



Library Plan

2025-29

GEELONG
REGIONAL
LIBRARIES



Acknowledgement of Country



The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges Wadawurrung Peoples and Eastern Maar Peoples as Traditional Owners of the distinct lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.

As the contemporary keepers of knowledge and story, we believe in shaping hearts and minds through literature and stories, amplifying voices and perspectives that promote empathy and understanding. Our heart of reconciliation is to journey together, guided by curiosity, hope, and respect, as we learn from First Nations people and truthfully acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonisation. Through truth-telling and cultural awareness and honouring First Nations perspectives, sensitivities and knowledge, we strive for reconciliation, nurturing safer spaces and facilitating collective growth as we take this journey together.

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Welcome

We are pleased to present our Library Plan 2025-29 – a plan shaped by our communities and grounded in our commitment to respond to a rapidly changing world.

Our purpose has never been more clear: to provide knowledge and connection for people and communities. Public libraries are unique spaces – vibrant, inclusive hubs of knowledge, creativity, and belonging – free and open to everyone, at every age and stage of life.

The role of libraries has never been more vital, or more complex. Deeply woven into everyday community life, our libraries and outreach services must adapt nimbly to changing needs. This responsiveness was powerfully evident during COVID-19, when libraries became a vital link to essential services and trusted information, reshaping perceptions of what a library can be. The pandemic also accelerated profound social shifts in how we live and connect, and the pace of change has only increased.

The ripple effects of global forces – from world conflicts and political extremism to the rise of disinformation – are being felt at a local level. Other factors, such as climate change, cost-of-living pressures, and rapid technological advancement, are influencing the ways our communities use and rely on us. Libraries continue to appear at the frontline, helping communities navigate the ongoing complexity and uncertainty of our times.

The library is increasingly seen as both a community hub and a social support network – especially critical considering parts of our region among the most disadvantaged in the country, and that loneliness and social isolation are on the rise nationally.

Our plan is framed around “responding to a rapidly changing world” – a call to action that is both rousing and challenging. We face rapid population growth, shifting demographics, and rising expectations, all within a constrained financial environment. Yet these pressures also open opportunities: to innovate, to forge new partnerships, and to make the most of our resources to deliver maximum value to the community. Changes to our corporate governance model, due during the life of this plan, will create opportunities to attract diverse partnerships while also sharpening how we define, communicate, and advocate for the unique benefits we provide to the community. As we continue to evolve, it’s important we remain grounded in the legacy that has enriched the lives of generations of library-goers.

As we finalise our first Reconciliation Action Plan, we will continue to prioritise learning about and sharing First Nations stories, culture, and language. We walk alongside and support Traditional Owners and all First Nations Peoples as allies and partners.

Our customer feedback is clear: our people make all the difference. Empowering our people to be their best will remain a key focus, as we invest in our skilled staff, leadership teams, and customer service champions.

We are excited about a future where ideas and people meet – where we work across the region, often in partnership, to build knowledgeable and connected communities.

Cr Liz Pattison
Councillor, Surf Coast Shire
Chair, Geelong Regional Library Corporation Board

Vanessa Schernickau
Chief Executive Officer





Context

“I think libraries are kind of already a big, exciting idea, and if they were introduced now, people would think it’s insane”

- Community member



WHERE DO LIBRARIES FIT IN OUR CHANGING WORLD?

The digital landscape

As more government, health and financial services move online, libraries are increasingly relied on to help people navigate complex digital systems. Our staff regularly support people with setting up emails, navigating MyGov, booking medical appointments and spotting online scams.

The rising influence of new technology, particularly artificial intelligence, requires new skills from library staff to support customers in using, understanding and applying a critical lens to emerging technology.

Libraries play a vital role in providing access, skills and resources to uplift digital capability of people who experience economic, geographic, educational and social barriers to the online world. At the same time, we need to embrace new technology and keep pace with the growing digital expectations of our customers, especially younger, digital natives.

A new corporate governance model

We are operating within a constrained financial environment at a time when our community is calling for expanded and more diverse library services.

The transition to a not-for-profit model under the Corporations Act 2001 opens up new funding and partnership opportunities but also brings new complexities.

We seek partners who share our values and vision for strong, connected communities. At the same time, we must sharpen our value proposition and clearly communicate the impact we deliver, especially in a landscape where many learning, cultural, and community organisations are competing for limited funding.

Disinformation and extremism

In a world of fake news, deep fakes and increasingly polarised views, libraries are safe and trusted institutions that offer access to reliable, balanced information. But that role isn't without risks. Libraries are increasingly dealing with pressure over programs, collections and inclusive events, and staff are on the frontline of those conversations. Helping communities build media literacy, engage respectfully, and think critically will be an ongoing role for us.

Environmental and economic change

In a time of rising living costs and more frequent extreme weather events, libraries are playing an increasingly important role in supporting community resilience. Libraries provide practical and reliable support, with free access to essentials like Wi-Fi, printing, study space, heating, and cooling, and a safe, welcoming place to be.

HOW DO OUR LIBRARIES FIT WITHIN OUR GROWING REGION?

Servicing our growing population

Population growth, economic change and the shifting demographics of our region will require our library services and spaces to adapt to new patterns of living and working.

In mid-2025, the City of Greater Geelong had the highest rate of regional migration in Australia, and the broader Geelong region is one of the fastest growing in Victoria

Our region's enviable coastal and country lifestyle, diverse industries and employment opportunities, high-quality schools and easy access to both Geelong CBD and Melbourne, will continue to attract new residents, with our population expected to grow from 366,000 people to more than half a million by 2050.

We're also becoming younger, which is reversing the trend typically seen in the regions. The median age in our region is now 40 years compared with 46 years in 2016.

Yet despite the growth in our population, some things remain the same.

Our region reflects the widening socioeconomic divide seen across Australia. Geelong and the Colac area are home to some of the most disadvantaged suburbs in Australia, yet suburbs along the Surf Coast and Bellarine are among the most advantaged.

In the City of Greater Geelong, rates of people experiencing loneliness are slightly higher than the Victorian average, at 25 per cent compared to 23 per cent, and much higher for people with disability (61 per cent) and young people (60 per cent).

Adapting to our changing economy

Our region's traditional manufacturing and construction industries continue to be the main drivers of our economy, but our region is also an incubator for emerging sectors, including scientific research, Information and Community Technology and creative industries.

Professionals are the largest cohort of workers, making up 22 per cent of the workforce.

Surf Coast Shire is one of four locations in Australia with the highest proportion of artists.

With improved digital connectivity, the number of home-based businesses in the knowledge economy is growing.

Our libraries help strengthen local economies by supporting job seekers, fostering creative start-ups, encouraging collaboration, and providing access to digital technology.

Honouring First Nations People

Sitting within the lands of the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar people, our region is grounded in the rich cultural history of Traditional Owners.

Since 2016, our region's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population increased by 104.1 per cent to more than 4,500 people. Geelong now has the highest proportion of First Nations peoples in Victoria.

Our libraries have a unique and important role to play in preserving and celebrating the stories of First Nations peoples and advancing truth telling about our past.

We are developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan that will honour First Nations perspectives and experiences. We will continue to walk with Traditional Owners and community on the journey towards Reconciliation.

Aligning with our regional & state partners

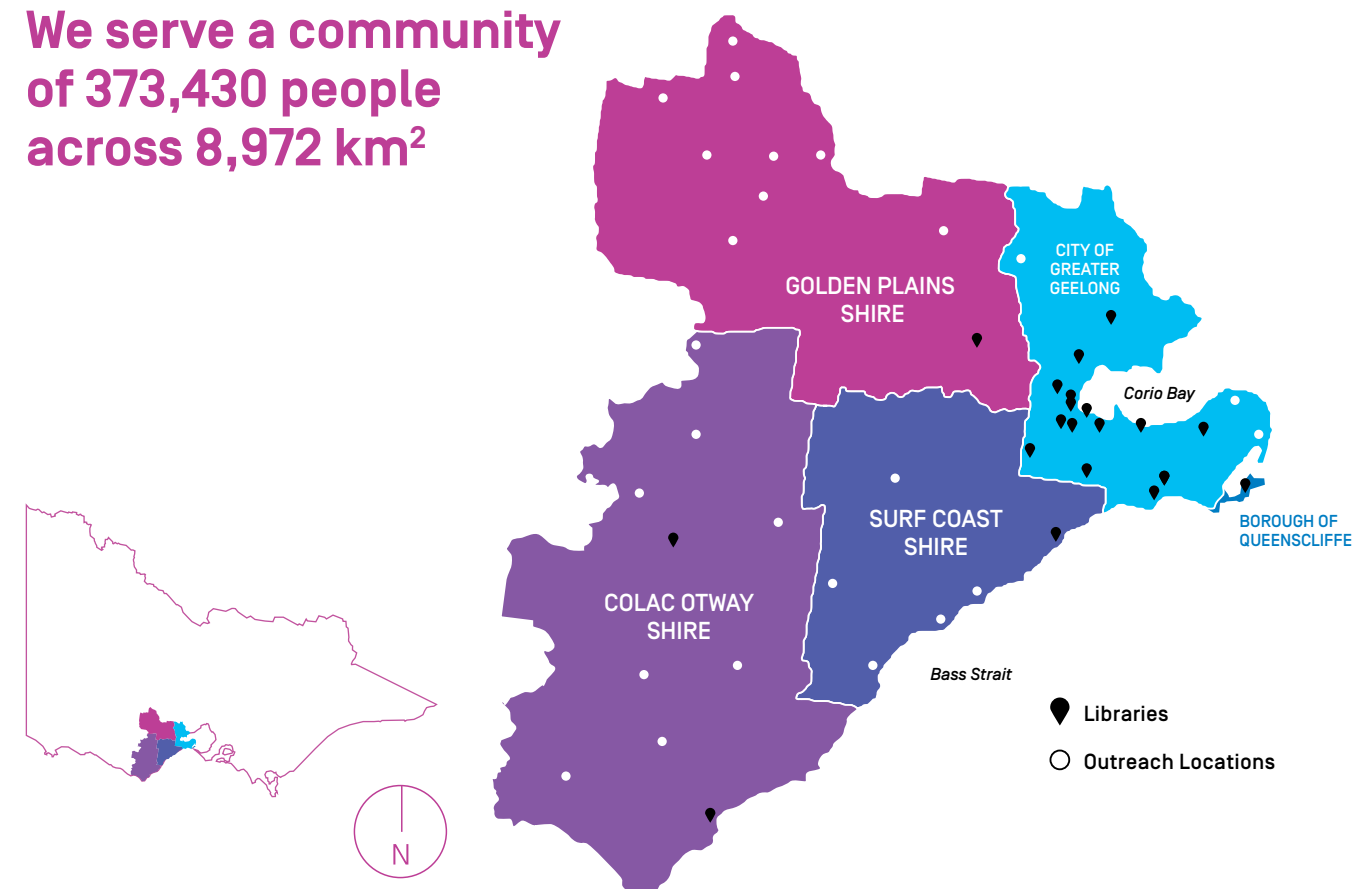
Our Library Plan integrates with plans from our regional and state partners.

Through the provision of services that are highly valued by our communities, and deeply connected to community life, we play a vital role in bringing the vision and objectives of our partners to life.

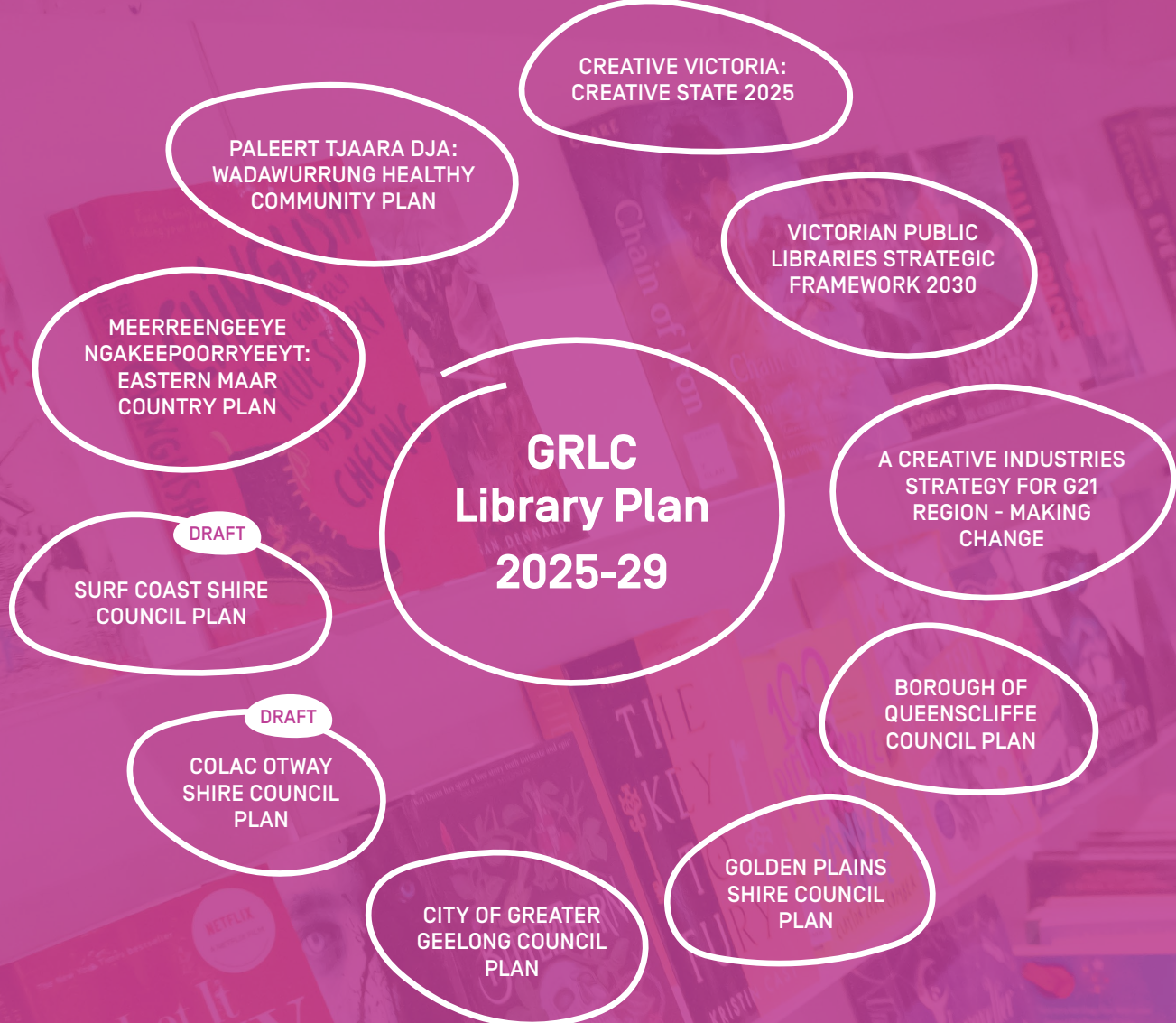
Examples of where our libraries can play a role include:

- / Enhancing community health and wellbeing and inclusive, connected communities
- / Supporting and celebrating innovation and our creative industries
- / Celebrating our heritage and culture
- / Learning from and honouring First Nations perspectives on the journey towards Reconciliation
- / Supporting liveable, sustainable and resilient communities
- / Supporting prosperous local economies
- / Contributing to the visitor experience in our region.

We serve a community of 373,430 people across 8,972 km²



Our plan integrates with
the plans of our state
and regional partners



Developing this Library Plan

This plan has been developed over a nine-month period in collaboration with our board, people, community and our stakeholders.

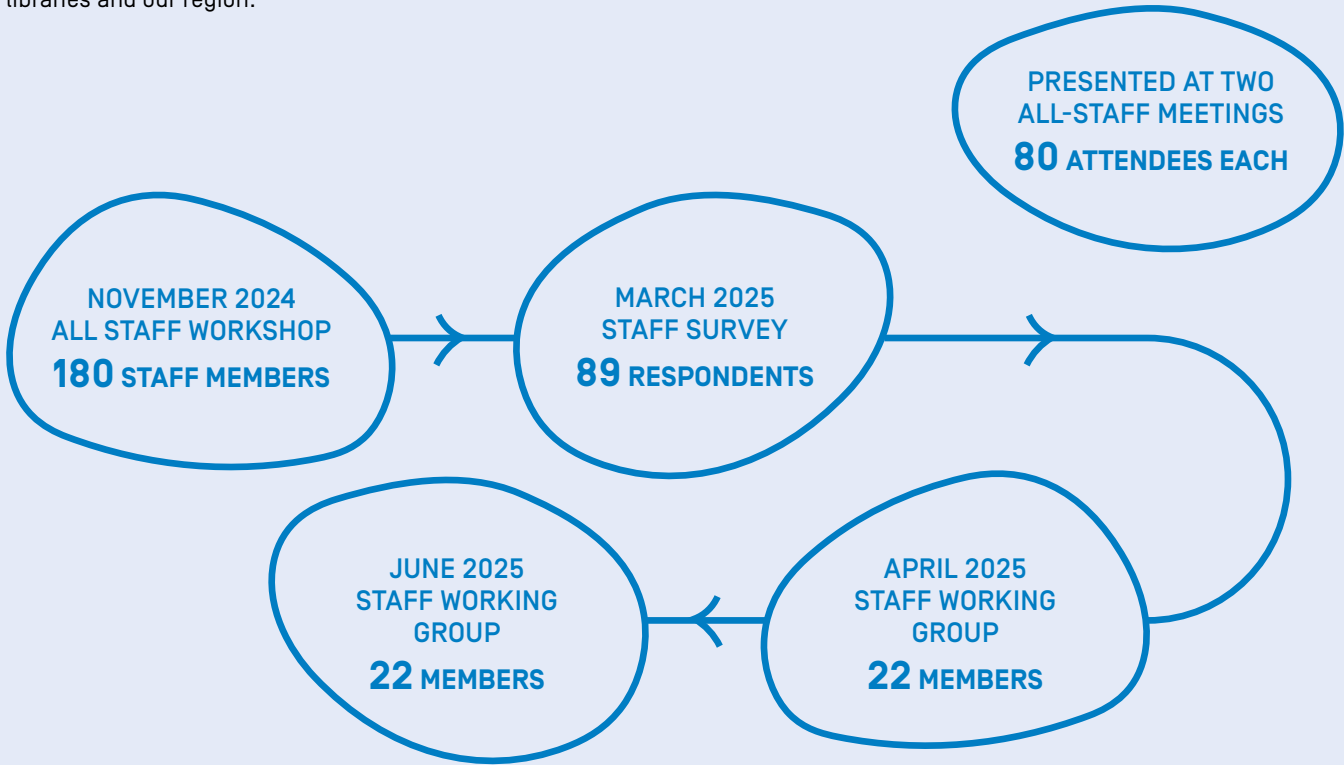
Shaped through conversations, workshops and shared reflections, this plan embodies the insights and vision of those who are connected to the everyday life of our libraries and our region.

OUR PEOPLE

The development of this plan began in late-2024, when all library staff came together for an annual staff day to reflect on their experiences and explore emerging issues and trends.

Staff were then invited to contribute further through a survey and by joining a working group that met across two sessions to examine and refine the key themes and priorities of the evolving Library Plan in more detail.

Throughout the process, all staff online meetings and briefings in libraries kept all staff informed and engaged with the plan's progress. Key insights from our people are summarised at the back of this plan.



OUR COMMUNITY

A community survey was open to everyone, including non-library users and those living outside the Geelong region. We wanted to understand not only what people value about our services, but also what barriers might prevent them from using their local library.

Featuring ten key questions, the survey explored what people value and find unique about their library. It encouraged participants to reflect on the future and consider how libraries might do things differently and better meet the changing needs of the community. To inspire imaginative thinking, respondents were also asked to share one "big, exciting idea" for the future of libraries - something bold that might seem out of reach today, but would be amazing if it became a reality.

The survey was provided in a variety of accessible formats and was promoted widely throughout the greater Geelong region. Key findings from our survey are provided at the back of this plan.



OUR COUNCIL PARTNERS

As key partners who understand the unique current and future needs of our community, our five member councils have played an important role in shaping this plan. Similarly, as an important provider of services that are highly valued by our community, we are acutely aware of the role we play in helping our member councils achieve their objectives.

Accordingly, we met with member council representatives during the development of this plan to ensure strong alignment between library services and local priorities.





Our Purpose

Knowledge and connection for people and communities

WHERE PEOPLE AND IDEAS MEET

At Geelong Regional Libraries, we provide access to knowledge and opportunities for connection that can transform lives and strengthen communities across our region.

Whether through books, technology, programs, or conversation, our network of libraries and online resources bring people together around shared interests, diverse perspectives, and new opportunities to grow.

It might be learning a new language, developing a creative skill, gaining confidence with technology, or discovering a story that opens up new perspectives and ignites imagination.

By offering free, universal access to lifelong learning, reading and discovery, and social spaces, we help people connect to themselves, to the world around them, and to our community.

In doing so, we live our purpose – to create knowledge and connection for people and communities.



Our Priorities

We will deliver our plan
over the next five years
by focusing on four key
priorities

Each priority includes specific aspirations and actions that will guide our work across the region to empower people and communities with knowledge and connection.

To create knowledge and connection
for people and communities

Priority 1

ENCOURAGING
PERSONAL CURIOSITY

We will ensure our libraries continue to be places where people can safely and truthfully learn not only about the world, but themselves, leading to a more meaningful existence for everyone in our region.

ASPIRATIONS

FACILITATING LIFE-LONG LEARNING
– LITERACY, CREATIVITY, HERITAGE

EMPOWERING SAFETY AND
RESPONSIBILITY ONLINE

HELPING INDIVIDUALS NAVIGATE
MIS- AND DIS-INFORMATION

Priority 2

EVOLVING CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCES

We will augment our core programs, collections and services to meet evolving community needs in a digital age. We will support all our customers to participate meaningfully in modern life, both professionally and personally, so that they leave their library having their expectations exceeded and horizons expanded.

ASPIRATIONS

UPLIFTING DIGITAL ACCESS
AND CAPABILITY

INNOVATING OUR SERVICE
EXPERIENCES AND QUALITY

ENABLING PARTICIPATION AND
PRODUCTIVITY – WORK, STUDY,
COLLABORATE

Priority 3

ENHANCING COMMUNITY
WELLBEING

Our libraries will continue to evolve as safe, welcoming and accessible public places where people from all walks of life connect with knowledge, ideas, and each other. In doing so, we contribute to the health and wellbeing of both local and wider communities.

ASPIRATIONS

FOSTERING CONNECTION
AND BELONGING

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE
AND DIVERSITY

CREATING PLACES AND SPACES
THAT PEOPLE VALUE

SUPPORTING ADOPTION OF
HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES

Priority 4

EMBRACING
OUR FUTURE

Our people will feel happy, supported, safe, and proud to work for an organisation that has successfully adopted a new not-for-profit governance model, enhanced its financial security and built strategic partnerships connected with likeminded organisations.

ASPIRATIONS

ADOPTING A NEW
GOVERNANCE MODEL

STRENGTHENING OUR
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

STRATEGICALLY PARTNERING
FOR IMPROVED SERVICES

EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE
TO BE THEIR BEST



ASPIRATION 1

**FACILITATING LIFE-LONG LEARNING –
LITERACY, CREATIVITY, HERITAGE**

We will continue to deliver on our core role of providing free access to books, resources and programs that support learning, creativity and celebrate our region's history. The opportunities we offer will be available for everyone and widely known and accessed across our community.

What we will achieve by 2029

Supporting early literacy will continue to be a key part of our work, with tens of thousands of children each year participating in activities that build a strong foundation for a lifelong love of stories. We will continue to provide opportunities for literacy and learning for young people and adults, through workshops, talks, and creative and cultural experiences.

We will continue to play an important role who may face barriers in accessing everyday services, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and vulnerable communities.

Our spaces are not just for reading – they're places where creativity comes alive. To do this we will continue to reimagine our libraries as makers' spaces that provide opportunities for our creative community to flourish, through creative offerings using the latest technology and the different experiences and access points it offers.

Our heritage collection will continue to provide a vibrant link to the region's recent and ancient history, celebrating our First People and others who shaped the life and culture of our region.

**“It diversifies the
information and stories
I have access to which
enables me to continue
learning, opening my
mind and enriching
my life.”**

- Community member



Priority 1

**Encouraging
Personal Curiosity**

ASPIRATION 2

EMPOWERING SAFETY & RESPONSIBILITY ONLINE

As part of supporting a digitally literate community, we will help our customers navigate the online world safely by raising awareness of both risks and strategies to protect against them. We will support our community to behave safely and responsibly online.

What we will achieve by 2029

We give people the practical skills to participate safely and responsibly in the online world, helping our customers protect their personal information and identify scams and other illegal activity online.

Similarly, we will support our customers to use digital spaces responsibly and respectfully.

As our young customers become increasingly digitally competent from an early age, we will provide appropriate programs to ensure they have the tools to make informed, safe choices as they explore online spaces. As they must learn to read, so must they learn the power that comes with the written word and how that power can cause both benefits or harms when serving the truth or mistruths respectively. Critical thinking is a key life skill and has never been more important than in this digital age.

We will continue to invest in our staff and call on experts to provide the best digital literacy advice to our customers, as well as ensuring our digital infrastructure is regularly updated to support a safe and secure online experience.

“Digital education, cyber security, and privacy and misinformation sessions for kids would also be amazing!”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 3

HELPING INDIVIDUALS NAVIGATE MIS- & DIS-INFORMATION

We will ensure our community is able to access accurate, reliable and trusted sources of information. We will help our community build the media literacy skills they need to confidently navigate an increasingly complex media landscape, as fake news and extreme opinions become more widespread.

What we will achieve by 2029

We are a source of truth for our users, supporting them to discern fact from fiction. We will continue to play a powerful role in providing access to reliable resources and information, complemented by our know-how and expertise.

Our events will spark conversations and show how robust, respectful debates can be constructive and help to advance society, when competing views are heard in an environment where the shared aim of debaters is a common good founded on truth and respect.

Through our continued commitment to digital literacy and collaboration with industry experts, we help our community develop the skills to recognise misinformation and make informed decisions about the content they consume and share.

“[The libraries can play a role in] ensuring ‘fake news’ is counteracted. Libraries contain truth.”

- Community member

OUR ACTION PLAN FOR PRIORITY 1

Adapt our programs, collections and services to the changing world so that we are relevant, safe and accessible to more people who need our services in times of increased costs and social isolation, for example:

- / Supporting literacy development, through all ages and stages of life
- / Enabling creativity
- / Connecting to heritage stories
- / Welcoming First Nations people and celebrating Traditional Owners' Heritage

Deliver a suite of programs that support early years language and literacy; foster reading confidence in school-aged children; build digital and creative skills in youth and adults; and explore local and First Nations history through storytelling and arts-based experiences.

Focus our programs from early childhood through to older adults to build critical thinking skills, health and wellbeing, and promote safe and responsible online behaviour.

Continually improve and enhance our creative technology programs, collections and services, so that we remain on the cutting edge, for example:

- / Borrowable technology (coding kits, video gear)
- / Immersive local history (VR/AR)
- / Digitisation of heritage collection

Design events to spark conversations and broaden horizons about current and emerging social issues / Advance regional knowledge in and constructive debate around complex challenges such as reconciliation, climate change, and social justice issues.

- ✓ ASPIRATION 1 / Facilitating life-long learning – literacy, creativity, heritage
- ✓ ASPIRATION 2 / Empowering safety & responsibility online
- ✓ ASPIRATION 3 / Helping individuals navigate mis- & dis-information



Priority 2

Evolving Customer Experiences

ASPIRATION 4

UPLIFTING DIGITAL ACCESS & CAPABILITY

We will continue our vital role in providing access and skills to digital technology for people who experience economic, geographic, educational and social barriers to the online world. At the same time, we will embrace new technology and keep pace with the growing digital expectations of our customers, especially younger, digital-savvy ones.

What we will achieve by 2029

As technology continues to evolve and more everyday services move online, we continue to support digital access and help everyone to thrive in a digital world.

For those who do not have ready access to computers, smart phones and other technology, we will continue to offer free access to computers, Wi-Fi and training programs that build confidence and literacy, especially for the most vulnerable members of our community.

At the same time, we will embrace new and emerging technologies and keep pace with the evolving digital expectations of our customers so that our libraries are vibrant, future-focused spaces where people of all ages can explore and experiment with the tools shaping tomorrow.

As part of supporting a digitally literate community, we will empower our customers to engage with technologies like artificial intelligence, while also developing the knowledge and confidence to understand potential risks.

“I can even get help with my phone & I look forward to learning how to sell & buy online.”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 5

INNOVATING OUR SERVICE EXPERIENCES & QUALITY

We continually innovate to improve the relevance and quality of our service. We want our customers to leave our libraries feeling like they not only got what they came for, but had a great overall experience.

What we will achieve by 2029

The community views our libraries as providing a multitude of experiences and opportunities across all hours of the day. While maintaining their traditional offering, customers can use our libraries as part of their flexible approaches to work and personal development.

Not only do people use different spaces in libraries for various work types and self-reflection, they do it with the latest technology available at their fingertips, helping improve efficiency and connection with the wider world in a digitally secure environment.

Customers also have access to services outside the library walls, not just via our digital offering but through our presence in the community through outreach services and our strengthened relationships with other service providers in the region.

Customers leave feeling supported and better connected than when they engaged with the library, with expectations exceeded and a better sense of what's possible for them.

"I have the convenience of ordering my books online and then being emailed when they are available."

- Library staff member

ASPIRATION 6

ENABLING PARTICIPATION & PRODUCTIVITY – STUDY, WORK, COLLABORATE

We provide the tools and spaces that support meaningful participation in modern life. At the library, our customers can apply for a job, access their My Gov account or meet people to collaborate. We will support the changing patterns of life and work, recognising people use our libraries for hybrid work, or for entrepreneurial and creative practice.

What we will achieve by 2029

Our libraries open opportunities for everyone to take part in the social and economic life of our community, whether that's completing everyday tasks, like online banking, or pursuing something life-changing, like applying for a job.

Through our digital services, support programs, personalised assistance, and fit-for-purpose physical spaces, we will continue to adapt to meet the needs of our community.

Our libraries will remain practical and reliable places that help people manage everyday tasks, access essential services, and find the resources and tools they need in daily life.

"The demographics of our communities are changing, and there are a lot more people needing to work remotely and may require free Wi-Fi, and an area that is conducive to them concentrating on their work and study."

- Library staff member

OUR ACTION PLAN FOR PRIORITY 2

Improve the accessibility and experience of our digital services



Launch a new website to support better digital engagement



Help customers build digital literacy and navigate the online world, beyond our own digital services



Investigate the use of generative AI to connect customers with high quality information



Develop a suite of programs to assist community in understanding and use of AI



Increase "out-of-hours" access to library spaces



Support customers' hybrid and entrepreneurial work practices through the provision of spaces, facilities and specialist tools and expertise



Provide job and career development tools, resources and programs



Explore co-location and/or complementary service opportunities with our partners, so that customers have access to a broader range of services



Deliver our outreach service review findings to innovate our library service offerings to maximise access and engagement for harder to reach communities



Ensure we are providing quality customer experiences in service areas through targeted feedback, service design and continuous improvement methodologies



ASPIRATION 4 / Uplifting digital access & capability



ASPIRATION 5 / Innovating our service experiences & quality



ASPIRATION 6 / Enabling participation & productivity – study, work, collaborate



Priority 3

Enhancing
Community Wellbeing

ASPIRATION 7

FOSTERING CONNECTION & BELONGING

Our libraries are safe, welcoming and accessible public places where people connect with knowledge, ideas, and each other. We will focus on improving accessibility for all, understanding how we can better support vulnerable and underrepresented communities. We will strengthen our role as a social anchor in an increasingly disconnected world.

What we will achieve by 2029

We will continue to be part of the community, offering spaces and experiences that help people feel that they are part of it, too.

We will reach out to diverse sections of our community to connect with them, and through our programs, connect them with each other and the world around them. Our programs, from our ever-popular storytime and knitting clubs to new ones developed over the coming years, will bring people together from all walks of life to share in the joy of making new friends and finding like-minded people.

Our spaces will provide a place for anyone in our community to just 'be', where a friendly greeting from a staff member or a familiar face can ease loneliness and spark connection.

We'll work to understand the barriers that might face people who don't use our libraries, and respond with programs, spaces and services that meet their needs.

"It is the heart of our village life."

- Community member

ASPIRATION 8

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE & DIVERSITY

Our collection, resources and programs will evolve so that they continue to represent the cultures, ages, backgrounds, abilities, genders and identities that make up our region. This includes celebrating First Peoples' stories, honouring our heritage, and embracing the voices of new and emerging communities.

What we will achieve by 2029

We are committed to providing safe and inclusive spaces that welcome everyone.

Our libraries reflect the rich diversity of our community, and our collection, activities and events contribute to making everyone feel seen, valued and included.

Our spaces will have improved accessibility, designed to make it easier for people of all abilities and with different sensory needs to spend time at the library and access our services.

We will listen to and understand our community and ensure everyone sees themselves reflected in our stories and experiences.

"I love coming to the Library. I have a disability which means I can't open heavy doors...I am able to access the Belmont and Highton libraries easily and I am grateful for this."

- Community member

ASPIRATION 9

CREATING PLACES & SPACES THAT PEOPLE VALUE

Our libraries are destinations. They contribute to the economic and social life of neighbourhoods, activating areas by attracting foot traffic and business to local cafes and shops. Our dynamic programming and thoughtfully designed spaces will mean our libraries continue to offer our customers and visitors a positive experience.

What we will achieve by 2029

Our libraries are part of our neighbourhoods. We provide places where people don't just 'drop in' to borrow a book, but stay to explore the library and the spaces around it.

Our world-class architecture at the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre and Biyal-a, as well as our comfortable spaces and diverse range of events and programs at other locations, make visiting the library an experience that locals and visitors from outside our region can plan their day around.

Libraries activate public spaces and bring energy and contribute to the economic and social vibrancy of their surroundings.

We will continue to make our libraries places people want to spend time, through dynamic programming and thoughtfully designed spaces for people to play, meet, create and relax.

“The innovative, spectacular design of some of the libraries in and around Geelong is just simply inspiring to be inside and even just drive past.”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 10

SUPPORTING ADOPTION OF HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Our libraries are places in which best-practice sustainability approaches and ideas germinate and grow. Through our own approach to sustainability, we provide examples to those who use our services of sustainability practices that might work for them.

What we will achieve by 2029

We will be an information hub for customers looking to live more sustainably, making resources and information readily available to customers from all walks of life through displays and events and its searchability in the library catalogue.

Through our connection with other regional leaders in the sustainability space, we will be a conduit connecting customers and stakeholders, enabling sustainable initiatives and practices to become more widespread in the community.

“ Libraries address current societal issues, such as the effect of climate change on our lives and what can be done on the community level.”

- Community member

OUR ACTION PLAN FOR PRIORITY 3

Undertake targeted engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities to understand what we could do better



Deliver a trauma-informed heritage service that is guided by the principles of safety, trust, transparency, choice, collaboration and empowerment / Embed subject-centred collection management



Reduce barriers for diverse communities and people experiencing vulnerability by creating safe and accessible spaces, programs and resources



Curate and expand collections that reflect community languages, cultural diversity, and local stories, including digitised First Nations and heritage content



Advocate with other regional leaders and partners to deliver programs, events and services that contribute to community wellbeing, local economies and place activation



Ensure collections celebrate cultural diversity, promote inclusion, and provide resources on health, sustainability, and social connection for the community



Promote and deliver a service that is a place for social connection through programming and informal opportunities



-  ASPIRATION 7 / Fostering connection & belonging
-  ASPIRATION 8 / Celebrating difference & diversity
-  ASPIRATION 9 / Creating places & spaces that people value
-  ASPIRATION 10 / Supporting adoption of healthy and sustainable practices



Priority 4

Embracing our Future

ASPIRATION 11

ADOPTING A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL

We will successfully transition to a not-for-profit model and leverage the opportunities that this brings. Through smart and proactive governance, systems and processes, we will embed new ways of working without compromising on service delivery or value to the community.

What we will achieve by 2029

Changes to the Local Government Act 2020, which require us to transition to a new, not-for-profit model under the Corporations Act 2001, mark a significant milestone for our libraries and create new opportunities for us to adapt and flourish in a changing world.

We will incorporate this change through good governance and a transparent change management approach across our structures, policies and processes.

“I have been a member for over 30 years and have watched it grow and change, for the better with the times.”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 12

STRENGTHENING OUR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our business model will evolve and strengthen our financial sustainability, despite the constrained financial environment in which we operate. By continually demonstrating and promoting the unique and irreplaceable value we bring to communities, we will secure ongoing funding and attract new and diverse revenue streams.

What we will achieve by 2029

A funding strategy that guides our efforts to pursue grants, sponsorships and philanthropic contributions will keep us on the path of financial sustainability. A secure financial future will ensure we continue to meet the needs of our population that is growing and requiring a greater depth and diversity of services from us.

“ I get to read books-learn so many different perspectives, which adds so much to my life, without any financial burden.”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 13

STRATEGICALLY PARTNERING FOR IMPROVED SERVICES

We will deliver greater value to our customers and community by building meaningful relationships with organisations that share our values. We will formalise existing partnerships and develop new ones with organisations that will help us deliver a range of community-focused services and experiences.

What we will achieve by 2029

We will build on the informal role we have played in providing links to government and community services by developing a partnership framework that enshrines the community-facing nature of our work.

We recognise our community's desire to see their library as an integrated community hub and will find and connect with like-minded organisations and services to deliver efficient and streamlined services to our community.

Through our efforts to pursue new funding partners, we will also find opportunities to explore imaginative ways to use our services and spaces to bring new collaborations to life.

“Philanthropically it would be fantastic to get support to create more sustainable programming.”

- Community member

ASPIRATION 14

EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE TO BE THEIR BEST

Our people are our greatest asset, making sure that our libraries are more than just bricks and books. We will continue to invest in supporting and developing our staff, by providing the skills, training, tools and opportunities they need to grow and deliver value to our community in a world that is continually changing.

What we will achieve by 2029

We will continue to evolve staff development opportunities so our people provide the exceptional level of service to our customers for which they are already known.

Our workforce is comprised of staff from diverse backgrounds, reflecting community demographics. They are engaged and energised about responding to our community's changing needs, especially in an increasingly digital world.

They work in a safe and inclusive workplace that invests in creating positive experiences for our people, while creating employment pathways and opportunities for people from all walks of life.

We will provide opportunities for people with all life experiences to be part of our team, and ensure that our workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

“The people who work in the library are very friendly, helpful, well informed and always caring.”

- Community member

OUR ACTION PLAN FOR PRIORITY 4

Ensure best practice governance frameworks and approaches through the transition to a not-for-profit governance model



Develop and implement a sustainable funding strategy, including implementation of Fundraising Strategy



Develop and implement a Partnership Plan that explores opportunities and formalises relationships with existing & new partners that share our values



Provide a healthy, safe, inclusive, accessible and welcoming work environment, so that our people feel well, valued and involved



Build and support a diverse workforce that reflects our diverse community, so we can best serve our community



Stand with our professional bodies such as Public Libraries Victoria and Australian Libraries and Information Association, to advocate for sustainable resourcing, free community access to wide ranging ideas and writing, and to contribute to collaborative professional development and knowledge sharing



Explore volunteer and student placement opportunities



Safeguard our digital infrastructure against current and emerging risks for our organisation and our customers



Ensure our people have the right tools, training and support they need to perform their roles effectively in a continually changing world, for example:

- / Digital literacy and safety
- / Use of existing and new technology, including AI



ASPIRATION 11 / Adopting a new governance model



ASPIRATION 12 / Strengthening our financial sustainability



ASPIRATION 13 / Strategically partnering for improved services



ASPIRATION 14 / Empowering our people to be their best

Our Next Steps

Our library plan won't just sit on a shelf – it will help to shape and drive our work every day. It represents our shared vision for the future, and so, we are committed to bringing it to life over the course of this plan.

To ensure we stay on track and deliver real impact, we will monitor our progress through a Balanced Scorecard that reflects what matters most – our customers, our people, and our financial sustainability. We will track and assess key metrics in these areas to ensure that we stay focused on our Priorities and advance toward our Aspirations.

We will also report on our progress against the Actions we have set for ourselves each year. Our progress report will be shared with our Board and made publicly available, so everyone can see how we are delivering on our promises and helping to create knowledge and connection for people and communities.

- PRIORITY 1 / ENCOURAGING PERSONAL CURIOSITY
- PRIORITY 2 / EVOLVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES
- PRIORITY 3 / ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELLBEING
- PRIORITY 4 / EMBRACING OUR FUTURE

DIMENSION	OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	
Customer	To measure how hard our overall collection is working with relation to ongoing population changes	Loans per capita (population)	● ●
	To measure our overall visits to service with relation to ongoing population changes in our communities	Visits per capita	● ●
	To measure the changing balance over time between high volume programs or more focussed programs	Avg. attendances to programs and events	● ●
	To measure customer experience of our high-volume customer journeys, over time.	Voice of customer results	● ●
	To measure overall customer satisfaction	Customer Service Satisfaction rating	● ●
Internal Processes	To measure how hard our collection is working	Loans per collection item	● ●
Learning & Growth	To measure the changes over time of staff engagement and associated actions.	All staff survey engagement score	●
	To understand our internal engagement, organisational culture and effectiveness of recruitment processes	Staff turnover rate	●
Financial	To track investment into the collection as our population changes	Collection expenditure per capita	● ● ●
	To measure successful efforts to secure alternate funding	Revenue from alternate sources YTD	●
	To measure how the level of investment into operating the corporation changes over time with population changes	Operating cost per capita	●



What we Heard

KEY INSIGHTS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Libraries' role in literacy, learning & access to resources is highly valued

The traditional role of libraries – providing access to books, magazines, and everyday services like printing and scanning – continues to be deeply appreciated by the community.

Survey results show that borrowing from the library collection is highly valued as a service that enhances quality of life. There is also strong affection for the long-standing tradition of library programs, particularly programs that support children's literacy, such as storytime.

Survey responses highlighted our community's view that the role of libraries in supporting literacy and lifelong learning serves a broader social purpose, helping communities to stay informed and engaged in a fast-changing world.

91% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID THAT LIBRARIES MAKE THEIR LIFE BETTER BECAUSE THEY CAN USE AND BORROW BOOKS, MAGAZINES AND OTHER RESOURCES

82% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THE LIBRARIES PLAY A ROLE IN HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER AND FEEL LESS LONELY

“I am in my mid-eighties and I am able to borrow large print books, CDs, etc that enable me to continue my love of reading despite slowly diminishing eyesight.”

– Community member

Libraries enrich people's lives as a welcoming, free place to learn and be

Libraries are widely recognised as friendly, welcoming places that offer more than just services. They provide a space for learning, discovery, and personal growth.

Our community said our libraries enrich their lives by 'opening up new worlds' and offering opportunities for reflection and creativity.

Our community also highlighted the importance of the libraries being free, noting that libraries provide materials they might not otherwise be able to afford. Free access was frequently mentioned as a powerful way our libraries help improve people's lives.

48% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID ACCESSING A DIVERSE COLLECTION FOR FREE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN ONLY DO AT THE LIBRARY

Libraries offer community connection through their spaces and services

Libraries not only provide a sense of personal fulfillment to our customers, but also support strong and connected communities.

Our community turn to libraries for opportunities to meet other people, share common interests and feel less alone.

The role that libraries play in strengthening community ties is recognised widely by our community. Activities like author talks, writing workshops and other creative programs are recognised as important ways our libraries bring people together and support wellbeing through social and cultural connection and exchanging ideas.

“Every Friday, my neighbour and I take a break from working independently at home and head to the library. It's our way of changing up the routine, getting out of the house, and staying connected while still being productive.”

– Community member

Opportunities to improve library spaces and access

Improvements to the physical libraries were mentioned frequently in feedback from our community.

The diverse purposes of our libraries, as spaces for work, study, relaxation, creativity and play, prompted a number of comments about the conflicting use of our libraries and suggestions for dedicated spaces to separate noisy and quiet activities.

There were recurring comments about the need for longer operating hours – especially in the evenings and on weekends – to better serve working people and families.

“Co-working spaces where people could meet and take calls, collaboration centres!”

– Community member

31% OF 'BIG IDEAS' FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR LIBRARIES RELATED TO IMPROVING LIBRARY SPACES AND FACILITIES

KEY INSIGHTS FROM OUR PEOPLE

Libraries are crucial places of learning for the community

Our people place strong value on the personal experience of visiting the library, highlighting the warm, welcoming environment and the support offered by staff as meaningful ways libraries enrich the lives of people in our community.

Staff strongly believe in the libraries' role in supporting lifelong learning, with the majority of staff who completed our survey stating that our libraries make community life better by providing opportunities for people to learn new skills.

90% OF STAFF SAID THAT LIBRARIES MAKE COMMUNITY LIFE BETTER BY HELPING PEOPLE LEARN NEW SKILLS

“Be in a safe and friendly space for free - where else can you do that these days?”

– Library staff member

Maintaining free access to resources and services is important

Free access to our collection and services was rated as one of the most important benefits of the libraries when staff reflected on their own experience and that of their community. Our people feel a sense of pride in offering diverse services and experiences at our libraries, and a place for people just to be - for free and for everyone.

Our libraries' broader role in fostering meaningful community connections emerged as a strong theme among our people. Our staff commented that our libraries, as places to meet people or just enjoy the quiet comfort of a shared space, help both them and our community feel a sense of belonging.

“Anyone can walk through the door and no one will ask them anything other than ‘Can I help you?’”

– Library staff member

78% OF STAFF SAID THAT FREE ACCESS IS SOMETHING THAT ONLY LIBRARIES CAN OFFER

Opportunities to enhance community connection, digital services and access

Our people expressed a strong interest in offering more opportunities for community connection and forming strategic partnerships with key community services.

There was a desire to expand and diversify the library collection and provide greater access to technology, including creative technologies, accompanied by a focus on digital literacy, such as scam awareness education.

Adapting library spaces and services to better meet community needs was mentioned often, including expanding after-hours access and providing purpose-built spaces for quiet, conversation and creativity.

“[People] feel like they are part of a community that cares for them and will help them find solutions.”

– Library staff member

52% OF STAFF SAID THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR LIBRARIES' RESOURCES, COLLECTION AND SERVICES EXPANDED

“Connect[ing] with other people face-to-face is now more important than ever, especially in the era of social media.”

– Library staff member

93% OF STAFF SAID THE LIBRARIES CAN PLAY A ROLE IN PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER AND FEEL LESS LONELY



Libraries play a
unique role in
fostering **community**
connection



References

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City of Greater Geelong [2025]	City of Greater Geelong Council Plan [draft]
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Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation [2015]	Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt Country Plan
Golden Plains Shire [2025]	Golden Plains Shire Council Plan [draft]
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Waller, S [2022]	Public Libraries Victoria Strategic Issues Paper 2022 - 2030



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Library customers at English Conversation Club at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library.
(Photo: Monika Berry)
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Vanessa Schernickau and Cr Liz Pattison at the Geelong Library & Heritage Centre. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customer sewing at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Students at Geelong Library & Heritage Centre. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Young people at Waurm Ponds Library. *(Photo: Pam Hutchinson)*
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Story Time at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customers at Colac Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library staff member at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customers at Pearl Jam at Corio Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customer at the Heritage Centre. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Young people coming into Colac Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customers at English Conversation Club at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*
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Library customer and staff member in the makerspace at Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Library. *(Photo: Monika Berry)*

Libraries

Geelong Library & Heritage Centre

51 Little Malop Street
T 4201 0600

Apollo Bay

6 Pengilley Avenue
T 5237 1013

Armstrong Creek

Biyal-a Armstrong Creek
20 Main Street
T 4201 0672

Bannockburn

25-27 High Street
T 4201 0661

Barwon Heads

Barwon Heads Primary School,
Golf Links Road
T 4201 0653

Belmont

163 High Street
T 4201 0665

Chilwell

51 Russell Street,
Newtown
T 4201 0651

Colac

173 Queen Street
T 5231 4613

Corio

Cox Road
(cnr Moa Street)
Norlane
T 4201 0658

Drysdale

Boronggook Drysdale Library
2-8 Wyndham Street
T 4201 0656

Geelong West

153A Pakington Street
T 4201 0660

Highton

Roslyn Road
(cnr Belle Vue Avenue)
T 4201 0662

Lara

5 Walkers Road
T 4201 0668

Leopold

31-39 Kensington Road
T 4201 0675

Newcomb

Bellarine Highway
(cnr Wilsons Road)
T 4201 0657

Ocean Grove

Presidents Avenue
(cnr The Avenue)
T 4201 0655

Queenscliff

55 Hesse Street
T 4201 0663

Torquay

Surf City Plaza,
Beach Road
T 4201 0667

Waurm Ponds

230 Pioneer Road
T 4201 0670

Western Heights

Western Heights College,
Vines Road, Hamlyn Heights
T 5277 1177

OUTREACH LOCATIONS

Aireys Inlet

Anakie

Anglesea

Beeac

Beech Forest

Birregurra

Cape Clear

Coragulac

Cressy

Deans Marsh

Dereel

Enfield

Forrest

Gellibrand

Grenville

Haddon

Lavers Hill

Linton

Lorne

Meredith

Portarlington

Rokewood

Smythesdale

St Leonards

Winchelsea





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