



## Geelong Regional Library Corporation releases draft 2023/24 budget

**Friday 12 May 2023**

The Geelong Regional Library Corporation (GRLC) has released their draft 2023-24 budget for public comment and submissions after the special board meeting held on Thursday 11 May 2023. [The draft budget is available to view on the GRLC website.](#)

The board was expected to sign off on the Geelong Regional Library Corporation 2023-2024 draft budget at the board meeting held on Thursday 27 April 2023. However, the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) draft budget, released Wednesday 26 April 2023, proposed a reduction in their contribution to the Geelong Regional Library Corporation.

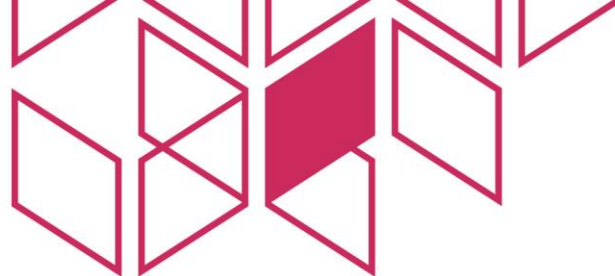
Geelong Regional Library Corporation CEO Vanessa Schernickau said “As part of discussions with all five member councils, we asked for a 2% increase for the 2023/24 budget. Our request is below CPI and just in line with the 2% staff remuneration increase as per our Enterprise Agreement, which all other funding councils agreed to.”

While the [CoGG draft budget](#) does include a 2% increase, it does not include vital funds to operate two new Geelong libraries, Boronggook Drysdale Library (opened April 2023) and Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library (opening 2024), leaving a gap in GRLC funding of \$1.118 million in 2023-24. This does not apply to funding from other member councils.

As a result, GRLC has been required to suggest operational changes to service levels across CoGG libraries to save the equivalent of \$1.118m in 2023-2024. The City of Greater Geelong has confirmed the intention that this proposed reduction was not specifically related to the running of Boronggook Drysdale and Biyal-a Armstrong Creek libraries.

Vanessa said “The GRLC draft budget in response to this shortfall includes the proposed closure of three libraries: Barwon Heads, Geelong West and Highton libraries and the transition of Chilwell Library to an unstaffed model. Other impacts include Corio and Boronggook Drysdale libraries closing on Sundays, and Belmont, Boronggook Drysdale, Corio, Lara, Leopold, Ocean Grove and Waurin Ponds libraries closing earlier on Saturdays, along with a reduction in services at Kim Barne Thaliyu (Geelong Heritage Centre). These proposed changes would take effect from the coming financial year.”

“The last thing we want to do is close libraries and reduce services to the communities that we serve, or to impact our staff. But with the COGG draft budget as it stands we have been left with no choice. A funding shortfall of this size cannot be found by reducing programs or events, or small modifications to our operating models.”



“Given that the City of Greater Geelong is by far our biggest funder, all of our Geelong libraries and communities will be impacted as a result of these changes, not just those that would close. Libraries situated in our other member Council areas will not be impacted.”

“Libraries are a fundamental part of healthy communities. During these tough economic times with so many local residents feeling the pinch we’re seeing people flock to the library, whether for free WiFi to look for jobs or do homework, or a warm place to be with young children while and attend our free Baby Time or Story Time sessions—more than 29,000 people attended vital early years literacy programs last financial year. Libraries are one of the last free, safe, warm, inclusive spaces that exist in modern society.”

“Almost a million people walked through the doors of our libraries last financial year, and in the first fortnight alone at the new Borongook Drysdale Library we welcomed more than 10,000 people.”

“People experiencing homelessness regularly find refuge in our libraries, those who are socially isolated can connect with others. We provide tech support from job seeking to avoiding cyber scams; deliver books and more to those who can’t leave their house due to illness or disability.”

“We are grateful for the funding from our member councils to run invaluable library services on their behalf.”

“We will be making a submission to City of Greater Geelong in response to their draft budget to outline the critical importance of adequately funded library services to healthy communities.”

Geelong Regional Library Corporation is a key employer in the G21 region, employing more than 200 people. GRLC continues to work closely with all staff, and the Australian Services Union on the potential changes. GRLC staff are a priority as we deal with these budget uncertainties. There will be no redundancies for permanent staff in the upcoming financial year (23/24) but there will be other solutions we need to apply to continue to operate on reduced budgets e.g. assess all current and future vacancies during FY 23/24 as to whether replacement or recruitment is required.

The draft budget is [available on the GRLC website](#), and public submissions are open until Friday 9 June 2023.

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