record the library they use, location or age and have not been included in these statistics.

Submission results

Participants who contributed to the survey answered questions regarding the following:

- How do you feel about the following vision, purpose and goals proposed in the draft Library Strategy? Very supportive, supportive, neutral, unsupportive or very unsupportive?
- Do you have any comments about the vision, purpose or goals?
- Would you like to provide feedback on other parts of the draft Library Strategy? Tell us your thought.
- Which library (or libraries) do you usually visit?

The following questions were then optional via the online survey:

- What inspires you to visit the library?
- What would enhance your experience at the library?
- How safe and included do you feel in the library spaces? Please explain your answer.
- Demographic based questions including suburb and age.

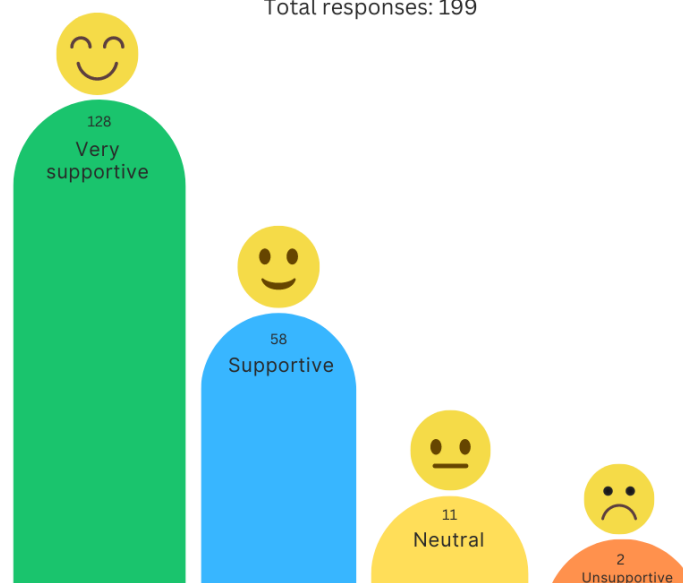
Responses received via email commented generally on the strategy and requests for libraries and were themed accordingly and filtered into the report where relevant.

The library youth group was an unstructured discussion around the meaning of the library strategy. The discussion followed similar questions as included in the Our Wollongong online survey. The group talked about their feelings about the library, what they liked and what was important to them, and what would enhance their experience. They were also asked about their feeling of inclusion in the library spaces. The ideas were recorded, themed and reported appropriately in this report.

The Draft Vision, Purpose and Goals

How do you feel about the following vision, purpose and goals proposed in the draft Library Strategy?

Total responses: 199



*responses recorded in the Our Wollongong Survey

Very Supportive: A significant proportion of respondents – 128 - described they were 'Very Supportive' when asked how they felt about the proposed draft vision, purpose and goals of the Library Strategy.

Supportive: There were 58 people stated they were supportive of the draft, however many offered minor tweaks and suggestions in their feedback that extended on what was already proposed.

Neutral: There were 11 people who felt neutral. They were primarily concerned with the implementation of the strategy.

Unsupportive: There were two respondents who were unsupportive of the draft and provided feedback in what they wished to see changed.

Very unsupportive: No respondents described their feelings towards the proposed vision, purpose and goals as 'very unsupportive'.

Support

Many people in support of the draft vision, purpose and goals described the points as easy to understand, wide reaching, aspirational, practical and supportive of everyone's needs. Others said it was bold, interesting, inspiring and encouraging. Focus on Wollongong City Council's libraries being a welcoming, learning hub and an important part of the local community was the common sentiment across responses.

Suggestions

Some people made specific requests on the wording within the Draft library Strategy. A change from the word 'customer' to 'community' or 'client' was requested. Featuring inclusive language including "like-minded" people and "diverse community" was also a suggestion.

There was a repeated reference to accessibility throughout the data that was collected. A commitment to making libraries accessible not just as a physical space but a social and psychosocial space for people was requested to be included in the goals of the strategy. Being inclusive of age was also referred to in responses.

Requests to feature the theme of inclusion was repeatedly recorded in the feedback received through the online engagement. Increasing engagement and collaboration with First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, neurodiverse and other diverse community groups were some examples where people wished to see inclusion manifest in the draft strategy.

There was a repeated request to use words like 'empower' and 'facilitate' the desire for people to learn, specific to goal 2. Respondents provided ideas such as of a relevant and appropriate activities, for example, having pre-school aged children visit the libraries and learn with senior people in a cross-age program.

There was also desire for the goals to mention a commitment to obtaining of resources and growing collections.

Concerns

There was a small amount of people who were concerned with the implementation of the vision, purpose and goals. Some stated they were concerned the vision, purpose and goals were reaching far beyond

providing the basics of a library. Others raised concerns that the draft were not achievable. An example was that the respondent wished the libraries to push harder on sustainable matters. Requests for a comparison of quantitative deliverables were a common theme amongst the responses. The justification for this was so that respondents could gauge the progress that the library committing to in the new draft.

Another common theme in the response was that the draft vision alluded to being specific to the larger libraries in the Wollongong City Council. The libraries at Unanderra, Dapto, Helensburgh and Corrimal were repeatedly mentioned clarifying their desire to ensure that all libraries were treated equal.

Some people provided more detailed suggestions and concerns of the library service including those who stated they were 'unsupportive' of the proposed vision, purpose and goals within the draft Library Strategy, which will be reported in feedback on other parts of the strategy.

Other parts of the strategy

Participants were offered the opportunity to comment on any other suggestions or concerns they had on other parts of the Draft Library Strategy. To enact transparency, some responses from participants have been moved within this report to reflect relevance to the question.

Strengths

The responses that provided positive praise for the draft strategy were around:

- Community engagement goals and strategies, including pop-ups
- Increasing activities like music in the library
- Telling of local stories and history
- Healthy physical spaces of Wollongong City Council's libraries
- Library refurbishments and the new Warrawong Library plan
- Continuing commitment to receiving suggestions for purchase
- Time-frames for getting new stock onto shelves
- Customer service delivery and professionalism by staff.

Suggestions

There were requests to have more KPI's of the draft strategy be measurable by satisfaction rather than have quantitative targets. People suggested satisfaction surveys during school holidays to capture youth's voices or similarly measure satisfaction when people are already engaged with library programs.

Many respondents suggested that the quantifiable nature of the strategy was not easy to understand. Some said the percentages measured did not explain the previous numbers they were being compared to or what an increase may look like. For example, increasing visitation by five percent annually, responders wished to know what this would look like in numbers. One suggestion made was that it would be appropriate to what the average performance has been over previous years as a point to compare to.

Some other suggestions people made in the survey included:

- Using the word 'patron' rather than 'customer'
- A greater focus range of activities and programs targeting a mix of attendees eg. Youth and elderly
- Increase creative activities and spaces for local artists.
- Increase and promote space for book clubs and community groups within libraries.

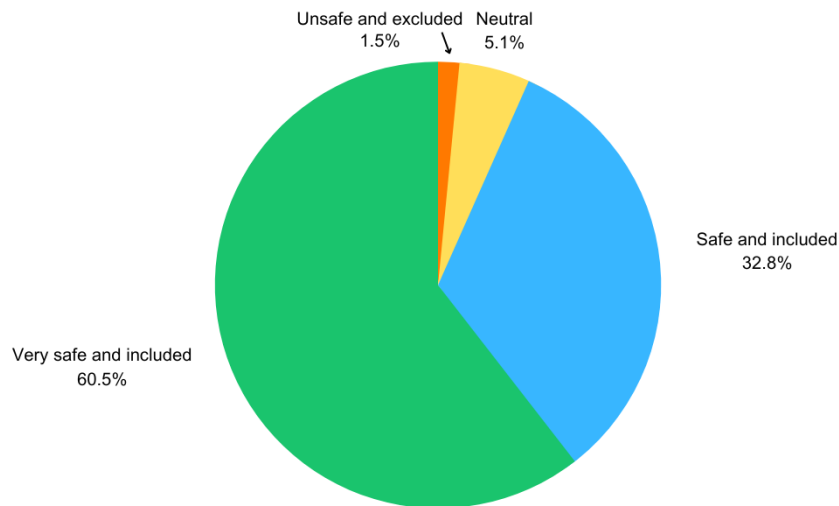
- Commitment to create cross-skill learning opportunity eg. Creative art with learning
- Increase engagement of young adults including people in their 20s
- Support for illiterate and semi-illiterate community
- Celebrate and engage LGBTQIA+ community, particularly young people with KPI's to include events, reading material, flags and working with local NGO's to provide safe spaces.
- Promote cultural safety and responsiveness with KPI's to provide staff cultural training.
- Increase accessibility for First Nations people and organisations and continue increasing Indigenous resources in the spaces of science.
- Commitment to maintaining face-to-face services with strong customer service.
- Creating spaces for community to project their voice as a library user eg. Allowing customers to contribute to a 'recommendations' list.
- Promote volunteering at the library as many were unaware it was an option.
- Enact and promote environmentally sustainable practices including opportunities for the public to interact with sustainable activities eg. Toy library.
- Increase accessibility of library by extending hours during week and on the weekend
- Have the library commit to bigger events including Sydney Writer's Festival
- Commit to obtaining different resources eg. academic journals and resources in different languages.

Concerns

The concerns over other parts of the Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028 included:

- The measures are not ambitious enough relevant to digital loans
- The measurements related to the Aboriginal community need specific consultation to create meaningful action
- Lack of detail and specificity could lead to actions be easily manipulated
- The measures would not be delivered as similar measures outlined in the previous library strategy had not been actioned eg. Opportunity to provide suggestions/feedback on resources and programs
- The strategy would lead to favouring the larger libraries and leave smaller libraries neglected.
- Wollongong City Council's libraries are too politically active and bias and push the alternate agenda at every opportunity including at drag story time.
- Some of the measurements were deemed as narrow-minded. The specific example was of injury within the library taking place where children were subjected to inappropriate content within books.

Safety and Inclusion



How safe and included do you feel in the library spaces?

Total responses: 195

Safe and Included

There was approximately 93 percent of respondents that reported they felt safe and included in Wollongong City Council's library spaces. Many respondents highlighted the efforts of library staff as a mechanism in making them feel safe. Some words that were recorded include that staff made people feel invited, welcomed and warm. Others said they never felt any judgement by staff and librarians were always happy to assist at any time. There was also mention about the physical presence of staff made people feel protected and comfortable.

Another factor of people feeling safe and included in the library was the atmosphere and physical space. People described the space as peaceful and relaxing, with comfortable areas to access. Other words included calm, quiet and clean. The open-plan design and appropriate staff supervision within the space was commended in the responses.

Some other elements of the library that made people feel safe and included:

- Acknowledgement of Country carried out at story time
- Posters, events and resources that celebrate inclusion, differences and minority groups
- The emergency room
- Sectioned areas and rooms at the library

The youth group agreed they all felt safe in the library space. Similar to the responses in the survey, the group commented on the staff who worked at the library. They said the staff were always friendly and welcoming, always smiling and greeting them by their name upon entrance. This made the youth group feel like they belonged and encouraged them to continue using the space.

Unsafe and Excluded

Requests and concerns regarding the safety and inclusion that people felt when interacting with Wollongong City Council's libraries were around the following themes – experiences in the physical space, the culture of the library and external factors. Points that impacted people's feeling of safety and inclusion are listed within the 3 themes.

Experience in the physical space

- Lack of lighting around Wollongong library and carpark
- Space between shelves were narrow and impact mobility impaired customers including wheelchair users
- Lack of comfortable and accessible areas to sit
- Limit on internet usage and data access
- Lack of water facilities at Thirroul library, specifically related to breastfeeding women
- Limited religious resources
- Drag queens entering women's toilets.
- No dedicated sensory spaces catered towards neuro-diverse teenagers and adults

Culture

- The book collections are very white-centric and limited in the range of stories and perspectives
- Lack of inclusion for Deaf/deaf, hard of hearing and Auslan users
- The 'blatant use of political activism by Library management pushed in customer's faces'
- Library management is 'using weaponised words such as "inclusive" but showing they are appealing to minority activists and holding obvious bias'.
- Youth would feel more included in the library delivered activities or "youth time" that were more targeted to their age group.
- Staff can sometimes lack recognition and understanding of neuro-diverse behaviours including stimming and being non-verbal.

External factors

- Experience with unpredictable people who are accessing the library or are hanging around the library made people feel unsafe.

Delivery of the current service

Participants were invited to comment on what inspires them to use the libraries of Wollongong City Council. The results reflected varying comments on the delivery of physical resources by the libraries, services provided to the community and the culture created within the library spaces. The data was tagged with common themes and words, then reported as a word map to identify the most common responses as the larger text.



The most favoured experiences that people had when interacting with the library were around the range of books available, reading, children's activities, library programs and sense of community.

An appreciation for the delivery of Customer Service was consistently mentioned by users of all libraries in the Local Government Area. The staff were friendly, welcoming and made people feel valued when accessing the library.

Many people complimented the variety of resources that the library offers, mentioning different books, DVDs, CDs, news, family history and online services like Kanopy. They commended there was so much on offer at the libraries and could use the libraries in a range of ways.

The consensus of what inspired the youth group to visit the library was the focussed on the social offerings. They visit the library because of the dedicated weekly youth time at the library, that was supported by a youth worker who hosted activities and conversations. It was about the social interactions they shared with other attendees where they could talk about common interests and their week. The library was viewed as more of a relaxing space rather than a place to borrow resources. The staff and delivery of customer service was very meaningful to the group.

Ideas for the future

The community were also invited to provide suggestions on what would enhance their experience in their elected library of choice. Suggestions could be themed against resources of the library, service delivery and creating and maintaining a community identity through the library's actions.



Resources

- Increasing book numbers, literary material, DVDs and documentaries, magazines, online resources
- Improve speed of obtaining new release books and notify library users
- Access to academic journals
- Recycling facilities at libraries
- Grow desktop numbers and internet access
- Host dedicated craft, puzzles or games areas

Service

There was a consistent reference to increasing events and programs that target a range of ages. Many people wished for more book clubs and games nights, others wished for diverse workshops, craft events and lectures. Some groups that identified they felt excluded from the current offerings were new mothers, young adults and middle-aged people. They wanted to have programs and activities that would bring like-minded people together and would be at suitable times for people to engage with the library, including after hours and mornings.

Some other suggestions that would enhance people's experience with Wollongong City Libraries' service included:

- Regular visit from the 'therapy dog'
- Games and puzzles within the library
- Increase Author talks, book launches and guest speakers
- Community-wide activities/events including in the school holidays
- Designated creative space

- Teaching workshops
- Café
- Designated quiet spaces or quiet times
- Meeting spaces and Individual study spaces
- Designated parking areas for library users
- Faster rotation of children's activities between libraries
- Provide a toy library
- Extended library hours to be 7 days a week
- Music incorporated in the space, in events and host music workshops
- High quality bilingual books
- Allow library cards to be electronically accessible
- Creative opportunities using digital media
- Themed events surrounding nationally recognised days including Halloween

Younger participants within the engagement commented consistently on the physical space of the library being why they accessed the service. The suggestions they offered were less about resources, but more about the space the library provided. Suggestions that would enhance their experience in the library were comfortable lounge-like seating, beanbags, nooks and cornered-off sections where they could feel somewhat separated from other library users. They liked the use of natural light and plants to create a serene space.

Community

- Flags on the wall including Pride flag, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.
- Learning events and engagement with Aboriginal cultural providers.
- Provide cross-age events and learning eg. Children playing with seniors.
- Engage the LGBTQIA+, non-English speaking background, culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Less political activism.
- Host events where children connect face to face.
- Inclusion of the disability community in events like Auslan story time and in resources including children's books.
- Consider neuro-diverse people, including young people in library spaces, for example consider sensory aids, and in library program schedules.
- Increase consultation with young people about what programs the library hosts

Next steps

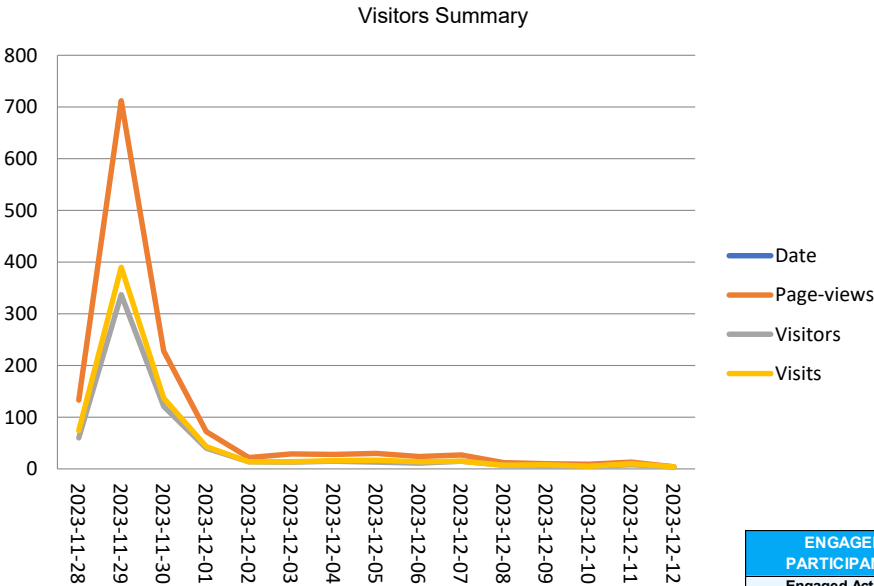
Based on suggestions received through the community engagement and consultation, the project working group will consider the data and may amend the Draft Library Strategy 2024-2028.

The final draft will then be submitted for the Councillors to endorse and is expected to occur in mid-October. The final Library Strategy 2024-2028 will then go on exhibition for 28 days.

Discover, Learn and Connect Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2024-2028

Community Engagement – Project Report 28 November to 12 December

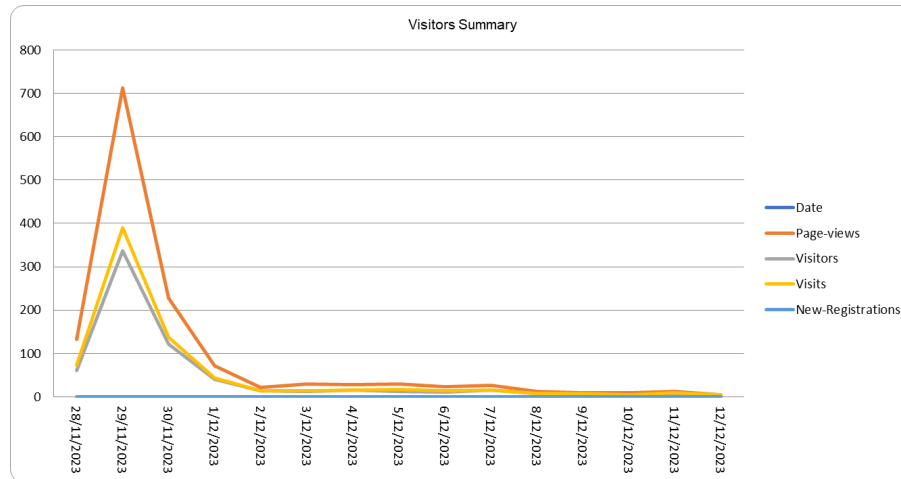
Summary



| Project Highlights | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Total Visits | 768 |
| New Registrations | 0 |
| Video views | 0 |
| Photo Views | 0 |
| Document Downloads | 266 |

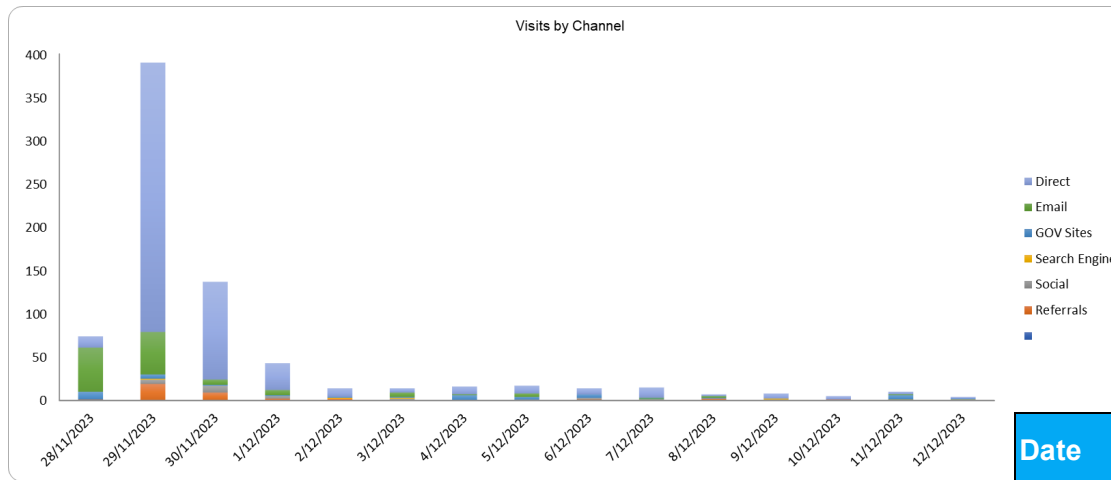
| ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS | 14 | | | INFORMED PARTICIPANTS | 233 | AWARE PARTICIPANTS | 610 |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Engaged Actions Performed | Registered | Unverified | Anonymous | Informed Actions Performed | Participants | Aware Actions Performed | Participants |
| Contributed on Forums | 0 | 0 | 0 | Viewed a video | 0 | Visited at least one Page | 610 |
| Participated in Surveys | 8 | 6 | 0 | Viewed a photo | 0 | | |
| Contributed to Newsfeeds | 0 | 0 | 0 | Downloaded a document | 210 | | |
| Participated in Quick Polls | 0 | 0 | 0 | Visited the Key Dates page | 2 | | |
| Posted on Guestbooks | 0 | 0 | 0 | Visited an FAQ list Page | 0 | | |
| Contributed to Stories | 0 | 0 | 0 | Visited Instagram Page | 0 | | |
| Asked Questions | 0 | 0 | 0 | Visited Multiple Project Pages | 190 | | |
| Placed Pins on Places | 0 | 0 | 0 | Contributed to a tool (engaged) | 14 | | |
| Contributed to Ideas | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |

Visitors Summary



| Date | Page-views | Visitors | Visits | New-Registrations |
|------------|------------|----------|--------|-------------------|
| 28/11/2023 | 133 | 60 | 74 | 0 |
| 29/11/2023 | 712 | 337 | 390 | 0 |
| 30/11/2023 | 228 | 121 | 137 | 0 |
| 1/12/2023 | 72 | 40 | 43 | 0 |
| 2/12/2023 | 22 | 14 | 14 | 0 |
| 3/12/2023 | 29 | 13 | 14 | 0 |
| 4/12/2023 | 28 | 15 | 16 | 0 |
| 5/12/2023 | 30 | 13 | 17 | 0 |
| 6/12/2023 | 24 | 11 | 14 | 0 |
| 7/12/2023 | 27 | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| 8/12/2023 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| 9/12/2023 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 0 |
| 10/12/2023 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| 11/12/2023 | 13 | 8 | 10 | 0 |
| 12/12/2023 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 |

Traffic Sources Summary



| Date | Direct | Email | GOV Sites | Search Engine | Social | Referrals |
|------------|--------|-------|-----------|---------------|--------|-----------|
| 28/11/2023 | 13 | 51 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 29/11/2023 | 311 | 49 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 19 |
| 30/11/2023 | 113 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 9 |
| 1/12/2023 | 31 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| 2/12/2023 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 3/12/2023 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 4/12/2023 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5/12/2023 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 6/12/2023 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| 7/12/2023 | 12 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 8/12/2023 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 9/12/2023 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 10/12/2023 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 11/12/2023 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 12/12/2023 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 40 | 0 |

Survey Summary

