

GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARY CORPORATION BRANCH REVIEW – 2015

**Prepared for the Geelong Regional Library Corporation
by SMH Management and Consulting Services Pty Ltd – Jan 2015**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Geelong Regional library Corporation (GRLC) has a clear vision and plan for the service and a priority to maintain financial sustainability in the medium to long term. The GRLC seeks to be an innovative and exemplary service, providing equitable access to information and technology through, amongst other things, the provision of “welcoming, purposeful and safe library facilities at the heart of the community.”

The literature predicts that successful libraries of the future will be characterised by innovation and creativity. Contemporary space design will be critical if libraries are to build on and extend their role as cultural and creative community hubs. Great spaces will help create libraries with a welcoming atmosphere and the flexibility to accommodate multiple needs and uses. Staff will be skilled with a range of approaches to engender creative or cultural expression and will be experienced in the delivery of a range of information services.

A number of reviews and reports have been prepared for the GRLC and the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) over the last 15 years. The reports described redevelopment and revitalisation strategies; the need to provide for population growth in growing communities and reports were also prepared that examined the financial needs and viability of the Service.

In line with the recommendations of the 2009 City of Greater Geelong Public Library Building Development Strategy (Development Strategy) there has been substantial investment in library infrastructure in the region. Golden Plains Shire opened a new Library in 2012 and the Surf Coast Shire redeveloped the Torquay Library in 2013. Twelve significant library improvement projects have been undertaken since 2007, including the construction of four new libraries.

This investment has greatly improved the standing of the GRLC compared with other Library services in Victoria. Performance on measures related to buildings, demand, productivity and cost effectiveness have improved significantly. And a number of performance measures are destined to increase after the opening of the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre. GRLC remains a very low- cost and efficient service provider despite the large number of physical branches in the service. It can be confidently said that GRLC provides one of the best library services in Victoria.

The GRLC has the most static branches of any Library Corporation in the State (with Central Highlands) and provides a static library for every 16,700 people over an area of 5,512sq km. There are 16 static libraries in the network, with an increasing disparity in the standard of library infrastructure. There is also significant overlap in library catchments in central Geelong that will be exacerbated when the new 6000sqm Geelong Library and Heritage Centre opens in late 2015.

In the 2009 Development Strategy there were three libraries, Highton, Barwon Heads and Chilwell where further reports on the buildings and service were recommended. At the Highton Library, the smallest in the network, it was recommended that the Library be redeveloped and expanded most likely on another site. With the Barwon Heads Library it was recommended that other modes of service delivery be employed for residents of Barwon Heads and the Branch be closed. Reports have not been prepared to address these issues at this time. A report was prepared for the Chilwell

Library in 2009 and the recommendations of the Chilwell Community Hub - Space Planning Project were not adopted by the COGG and there are no alternate plans for the renewal of the library on that site.

To help understand the performance of branches in the GRLC a set of indicators have been developed. The indicators include viability measures, net returns and membership location and borrowing patterns. Barwon Heads, Chilwell and Highton Libraries are regarded as non-viable through this analysis because of their scores on these measures over time, the rate with which their members use other services and proximity to other branches.

Queenscliff Library also scored on a small number of non-viability measures, but, it is the only library in the Borough of Queenscliffe with a small population catchment and it is over 14km to the nearest branch. There is scope to improve this library and opportunities need to be identified to increase the relevance and appeal of the service.

Given the finite capacity of Councils to build and operate libraries and the need to provide services in new and growing communities, it is hard to justify capital investment in older and smaller libraries when they are located in crowded catchments that feature large modern libraries. The following table shows the significant library renewal or construction projects foreshadowed in the next decade across the region.

Summary of Library Development Projects for next 10 years				
Branch	LGA	Development timeframe	Replacement or Renewal	Status
Geelong Library and Heritage Centre	COGG	Current	Replacement	Construction underway to be completed 2015.
Corio	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Site plan prepared. Concept and feasibility work planned 2015/16
Ocean Grove	COGG	0-5 years	Renewal	Preliminary planning underway
Lara	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Planning on hold
Leopold	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Design to commence 2015
Drysdale	COGG	5-10 years	Replacement	Preliminary site planning underway
Armstrong Creek	COGG	5-10 years	New	Library site being discussed as part of Armstrong Creek Structure Plan.
Smythesdale	Golden Plains Shire	0-5 years	New	Planning for Reading Room underway
Queenscliff	Borough of Queenscliffe	0-5 years	Renewal	Planning library improvement as part of the Hesse Street Hub Project.

It will be important that GRLC and the COGG, particularly, continue to work closely together to scope and time projects to meet demand. All these projects will impact on the capital and operating budgets of Council and in most cases require additional funding to the GRLC.

Councils are under increasing financial pressure to limit rate rises and do more with less. The GRLC Strategic Resource Plan for 2014-15 - 2017-18 includes budget projections for activity in the current Library Plan with financial sustainability a priority. A key assumption in the SRP is that member Council contributions increase at an average 5% per annum to cover the operating and capital costs. Changes to these funding inputs will require the GRLC to consider a range of budget management options.

The opportunity also exists for a review of the Service Hierarchy Model based on a review of recent developments within the network. There is no practical application of the distinction between the sub regional and the branch libraries. The Community and e library service delivery framework should be retained. Standards provided by the Australian Library and Information Association and the People Places Guide should be used to inform service and infrastructure developments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review has sought to critically assess the existing Library Branch Network and make recommendations for a viable and sustainable network that can meet the ongoing challenge of providing a relevant and high quality library service. There are 16 static branches in the GRLC network and this is the largest number of branches managed by a library service in the State. The larger new branches are, in the main, performing well and being progressively improved. The general level of satisfaction of users of the service is very high in both the new larger branches and the smaller branches. Never-the-less the use of smaller and less viable libraries continues to decline and this pattern has been observed over a period of years.

While it is not the role of the GRLC to close branches in the network, there is value in the GRLC having a clear understanding of the relative performance of all branches. If changes in funding arrangements were to occur, or further efficiencies within the service were required, the GRLC should be able to identify strategies to maintain the quality of the overall service. A number of recommendations have been made accordingly;

1 Reduce the number of static libraries in the network targeting the less viable branches. Those branches include;

a) Chilwell Library. The rationale for this recommendation is:

- The Chilwell Library has achieved 3 to 4 non-viable measures in 2005, 2010 and 2014.
- The Chilwell Library catchment is over-serviced. Within 2 km or a 6 minute drive of the library, are the GLHC, Geelong West and Belmont Libraries.
- The Library is small with limited capacity to host the range of programs and activities being offered at the larger GRLC libraries.
- Over the last five years loans have continued to decline and visits are down by 12%.

- The collection is small and there are more items returned to this library than are borrowed.
- 35% of the time members of Chilwell Library use other nearby libraries to borrow items.
- Redevelopment plans prepared in 2009 for the Library were not adopted by Council and there is no indication that the recommended investment in the building will occur.
- Evidence gathered through this process confirms the recommendations of the 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network which concluded that, “continuation of the service represented an uneconomic utilisation of resources because of low usage and proximity to other larger libraries”.

b) Reduce community access to the Barwon Heads Library and examine alternative service delivery models. The rationale for this recommendation is;

- In 2005, 2010 and 2014 Barwon Heads Library was the only library in the network that was non-viable across all four measures. It has the lowest visits per hour open, loans per hour open, internet session per hour open and stock turnover of any branch in the network.
- The library is very small and is located in a primary school with limited community opening hours (13) per week. The small space limits the collection size to just over 6000 items, which is less than recommended for a viable library.
- There is another branch in the catchment. Ocean Grove Library is 4.2 km or a 7 minute drive away.
- The 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network and the 2009 Development Strategy both recommended that Barwon Heads Library be closed.
- Alternate service delivery models could include improved digital access and the identification of locations for pick up and returns.

c) Highton Library. The rationale for this recommendation is:

- The library is the smallest in the network at 135sqm with a limited capacity to provide the range of services and programs identified in the Library Plan.
- The Highton Library catchment is over serviced. The Belmont Library is 1.8 km away from Highton and 4 km from the Waurin Ponds Library.
- The 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network also made the above observation and noted the “doubtful” cost benefit of extensions or refurbishments to the building in a revitalised branch library network.
- 68% of members of this Library prefer other libraries to borrow items and many more items are returned to this library than are borrowed from it.
- Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 loans have fallen by 23%. Over the same period the visits to the library have also declined by 25%.
- It is likely that there will be a further decline in the patronage of this service when the GLHC opens in late 2015.
- The Branch only marginally exceeds the visits and loans per hour non-viability.

2 Monitor and review performance of library branches to enhance efficiency targeting the following branches;

a) Review the service and usage at Queenscliff Library.

The small catchment is a major contributor to the low scores on the non-viability measures. The Branch ranks highly on costs per visit, has high rates of membership from the local community and is well supported by the local community and Council. There are plans afoot that may result in improvements to the building and other initiatives should be explored to increase the use and efficiency of the service.

b) Review the service and usage at the Lara Library.

This is a relatively new branch that ranks highly on costs per visit and below average on visits per hour open and PC usage. A review of staffing, programming, the collection, promotion and the opening hours will identify opportunities to improve the performance and viability of this valued local service.

c) Monitor the performance of the Geelong West Library after the opening of the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre.

The GLHC is 1.4 km from the Geelong West Library. Changes in use of the Geelong West Library should be monitored following the opening of the GLHC and opportunities to modify the service delivery model should be explored.

d) Complete the branch library network and opening hours review to ensure equitable access to library services across the region. (as per the Library Plan)

3 Future Development

a) Establish strategic library development working group with the COGG.

Given the number of library development projects being considered by the COGG, a formal working group including key COGG and GRLC staff should be established to discuss scope, timing and funding of projects.

b) Revise the Service Hierarchy Model and remove the distinction between the Branch and Sub-regional library service.

Standards provided by the Australian Library and Information Association, People Places and the benchmarks provided by the Public Libraries of Victoria Network provide comprehensive frameworks for library service and infrastructure development. These guides more adequately inform library development than the current sub-regional and branch library definitions.

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this review is to critically assess the existing Library Branch network and make recommendations for a viable and sustainable network that is responsive to societal and library trends and positions the GRLC to continue to provide excellent community responsive library services into the future.

A number of reports have been prepared for the Geelong Regional Library Corporation (GRLC) making recommendations about an optimal number of branches to supply the community, and the level of funding needed to deliver the services determined by the Board of the GRLC.

This desk-top review has examined these reports, the performance of the GRLC over the last eight years, the current usage data and funding environment to make recommendations about the composition of the branch network.

Currently there are 16 static libraries in the network with a wide disparity in the quality of the infrastructure and number and type of services that can be provided. In 2015 the GRLC will open one of the most exciting library developments in the country and over the next decade another ten significant library developments are foreshadowed.

Providing value for money to rate payers and the state government is an increasingly important question being put to service providers as funding pressures grows. It is timely to take stock of what this means for the GRLC branch network and the service more broadly.

1 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The following section provides an overview, with comments, of relevant recent reports and plans evaluating the GRLC service, and that relate to libraries as physical spaces. It provides a context for this Review and the subsequent recommendations.

1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network, Library Consultancy Services Pty Ltd – Final Report

The aim of this report was to review the Greater Geelong branch network and critically assess the effectiveness and performance of the branch network and recommend a redevelopment and revitalisation strategy. The report evaluated the network in terms of location, siting, overall performance and standard of facilities. It also included a planning methodology to be applied to future library developments and development options with preliminary costings.

The Review acknowledged that the branch distribution reflected pre-amalgamation local government jurisdictions, and not the planned distribution of branches for a viable library service. The review made a number of observations and recommendations about the service including;

- The urgent need to revitalise the Geelong Library.
- Substantial service duplication in the centre of Geelong with overlapping branch catchments.
- The urgent need for renewal and revitalisation of the service.

- The poor location of Corio, Chilwell, Geelong City, Grovedale and Newtown was contributing to underutilisation.
- Small branches were being overlooked by users for larger better resourced libraries. Those libraries included Barwon Heads, Chilwell, Grovedale, Newtown and North Geelong.
- Most libraries in the network required substantial redevelopment and the only cost effective way to do that was to invest in branches where there was a sound long term growth potential.
- All libraries needed better external signage.

The Development Options sought to address oversupply of branch libraries particularly in the Central and Southern Zones of Geelong. The objective was to eliminate the management and operational inefficiencies caused by maintaining low performing and fragmented infrastructure.

A number of recommendations from the Review have been implemented including;

- The closure of the Newtown library.
- Withdrawal from the North Geelong Community Library.
- Refurbishment of the Geelong West Library.
- Refurbishment of the Belmont Library.
- Development of the Waurm Ponds Library.
- Refurbishment of the Drysdale Library.
- The development of a new City Library – the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre.
- The closure of the Grovedale Library.
- The development of a static Library in Lara.

The Review also made other key recommendations that have not been adopted;

- Closure of the Chilwell Library because of its low usage, proximity to other larger libraries and that the continuation of the service “represents an uneconomic utilisation of resources”¹.
- Closure of the Highton Library. The reasons given were the low level of usage, proximity to the Belmont Library (and the proposed Waurm Ponds Library), the preference of the Highton residents to use other libraries and the “doubtful “cost benefit of extensions or refurbishments to the building in a revitalised branch library network.
- Closure of the Barwon Heads Library given its close proximity to the Ocean Grove Library.

The Public Library Building Development Strategy 2009, by the City of Greater Geelong (COGG)

The Public Library Building Development Strategy 2009 (“Development Strategy”) was undertaken because Council needed to review the service delivery model and have guidelines for the redevelopment of existing branches and new libraries in growth areas. The Development Strategy reinforced the notion that modern libraries needed a shift of focus and be places that;

- created informed communities through access to local and global information sources;
- provided free and universal access to information technology infrastructure computer literacy and technology resources;

¹ Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network. Final Report. July 2009. Pg. 72. Library Consultancy Service Pty Ltd.

- provided opportunities for lifelong learning, programs and reading and literacy activities; and
- built social capital by providing welcoming, neutral, community space that is open to all members of the community.

The Development Strategy evaluated activities and functionality and recommended development and renewal based on a series of design principles with a cascading hierarchy of branches providing different services and floor area depending mainly on population catchment size. It is pleasing to note that the review timeframes have been largely met, three new libraries have been built in the COGG and upgrades to most branches have been implemented.

This Strategy reiterated that both the Chilwell and the Highton Libraries were too small to provide the range of services the GRLC sought to provide. The Strategy recommended an investigation into the feasibility of co-locating the Chilwell Library with the nearby Maternal and Child Health Centre and, that the Highton Library, the smallest in the GRLC network at 135m², should be redeveloped and expanded – most likely on another site. It also recommended that there be alternative methods employed to provide library services to residents of Barwon Heads and that the branch library be closed.

Comment re GRLC Financial Position and Industry Standing – JL Management Services Pty Ltd. November 2010.

In 2010 this report was commissioned by the COGG to assist the GRLC and the member Councils establish a set of service standards and quantify the funding required to improve the Corporation's performance on a range of service measures.

Using the Public Libraries of Victoria Network (PLVN) statistics and benchmarking data, it ranked the performance of the GRLC on 20 key measures related to supply, demand, productivity, collections and funding. It also compared the performance of the service between 2005 and 2009/10.

It concluded that significant progress had been made over the previous five years in key areas like collection development, access to on line services and branch development. But there had been other areas where performance had declined due to low levels of funding compared with other library services in the state.

The report also provided commentary on four key operational measures used to help assess the viability of the GRLC's branch libraries. The measures were of the library's appeal, the performance of its core functions, collection resources available to library users and measures of the collections relevance, appeal and performance. The Report also referenced the 2005 Review prepared by JL Management Pty Ltd for the COGG titled "Comment re Geelong Regional Library Corporation's Request for Increased Funding". This Review also used the same viability measures to determine the relative performance of library branches across the City.

The 2005 JLM Review deemed the Highton, Chilwell, Grovedale and Newtown libraries unviable. The 2010 JLM Review determined the Barwon Heads Library was not viable and nor was Grovedale. Chilwell Library was also characterised as long term non-viable despite improvements between 2005 and 2010.

G21 Regional Growth Plan – Implementation Plan

The G21 Regional Growth Plan (Growth Plan) provides a strategic land use and growth framework to manage population growth of the region to 500,000 by 2050. The Implementation Plan builds on the work of the Growth Plan and, amongst other things, it identifies the critical social and community infrastructure required to support the housing and employment growth of the region. The Plan describes the integrated roll out of infrastructure and identifies a number of library projects for the short, medium and long term including;

- Geelong Library and Heritage Centre
- Corio-Norlane subregional library expansion
- Armstrong Creek subregional library
- Lara permanent branch library
- Leopold library and community hub
- Drysdale subregional library
- Ocean Grove library expansion and upgrade
- Torquay subregional library
- Winchelsea branch library

Reading the Future – Geelong Regional Library Corporation Library Plan. 2013-17. Geelong Regional Library Corporation

The Plan details the GRLC vision for a strong, vibrant, connected community enriched by reading; empowered by learning and inspired by information and ideas. The Plan describes the significant development and progress of the service over the previous five years. It also outlines strategies and actions to help deliver an innovative and exemplary service providing equitable access to information and technology through the encouragement of expert and knowledgeable staff. The Plan has been developed in the context of unprecedented regional growth; changes in the makeup of the population; globalisation and new technologies and the fact that the role of libraries in communities is changing. The Plan outlines ways the service can evolve to support a range of better outcomes for communities.

Strategy Two of seven inter-related strategies in the Plan is “Welcoming places and spaces”. The objective is to “Present welcoming, purposeful and safe library facilities at the heart of the community” and includes:

Participate in planning and development of new and refurbished libraries (including Lara permanent, Leopold Stage 2, Water world Precinct Plan, Queenscliff’s Hesse Street Hub Project, Armstrong Creek, Surf Coast Precinct Masterplan, and Smythesdale).

In partnership with member councils conduct a branch library network and opening hours review to ensure equitable access to library services across the region.

Investigate opportunities to provide multiple means of service delivery to rural communities including feasibility of postal service, digital access and locations for pick up and returns outside mobile library visit hours.

In partnership with member council’s address ageing infrastructure, improve access for all and ensure safe public library facilities.

Review and improve internal library layout, signage and facilities with a view to maximising public space and comfort for learning, study, work and leisure.

The Plan makes particular reference to libraries becoming dynamic experiential places. The design of library space and the service environment will play an increasing role in the success of and capacity to deliver successful 21st century library services. Attention will be on distinctive spaces for user groups (e.g. digital media labs, urban offices for tele-commuting and co-working, communal meeting spaces); creative, learning and lounging spaces; archival space; retailing approaches to ambience; interior design; comfortable furniture; appropriate lighting and signage; pervasive ICT; and eating and drinking facilities.

Tomorrow's Library. Review of Victorian Public Libraries Stage 2 Report. Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries, November 2013

This project was an initiative of the Victorian Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries in response to the great changes occurring in the library sector here and around the world. The MAC concluded that the public library sector needs to increase collaboration and take a unified, strategic approach to effectively adapt and remain a relevant community asset in a globalised, digital world. Libraries are changing from transaction-oriented borrowing places to being more activity-focused, engaging and vibrant community spaces. Digital resources are more popular and people are increasingly using electronic media to access information and content. The traditional role of the physical library is changing and the emerging role of the digital library is seeking definition. The Review identified a number of key strategies for Victorian Libraries to maintain a vibrant and relevant library network future as follows;

- Improved digital content and delivery across the network
- Improved quality and accessibility of the collection
- Improved and streamlined backroom processes
- An integrated statewide library service.

Creative Communities - The cultural benefits of Victoria's public libraries 2014. State Library of Victoria. 2014

The role of public libraries as cultural institutions in the sense that they involve the collection and dissemination of knowledge and knowledge-producing artefacts, such as books, art and local history collections is well understood. But the ways that public libraries contribute to culture-making is less clear. Increasingly libraries are being used to showcase and support community creativity. This report used quantitative data, extensive community consultation and case studies from public libraries across the state to understand the role of public libraries as long-term and dynamic contributors to Victoria's cultural landscape

The report emphasised that innovative and up-to-date space design is critical if public libraries are to build on and extend their role as cultural and creative hubs. The future of libraries will rely heavily on the right design approach allowing the balanced use of space involving;

- the physical building and its interiors
- the flexibility of spaces and how they can accommodate multiple needs and uses
- the use of contemporary design to create a welcoming and uplifting atmosphere

- awareness of how staff skills and attitudes shape mood, and permit or block creative or cultural expression
- the design of digital interfaces and websites.

Victorian Public Libraries 2030 – Strategic Framework. 2013

This ambitious strategy document looked beyond the usual three or four year planning cycle and explored the role of the public library in 15 years' time. The Strategy proposed that public libraries in the future extend their traditional content management and distribution role in different directions along the content spectrum: between creation, management and distribution, and consumption. By adopting a broad sense of purpose and identity, and a capacity to adapt to changing social trends, libraries could continue to provide great value to communities.

The Strategy describes two strategic options for library services in 2030: the Creative Library and the Community Library. The Creative Library is where people will create content and seek skills and resources to develop and express their creativity. The Community Library is a place where people will consume content and will seek classes, workshops and spaces that support 21st-century literacies and learning. In both scenarios, public libraries have an opportunity to continue the transition from passive, product-based environments to ones that deliver active, service-based experiences.

The Strategy Framework goes on to describe what services are on offer are in the community and creative library with implications on a wide range of areas including staffing; the housing of physical and digital collections; the documenting and warehousing of local history, culture and knowledge; the provision of business centres for local telecommuters; and the provision of community literacy and learning programs, training and workshops.

The Strategy also describes the need for a range of spaces in the Community and Creative Libraries including less space for physical collections; spaces for individual and group learning; telecommuting facilities; social spaces and lounges that provide a community 'living room' feel; communal meeting spaces for forums, public lectures and information sessions; archival spaces provide local history collections in print and digital formats; studios for rehearsing, recording and editing content and cafe and catering facilities to encourage social interaction.

Analysis and Conclusions

There are number of plans and reviews that have been prepared for Councils and the GRLC to help manage the large branch network that services the region. Many recommendations of the reports have been adopted and the services are being delivered in a number of refurbished and new buildings. The analyses done on the performance of the GRLC relative to other library services built the case for increases in the financial contributions of member Councils to the GRLC and there have been strong improvements in performance subsequently.

Library developments in the GRLC are striving to deliver library spaces that fulfil roles as community and creative hubs and they are adapting to meet changing community needs. There are libraries with limited capacity to grow and/or are located in crowded catchments that have been identified as unviable and two branches have closed subsequently. Reviews undertaken in 1999, 2005 and 2010 have questioned the ongoing viability of branches in Chilwell, Barwon Heads and Highton.

2 PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE

The 2010 Report, “Geelong Regional Library Corporation Comment on the Financial Position and the Industry Standing” was commissioned to assist the GRLC and the member Councils establish a set of service standards and the necessary funding support required. Using the PLVN Annual Survey of Public Libraries statistics and benchmarking data it ranked the performance of the GRLC on 20 key measures related to supply, demand, productivity, collections and funding. It also compared the performance of the service between 2005 and 2009/10. The report was the catalyst for some substantial increases in funding from the member Councils (15% 2010/11, 15% 2011/12, 13% 2012/13, 9% 2013/14). This section will provide an overview of the performance of the service against Australian Standards, other Library Services across Victoria and by Branch.

3.1 Ranking against Australian Standards

The Standards for Australian Public Libraries is an evidence-based guide for the development of public library services in Australia. It uses the National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) annual collation of state and territory statistics as its evidence base. The standards are quality levels and describe goals for attainment. They guide best practice and are intended as operational suggestions for improving performance and describe baseline and enhanced service delivery levels².

The standards relate to library management and operations, staff, library collections, information technology and customers service. A review of the performance of the GRLC against the Australian Standards based on the 2013/14 PLVN benchmarking data showed that GRLC meets or exceeds 8 of the 12 minimum the following standards:

- Visits per capita per annum
- Qualified staff ratio for population served
- Library materials expenditure per capita per annum
- Age of collection (last five years)
- Circulation (loans) per capita per annum
- Turnover of stock
- Provision of Internet computers
- Satisfaction with library services

and is below the baseline and the enhanced target standard for:

- Library expenditure per capita per annum
- Membership as a percentage of population
- Number of staff
- Collection items per capita

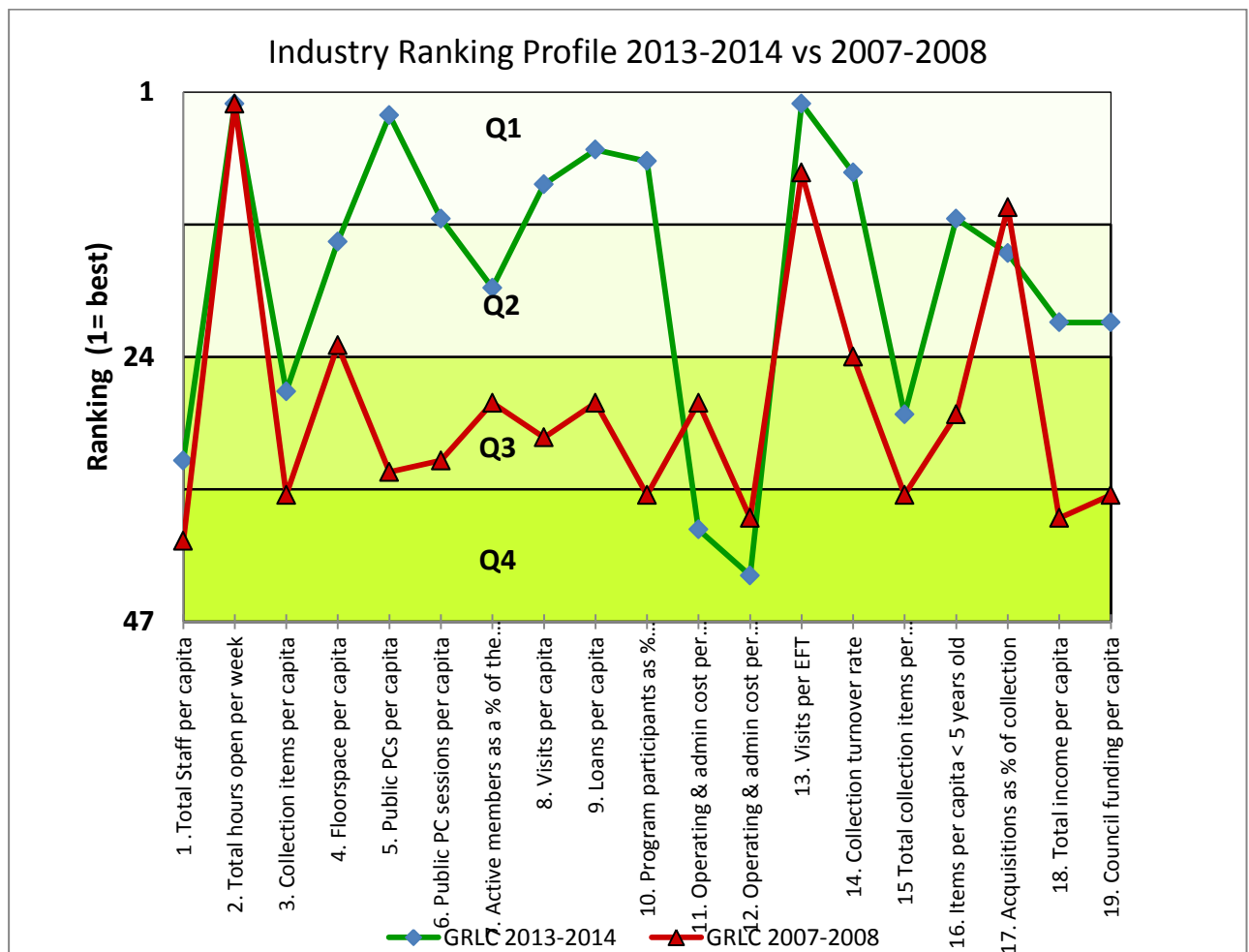
There are a number of indicators where the GRLC is performing at or above the Australian Standard. There are four areas where the service is below the standard, and these are likely to change with the opening of the GLHC.

²Australian Library and Information Association (2012). *Beyond a Quality Service: Strengthening the Social Fabric. Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*, 2nd ed.

3.2 Ranking and performance of the GRLC with other Victorian Library Services

The Public Libraries of Victoria Network undertake an annual survey of Victorian Library Services. The survey gathers information on a number of measures to help quantify things like costs related to the delivery of services, the demand and supply of services, collections and programs. The information helps Library services identify their performance in different areas in relation to others and, importantly, areas for improvement.

The following graph provides a snapshot of changes in the performance of the service between 2007/08 and 2013/14 using the 2013/14 Annual Survey of Public Libraries³. The general improvements can be attributed to increased funding (from member Councils) and the strategic reallocation of resources to better position the GRLC to meet the needs of users.



Graph 1

For the overwhelming majority of the 20 measures GRLC’s ranking has improved over the last five years. When the previous industry standing exercise was conducted GRLC ranked above the median on only five measures. For the 2013/14 financial year GRLC ranks above the median on 15 of the 20 measures. Two of the measures below the median are productivity and efficiency measures – where the low costs per loan and visit means the GRLC ranks near the bottom.

³ Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries 2013/14. Public Libraries of Victoria Network.

Investment in new libraries has meant that measures 2-4 have maintained or improved rankings. While the GRLC ranks number 2 in the State for hours open, it ranks at number 30 for average hours open per Branch. This ranking is related to the large number of branches and the limited opening hours at smaller branches.

A strategic commitment to increasing technology access in branches has improved the public PCs per capita rating from the lower end of the third quartile to the top quartile and number 3 in the State.

Measures 6-10 relating to community demand for library services ranked in the third and fourth quartile in 07/08. Four out of five measures are now in the top quartile and one is the second quartile.

The ranking of the GRLC on productivity and cost effectiveness measure 11, costs per loan and 12, cost per visit have dropped in last five years. These measures ranked below the median in 07/08 and still rank below the median. The cost per loan at GRLC is \$3.55. At the number 1 ranked library the cost per loan is \$30.91. At the GRLC the cost per visit is \$5.50. At the number 1 ranked library the cost per visit is \$28.11. Given the improvements in other areas these rankings establish GRLC as a low-cost and efficient service provider. Staffing levels in the service are lean, particularly when considering the number of physical branches and visits per full time staff member are in the top quartile.

The improvement in the rankings related to the Library Collection illustrates the increased investment and revitalisation of the collection. The increase in the collection turnover rate indicates that initiatives to revitalise the collection are also succeeding and meeting user's needs. The reduction in the ranking of acquisitions as a percentage of the collection is indicative of the substantial weeding of the collection to remove out of date, damaged and low demand materials.

Rankings for Library Funding have improved from the bottom quartile five years ago to the lower end of the second quartile now.

The GRLC has grown and developed in many ways; early adoption of new technologies including RFID has contributed to efficiencies in library operations; there is greatly increased access to and use of library computers; more vigorous programming, events and collaborations; more flexible spaces and visitation; access to Wi-Fi and increasing on-line transactions characterise this changing service.

It is worth noting that the GRLC has increased its annual opening hours from 25050 in 2009/2010 to 33,688 in 2013/14. These new hours can be attributed in part to the opening of three new library branches at Waurin Ponds, Bannockburn and Lara and increased opening hours in some other branches on weekends and evenings. The Grovedale Library was closed in 2011 and replaced by the Waurin Ponds service. This increase in the number of hours open has contributed to a fall in the average number of visits per hour across the service from around 52 in 2009/10 to 47 in 2013/14 and loans per hour from 93.7 in 2009/10 to 65 in 2013/14.

3.3 Performance of Library Branches across the GRLC

Most of the data provided to the PLVN is the aggregation of information collected at the branch level, so while the service may be improving overall an examination of the service branch by branch shows significant variation in performance. The information is collated each year, so the

performance of a branch can be monitored over time and with other branches. This provides the GRLC with important feedback and opportunities to improve the service.

There are some key measures of activity that tell us about the use and viability of different branches. The indicators include viability measures, borrowed items relative to returns and membership location and borrowing. Activity at different branches is influenced by a range of factors including;

- The size of the population catchment around the branch
- The proximity of other library branches
- Size of the building and its capacity to accommodate collections, programs and other activities.
- The design and amenity of the library space
- Location and access including the availability of parking and proximity to other retail and community services
- Quality and range of items in the collection
- Number of staff and skills

The bi-annual user Libraries Building Communities Survey⁴ provides another set of data about things like who uses libraries, what for and how often, which ones they use, how long they have been members, their satisfaction with the service and where improvements can be made. The survey also reveals differences between branches. The satisfaction of library users with the service continues to increase across the board with average satisfaction at or above 2012 levels across all measures.

Decisions about the future of services are subjective and complex, but the quantitative measures described can and should be used to inform decisions about improvements and change to the branch network. Summary information per LGA are in the Appendices. NB Western Heights College data has been removed from the review as the library is located in a school and staffed by the school. Some community access is provided at specific hours.

a) Branch Viability Measures

A subset of service measures have been developed as key indicators of branch viability. Three out of four of these quantitative measures were developed by JL Management Pty Ltd and used in the 2005 and 2010 in Reviews for COGG and the GRLC. For this Review the viability measures have been defined as follows:

- Visits per hour open as a broad measure of a library's appeal.
- Loans per hour open as a measure of how well a library performs its core function.
- Internet sessions per PC as a measure of the library's appeal to users of new technologies
- Stock turnover as the primary measure of a library collection's relevance, appeal and performance.

⁴ Libraries Building Communities 2014 Library Survey 2014. Geelong Regional Library Corporation. I & J Management Services, November 2014.

b) Non – Viability Measures

Table 1 in Appendix A provides an overview of activity levels, members, collections, visits and loans and scores on the viability measures for all branches in 2013/14. The viability measures quantify the extent to which branches appeal to users and perform their core function. They can guide improvement or change, and reveal the capacity of branches to deliver the level of service the GRLC seeks to provide. The viability measures show where branches are providing good value and what success looks like. They also reveal branches operating well below average where questions about ongoing viability must be asked.

To be classified as non-viable on the four key measures the following thresholds have been defined:

Visits per hour open

Visits per hour open of less than 24, which equates just over 50% of the GRLC average. Average visits per hour across the service are 47. This is a broad measure of a libraries appeal and as can be seen from Table 1 Appendix A visits per hour open range from 10.16 to 90.41. It is anticipated that the numbers are lower in smaller communities and where there are competing branches in the catchment area. It is appropriate to strive for visitation rates within a compressed range and to explore major variances for improvement opportunities.

Loans per hour open

Where loans per hour open are less than 33. Average loans per hour across the GRLC are just over 65 and the loans per hour range from 132 to 19. 33 is approximately 50% of the GRLC average. This is a measure of how well the library performs its core function and this proportion of loan activity is the same as has been used in previous reviews.

Internet session per PC

A new measure for this exercise is internet session per PC per hour. The viability threshold has been set at less than .5 internet sessions per PC per hour which is the average. The number of PCs across the GRLC has increased from 77 in 2009/10 to 171 in 2013/14. The frequency of use is an indicator of the uptake and demand of new technologies across the community; the importance of free access to PCs and the internet to those who otherwise could not afford it and learning opportunities for those embracing new technologies. A usage level of less than .5 could indicate an oversupply of PCs at a particular location (where there are 10 or more PCs in a branch) or general underutilisation of the service.

Stock Turnover

A turnover rate of less than four turns per annum is consistent with the rate applied in the 2005 and 2010 exercise. A turnover rate of 4.7 turns per annum was identified by the Australian Library and Information Association as the baseline target.

c) Non-Viable Branches 2013/14

Using the visitation measure to rank branches, Table 2 shows branches where there is one or more measure in the non-viability range. The highlighted figures indicate non-viability or marginally above the non-viability threshold.

Non – Viable Branches 2013/14					
Branches		Visit per hour open (<24)	Loans per Hour (<33)	Internet session per PC per hour (<.4)	Stock Turnover (<4.7)
1	Barwon Heads	10.16	19.46	.29	2.12
2	Queenscliff	19.48	42.5	.4	3.92
3	Chilwell	20.82	37.49	.42	4.17
4	Highton	25.24	39.1	.55	5.62

Table 2 Numbers - denote non viability Numbers – marginally exceed the non – viability measure

Information about the viability of branches has been collated over time. The 2005 JLM report described the Highton, Chilwell, Grovedale and Newtown libraries as unviable. The 2010 JLM report determined the Barwon Heads Library was not viable, Grovedale was not viable and Chilwell Library was also characterised as borderline viable despite improvements between 2005 and 2010. The Grovedale library was closed when Waurn Ponds opened and Newtown Library was also closed. The following Table provides a summary of the performance of all branches on the key viability measures based on the 2013/14 usage data.

Library	Vists per hour open	Loans per hour	Internet sessions per PC per hour	Stock turnover
Barwon Heads	10.16	19.46	0.29	2.12
Queenscliff	19.48	42.50	0.4	3.92
Chilwell	20.82	37.49	0.42	4.17
Highton	25.24	39.10	0.55	5.62
Lara	28.07	66.00	0.28	5.44
Bannockburn	36.23	48.40	0.3	5.52
Torquay	37.75	87.24	0.64	7.87
Waurn Ponds	44.99	75.51	0.48	7.77
Newcomb	48.92	36.97	0.62	7.62
Drysdale	51.25	41.36	0.51	9.7
Ocean Grove	56.7	34.42	0.6	8.54
Geelong West	67.46	117.23	0.8	9
Geelong**	76.79	111.98	0.76	1.73
Belmont	85.14	132.50	0.7	8.34
Corio	90.41	83.89	0.6	5.5
All Static Libraries *	699.41	974.05		92.86
	av = 47	av = 65	av.53	av = 6.19

Table 3

d) Net Returns Branches

Another indicator of usage preferences is a measure known as ‘net returns’. Members benefit from the flexibility of being able to borrow and return to any one of the GRLC’s 16 static branches or mobile services. Often smaller branches are ‘net returns’ branches as members visit and borrow from larger branches with more extensive collections, programs and services and use the smaller

branches as returns locations. The location of larger branches near shopping centres and transport links can also result in a higher amount of returns than loans. Relative to the number of items borrowed, Barwon Heads, Chilwell and Highton are the highest 'net returns' branches in the GRLC.

Net Returns Branches 2013/14			
Branch	Issues	Returns	Net Returns
Barwon Heads	13158	15192	2034
Chilwell	59471	63854	4388
Highton	62051	81226	19175

Table 4

e) Membership location and borrowing

People join a GRLC library by applying at one of the static libraries or mobile service. Table 5 shows the proportion of borrowing done by members at the branch where they are a member over a 120 day period in late 2014. Not surprisingly the highest rates of borrowing by members at their branch occurs where there are no other libraries in the town or within the catchment. Lower rates of borrowings are related to competing branches in the catchment, collections, space, amenity, proximity to other services.

More often than not members of the Highton Library are using either the Belmont Library (32% of the time) or the Waurn Ponds Library (14% of the time) to borrow items. Members of the Chilwell Library are using Geelong West (13% of the time), Belmont (8% of the time) and Waurn Ponds Libraries (4% of the time) to borrow items. 14% of members at the Belmont Library are borrowing from Waurn Ponds. Alongside other measures this is another indicator of the popularity and perhaps need for particular services.

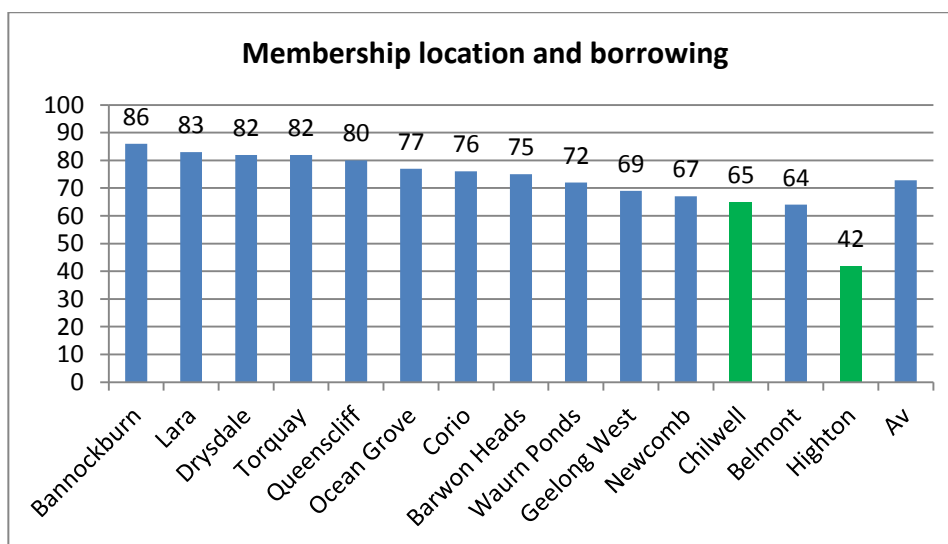


Table 5

f) Branch Catchments and Overlap

The use of population catchments and future population projections inform the location and size of library services. People Places: A Guide for Public Library Buildings in New South Wales⁵ describes

⁵ People Places: A Guide for Public Library Buildings in New South Wales Third Edition, State Library of New South Wales, 2012

service and population based benchmarks to help determine the floor area requirements for new and redeveloped library services, but there are a range of factors influencing the right size of a library service and its location.

The Service Hierarchy Model described in the Development Strategy is a useful guide in the scoping and development of new libraries. The model describes library catchments ranging from 25,000 plus people for a sub-regional library and 10,000 to 25,000 plus people in a branch library. The Central Library catchment is 200,000 plus people. Catchment areas have also been defined as the area in which 80% of members reside.

Numeric measures like kilometres between branches or time travelled by car are also used to determine a reasonable catchment for a service. These things are also be influenced by;

- Socio demographic characteristics – i.e. wealthier people over 18 are more mobile
- The collection and the services available
- Proximity to other services like parking, retail and recreation facilities
- Building size and amenity

The GRLC policy guidelines for the mobile service points dictate that mobile library sites must be at least 15 kilometres by road from a static library. In more heavily populated areas it would not be uncommon for a 5 km radius to guide the frequency of service provision alongside other factors including population catchment, building size, transport links and surrounding services. There are obvious operational and capital cost efficiencies managing fewer and larger services.

In the 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network, inter-network competition or catchment overlap was identified as a major issue for the ongoing viability of the whole library service, and smaller branches, particularly, in the centre of Geelong. The Review proposed reducing branches and developing new, larger and better located services to overcome the problem. Inter-network competition affected the Chilwell, Geelong City, Geelong West and the Newtown libraries as well as the Highton, Belmont and Grovedale libraries.

Despite the closure of Grovedale, Newtown and the North Geelong Community Libraries there is still a significant overlap in library catchments in the centre of Geelong. This will be further compounded by the opening of the 6000sqm Geelong Library and Heritage Centre in 2015

The following table describes the time and distances between the Chilwell and the Highton Libraries and other larger and newer branches in Central Geelong.

Travel time and distances between Chilwell and Highton and Central Geelong Libraries			
	Travel time in car	Distance	
Chilwell Library	6 min	2.8 km	Belmont Library
	6 min	1.8 km	GLHC
	5 min	1.9	Geelong West Library
Highton Library	3 min	1.8km	Belmont Library
	8 min	4 km	Waurm Ponds Library

Table 6

The GLHC will also only be 1.4 km from the Geelong West Library. This is a popular and heavily used branch has real pressures on space and there may be opportunities to modify the service delivery model once the new library opens.

3.4 Summary Analysis of Non-viable Branches

Barwon Heads Library

In previous reviews this was the only library in the network that was non-viable across the all four measures. It is the same again in 2014 and positions the library as on-going non-viable.

Barwon Heads Library - Performance on Non- Viability Measures Over Time						
	Members	Visits	Visits/hour	Loans/hour	Items/member	Stock Turnover
2005/06	624	4180	12.4	28.4	12.5	2.1
2009/10	555	6288	9.7	24.5	10.9	2.6
2013/14	574	6870	10.6	19.46	10.79	5.13

Table7

Usage figures in the 2013/14 GRLC Annual Report include school visits and loans. These numbers have been removed from the data. While members and visits have slightly increased from 2009/10 to 2013/14 on two out of three measures the service has continued to slide backwards. The service is located in a primary school library with limited community opening hours (13) per week. The library is also only 4.2km or a 7 minute drive from the Ocean Grove Library. A key issue is the collection size; static libraries with collections of less than 12,000 items, it has been suggested, are not viable.⁶ The collection at Barwon Heads has only 6199 items. The library is also very small at 180sqm which is below the minimum size recommended in People Places⁷ for a library (190sqm).

Queenscliff Library

The Queenscliff Library has triggered the non-viability measure on the number of visits per hour open and the stock turnover. There were similar findings in the 2010 Review. Since the 2009/10 review the number of hours open has increased and this explains the decline in the visits and loans per hour and the increase in the number of overall visits and loans. The reading room is serviced by but external to the library, and hosts programs and houses the newspapers. Both attract regular daily visits which are not included in the statistics.

Given it is the only library in the Borough of Queenscliffe; the population catchment (3,000 to 17,000); the distance to the next static library in Ocean Grove (around 14 km) and the commitment of the Council to maintain the Library - the ongoing involvement of the GRLC is completely justified. Never-the-less it is important to continue to monitor the performance of the Branch and identify opportunities to increase the relevance and appeal of the service. Work being done by Council on the development of the Hesse Street Hub Project includes the possible expansion of the library.

Queenscliff Library - Performance on Non-Viability measures over time						
	Members	Visits	Visits/hour	Loans/hour	Items per members	Stock Turnover
2005/06	2100	29100	26.5	55.7	7.6	3.8
2009/10	2560	26829	25	53.9	5.9	3.8
2013/14	2675	30904	19.48	42.5	5.58	3.92

⁶ Comment re GRLC Financial Position and Industry Standing. November 2010. J.L. Management Services Pty Ltd. Page 11.

⁷ People Places; A Guide for Public Library Buildings in New South Wales. Third Edition, State Library of New South Wales, 2012. Page 6

Chilwell Library

The Chilwell Library rates as non – viable on three out of four measures in 2013-14 and is marginally above the non- viability threshold on the loans per hour. The library rated as non-viable on the three of the four measures in 2010 and in 2005 the service was non – viable on all measures used.

Between 2005 and 2010 there were improvements in the performance of the branch on visitation, loans and stock turnover. The improved performance was attributed, in part, to some refurbishment that had occurred and it was suggested that the branch had capacity to improve in response to GRLC initiatives. It is also the case that the Belmont Library was closed from July 2009 to March 2010 for refurbishment and this inflated the visits and loans during this period and Geelong West was closed from September 2007 to September 2008. It should be noted that the improvements between 2005 and 2010 did not make the service significantly more viable, it simply showed that improvements could be made. This improvement trend has not been sustained between 2010 and 2014.

Loans have been trending downwards at around 5% over the last five years – and that includes a jump from 54,757 in 2012/2013 to 59,471 in 2013/14. Visits are also down by 12 % over the last five years and that also includes an 8% increase in visitation in 2012/2013 from 30446 to 33028 in 2013/14. Both these increases could be attributed, in part, to the relocation of the Geelong Library.

Chilwell Library Performance on Non-Viability measures over time						
	Members	Visits	Visits/hour	Loans/hour	Items per members	Stock Turnover
2005/06	1647	22050	11.2	21.4	14.9	2.2
2009/10	1483	37780	24.8	41.2	8.5	5
2013/14	1398	33028	20.82	37.49	10.18	4.17

Table 9

Highton Library

The Highton library marginally exceeds the visits and loans per hour measures and is just on average with the PC usage indicator. There are only 2 PCs in this library due to space limitations. In 2009/10 the Highton Library experienced a peak in usage while the Belmont Library, approximately 1.8 Km away, was being refurbished. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 loans have fallen by 23%. Over the same period the visits to the library have declined by 25%.

The Highton Library does marginally exceed the non-viability measures but it is the smallest Council branch in the network at 135sqm, well below the recommended minimum size for a library. The fact that most members of the Highton Library are borrowing from nearby libraries at Belmont and Waurin Ponds suggest it is not competitive in a crowded catchment that includes superior services.

Summary and Conclusions

There are many measures available to evaluate the performance of the GRLC against other library services and branches within the service and the evidence shows that GRLC has improved significantly over the last 8 years.

In the 2005 JLM Report there were four branch libraries identified as being non-viable; Barwon Heads, Chilwell, Grovedale and Newtown. In 2010 there were three branches identified as non-viable and they were Barwon Heads, Grovedale and Chilwell (Newtown had been closed and Grovedale Library was subsequently closed in 2011). The exercise undertaken by JLM in 2010 confirmed the marginal performance of the Barwon Heads and the Chilwell Libraries and also identified the need to review aspects of the operation of the Queenscliff Library.

Three of the four non-viability measures set the bar fairly low and represent performance at 25 % of the best. Table 3 of the Report illustrates the variation in the usage and popularity of branches across the network. It is clear the close proximity of competing services continues to erode the viability of smaller older services, particularly in the centre of Geelong.

In the 2005 and 2010 reviews **Barwon Heads Library** was the only library in the network that was non-viable across the all four measures. It is the same again now and positions the library as ongoing non-viable. Options exist for users of the Barwon Heads Library to access the Ocean Grove Library which is 4.2 km away or a 7 minute drive. Other means of providing access to the collection at this site should be considered as an alternative to a static library.

The **Chilwell Library** was identified as non-viable in the 2005 review. In 2010 it was recommended that the service be closely monitored, and that initiatives by the GRLC could help sustain improvements in the service. This has not been the case and the branch is non-viable on 3 out of 4 measures and loans and visits to the Chilwell Library continue to decline. The Library is a net returns Library indicating that people use the convenience of the branch to return books more often than they borrow there. The proximity of three other quality services within 2 km of the library contributes to this. Members of Chilwell Library use other libraries in the network to borrow items 35% of the time.

The **Highton Library** marginally exceeds the visits and loans per hour non-viability measures and the PC usage indicator. In 2009/10 the Highton Library experienced a peak in usage while the Belmont Library, approximately 1.8 Km away was being refurbished. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 loans have fallen by 23%. Over the same period the visits to the library have also declined by 25%. 68% of members of this library prefer other libraries to borrow items and many more items are returned to this library than are borrowed from it. The heavy use of the nearby libraries at Belmont and Waurn Ponds because of their close proximity suggests that this small branch library (135sqm) it is not competitive in a crowded catchment that includes superior services.

Given **Queenscliff Library** is the only library in the Borough of Queenscliffe, the small population catchment and the distance to other services it is appropriate to continue to monitor the performance of this Branch and identify opportunities to increase the relevance and appeal of the service. Overall visits and loans to this library have increased as have the opening hours.

3 PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRANCH NETWORK

The 2009 Geelong Public Library Building Development Strategy recommended timeframes for the review and development of libraries in Geelong over 5-10 years. It is timely, in 2015, to revisit this Strategy and consider the development outlook for the branch network over the next decade.

The Development Strategy used a service model framework that provided a hierarchy of services and branches depending on the catchment and function. The model included a Central Library, Sub-regional libraries, Branch libraries, Community Libraries and E library services for all population catchments. The document included a Planning and Infrastructure Review Schedule and foreshadowed development opportunities flagged in response to projected population growth and the demands of 21st century libraries.

The Planning and Infrastructure Review Schedule has been updated in Table 10 and now includes all branches in the GRLC as well as new libraries planned in response to population growth. It provides an overview that includes the service model, the review timeframe from the 2009 Building Development Strategy and changes that have occurred to the branch infrastructure over the last five years. There is additional information from the G21 Growth Plan – Implementation Plan, and information included from the COGG draft Social Infrastructure Plan 2015 which includes renewal and development of new libraries alongside a range of other community facilities.

4.1 Status of the 2009 COGG Library Buildings Development Strategy

The COGG has implemented most of the recommendations in the 2009 Development Strategy. Action has been taken on the libraries identified for immediate review/development – including Belmont, Geelong City, Grovedale/Waurn Ponds, Vines Road and Lara. The 2009 Chilwell Community Hub - Space Planning Project for the COGG explored the co-location of a Maternal and Child Health Service and public toilets, and proposed the retention and expansion of the building. COGG has not implemented the Plan and there are new priorities for the COGG in the provision of Early Years Services including MCH. Other recommended reviews of the Barwon Heads and Highton Libraries have not been undertaken. Outside of the COGG the Torquay Library has also been refurbished and a new library was opened in Bannockburn in 2012. The following table is a summary of development work undertaken and proposed across the network.

LIBRARY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS AND UPGRADES 2007-2015

No. Branches	Location	Service Model	Review Timeframe from 2009 report+	Development/renewal	Status 2015
1	Bannockburn	Sub –regional	Na	New Library opened 2012	Review 10+ years
2	Belmont	Sub-regional	Short-term (0-5 years)	Redevelopment complete 2010	Review 10+ years
3	Corio	Sub-regional	Completed	Redevelopment completed 2005	Replacement Library planned as part of Northern Arc 0-5 years.
4	Drysdale	Sub-regional	Medium-term (5-10 years)	Refurbished 2011.	New Library planned as part of Community Hub in Drysdale in 0-5 years.
	Geelong City	Central / Regional	Short Term (0 – 5 years)	Closed 2013	Na
5	Geelong Library and Heritage Centre	Central / Regional	Under construction	To be completed late 2015	Review 15+ years
6	Geelong West	Branch	Completed	Refurbished 2008	Review 10+ years and monitor after opening of the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre
	<i>Grovedale</i>	<i>Branch</i>	<i>Short-term (0-5 years)</i>	<i>Closed in 2012and replaced with Waurm Ponds</i>	<i>na</i>
7	Lara	Branch	Short Term (0-5 years)	New Library opened 2011	Concept planning for new permanent Library 0-5 years
8	Newcomb	Branch	Completed	Redeveloped in 2007	Monitor following opening of the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre and review 10+ years
9	Ocean Grove	Sub-regional	Long term (10-15 years)	Refurbished and redesigned service area 2014	Redevelopment and expansion 0-5 years.

10	Torquay Library	Branch		Redeveloped in 2013	No major change to building footprint foreshadowed in the 2014 Surf Coast Precinct MasterPlan.
11	Waurm Ponds	Replaced Grovedale Library	Short term (0-5 years)	New Library opened 2011	Review 10+ years
12	Western Heights Secondary College (Vines Road mobile)	Community Library	Short term (0-5 years)	Community Library opened 2011	Review
LIBRARY BRANCHES PENDING REVIEW FROM 2009 REVIEW					
	Location	Service Model	Review Timeframe from 2009 report*	Development/renewal	Status 2015
13	Barwon Heads	Community Library	Medium term (5-10 years)	Identify alternate models of service delivery	Review 0-5 years
14	Chilwell	Branch	Medium term (5-10 years)	Feasibility Study examining co-location with Maternal and Child Health Centre completed in 2009.	Review 0-5 years
15	Highton	Branch	Medium term (5-10 years)	Recommended investigation of opportunities to redevelop and expand the Library has not been undertaken.	Review 0-5 years
16	Queenscliff	Branch			Redevelopment of library proposed in 2015 Queenscliff Hesse Street Hub Project

NEW AND REPLACEMENT LIBRARIES PROPOSED					
	Location	Service Model	Review Timeframe from 2009 report*	Development/renewal	Status 2015
17	Armstrong Creek	Sub-regional	Long term (10-15 years)		New Library foreshadowed in precinct structure plan with Civic and Cultural Complex. Planning to commence in 2020*
18	Leopold	Branch	Short term (0-5 years)		Detailed design of replacement library to be completed in 2015 as part of community hub. Funding being sought from State and Federal Government.
	Lara (Permanent Library)	Branch	Short term (0-5 years)		Central Lara Hub Project including Neighbourhood House and permanent library to commence in 2017*
19	Smythesdale	Community Library	Short term (0-5 years)		Planning underway for new reading room as part of the
	Northern Arc (Corio)	Sub Regional	Short term (0-5 years)		Feasibility Study planned in 2015/16 for replacement library as part of new Health and Wellbeing Complex.

Table 10

*From the G21 Regional Growth Plan Implementation Plan

+Review Time frame from the Public Library Buildings Development Strategy, pg. 18. City of Greater Geelong 2009

4.2 Number and range of static libraries in the Network

Currently there are 16 static libraries in the network with a wide disparity in the quality of the infrastructure and number and type of services that can be provided. If the proposed new libraries are developed over the next 10 years, there will be nineteen static libraries in the GRLC including 15 in the COGG.

The GRLC has the most static branches of any Library Corporation in the State and provides a static library for every 16,700 people over an area of 5,512sq km. The number of static libraries provided by a library service is often higher where a large geographic area is covered i.e. services that provide libraries in dispersed smaller country towns. The GRLC has eight libraries - Corio, Geelong West, Geelong City, Chilwell, Highton, Belmont, Waurin Ponds and Western College servicing the urbanised areas of Geelong City in just over 50sq km. The other eight libraries cover the rest of Geelong and the balance of the Corporation's 5,460 sq km area. When the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre opens in late 2015 the size of library branches in the network will range from 135sqm to 6000sqm.

The impacts of the large number of branches for the GRLC include;

- Staffing levels are at the minimum at most branches – evidenced by measures like visits and loans per staff member.
- Increased maintenance, operating and capital costs of running the service from multiple sites.
- There are service points competing with each other in the same catchment
- There is a wide disparity in the experience members and users have in libraries that are part of the same service.
- Smaller branches attract fewer visitors but they have are more expensive per staff member and member to operate.
- There is a limited capacity to conduct events and programs in smaller library spaces that were not designed to meet the current needs of the service and users.
- Small branches are often staffed by one person raising OH&S issues. Addressing this issue by providing more staff makes the small branches even less viable.

4.3 Library Building Improvements

The 2009 Development Strategy described a service with a hierarchy of library buildings and services. All library improvements seek to improve the capacity of buildings to meet the changing needs of communities. At the top of the service model are the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre providing central library and heritage services to the wider region of over 200,000 people. Then there are five sub-regional libraries, eight branch libraries and service models specifically tailored for rural and isolated communities and e-services.

In the 2009 Development Strategy the key areas for improvement from the community were:

- Better/bigger refurbished library buildings
- Greater volume and range of collections
- Extended opening hours

- Increased IT provision
- Increased study and program spaces ⁸

In the 2014 Libraries Building Communities Survey the key areas for improvement were similar. Users want their branch to be bigger, with larger collections and longer hours of operation. Weekend hours were sought and evening opening hours were suggested where they are not already provided. Library users were keen to see toilet facilities improved, more space made available for desks and tables for study and work and improved access to power points for mobile devices⁹.

Councils and the GRLC have worked together on the development and the renewal of library buildings in the network. Resources like the Service Hierarchy Model, People Places: a guide for public library buildings in New South Wales, and the Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries are used to guide development. Financial considerations, population changes and feedback from users also inform the scoping and prioritising of development work.

4.4 Looking Forward

The future of the Branch network should be considered in terms of its capacity to deliver on the broad goals and strategies of the GRLC expressed in the Library Plan. Actions in the Plan include opening the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre, the development and management of digital and heritage collections, program development and promotion, building new collaborations and partnerships, cementing the role of the libraries as cultural centres and attracting and developing people with the right competencies for modern libraries. In delivering on the Plan the role of the static branches is to;

- Present welcoming, purposeful and safe library facilities at the heart of the community.
- Provide facilities that can accommodate engaging library programs, events and activities encouraging a lifelong love of reading and increase social inclusion.
- Provide spaces for learning study, work and leisure.

When Branches are performing well, the service is providing:

- A number of flexible, multi-use spaces for children’s activities, events, meetings, exhibitions;
- Specialist staff- providing information services, children and adult programming;
- Generalist staff – who are knowledgeable facilitators;
- A broad range of print materials and collections tailored to local needs;
- A range of multi-media DVD’s, CD’s, talking books;
- Fixed public PC’s and Wi-Fi and children’s PCs;
- Mobile devices to borrow - I pads/tablets;
- Casual seating;
- Study areas;
- Informal meeting and gathering spaces;
- Innovative and up-to-date space design with modern furnishings;
- All abilities access to the building, collections, meeting spaces and toilets.

⁸ Public Library Building Development Strategy 2009, City of Greater Geelong

⁹ Libraries Building Communities 2014 Library Survey, I & J Management Services, Summary pg. 9.

Summary and Conclusions

Over the last eight years there has been significant investment in and improvements to library infrastructure in the GRLC in line with recommendations of the 2009 Development Strategy. Twelve libraries have been upgraded including the construction of four new libraries. There are two libraries, Highton and Barwon Heads, where specific reviews were recommended and have not been completed. The recommendations of the Chilwell Community Hub - Space Planning Project were not adopted by the COGG and there are no alternative plans for the renewal of a Library on that site.

The success of the whole service will be impacted by the capacity and flexibility of buildings to meet user needs and adapt to change. Given the finite capacity of Local Government to fund libraries, and the need to provide services in new and growing communities, it is hard to justify investment in older and smaller libraries particularly in crowded and competitive catchments.

The following table summarises the library renewal or development projects foreshadowed in the next decade. The projects will impact on the capital and operating budgets of Council and in most cases require additional funding to the GRLC. In the developments foreshadowed it will be important for Local Government and the GRLC to work closely together to scope and program projects to meet demand. It must also be understood that the progress of projects will be influenced by a range of external factors including the availability of funds, development contributions and the prioritising of other community infrastructure projects.

Summary of development projects for next 10 years				
Branch	LGA	Development timeframe	Replacement or Renewal	Status
Geelong Library and Heritage Centre	COGG	Current	Replacement	Construction underway to be completed 2015.
Corio	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Site plan prepared. Concept and feasibility work planned 2015/16
Ocean Grove	COGG	0-5 years	Renewal	Preliminary planning underway
Lara	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Planning on hold
Leopold	COGG	0-5 years	Replacement	Design to commence 2015
Drysdale	COGG	5-10 years	Replacement	Preliminary site planning underway
Armstrong Creek	COGG	5-10 years	New	Library site being discussed as part of Armstrong Creek Structure Plan.
Smythesdale	Golden Plains Shire	0-5 years	New	Planning for Reading Room underway
Queenscliff	Borough of Queenscliffe	0-5 years	Renewal	Planning library improvement as part of the Hesse Street Hub Project.

Table 11

4 REVIEW OF THE SERVICE HIERARCHY MODEL

The library service and branch network inherited by the GRLC reflected municipal boundaries that existed prior to Local Government amalgamations of the mid 1990's. The infrastructure development model proposed in the 2009 Development Strategy was based on the development of a cascading service hierarchy beginning with a new Geelong City Library and Heritage Centre providing central library and heritage services to the wider region, 5 sub-regional libraries, 8 branch libraries, service models specifically tailored for rural and isolated communities and e-services.

The model was underpinned by eight Principles and Guidelines as follows:

- 1 GRLC Libraries will be planned and delivered utilising People Places guidelines and planning toolkit.
- 2 GRLC Libraries will meet People Places building area standards.
- 3 GRLC Libraries will be tailored to local community need.
- 4 GRLC Libraries will be designed as important civic spaces and places.
- 5 GRLC Libraries will provide "Whole of community" and universal service.
- 6 GRLC Libraries will be Future-Proof designed including Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD).
- 7 New Libraries will be developed in partnership and/or located with other services.
- 8 GRLC Libraries will be primary access points for Smart Technology.

Sub Regional libraries

A sub-regional Library was defined as a library with a catchment of 25,000 plus. It provides extended services for immediate and specific surrounding catchments. It would have retail opening hours - at least 2 evenings per week and weekend hours and could be co-located with complementary services like Council customer services, community hubs, recreational hubs, retail centres, and education hubs. Currently the Belmont, Corio, Drysdale and Ocean Grove libraries fall into this category.

Branch Libraries

Branch libraries were defined as a library with a catchment of 10,000 – 25,000 people. It was to provide services to the immediate catchment area and was described as *boutique*, tailored specifically to the needs of a local community and providing popular collections and smaller spaces for social interaction. Co-location opportunities include community hubs, council customer services, retail centres, and education hubs. Currently Chilwell, Geelong West, Waurin Ponds, Highton, Newcomb, Lara, Bannockburn and Torquay are defined in this category.

5.1 Review of the Hierarchy of Infrastructure and Service Model and Guiding Principles

The Hierarchy of Infrastructure and Principles have provided a framework for the redevelopment of sub-regional and branch libraries over the last five years. A review of the model is timely given the scale and scope of recent developments and new libraries being proposed.

In recent library developments the Service Hierarchy Model has been applied alongside the ALIA Standards and the People Places Guide. The recent library redevelopments and the construction of new libraries at Bannockburn, Lara, Waurin Ponds, Torquay and Ocean Grove show that there is no significant distinction made between the development of sub regional and branch libraries.

Operating issues like opening hours are related to user needs, service goals and budget and are not necessarily defined by the status of a library as branch or sub regional. To meet the changing needs of users, branch libraries with large catchments will seek to have “retail” opening hours - some evening and weekends. It is the case that all libraries in the GRLC are to be tailored to meet local needs (Principle 3) - so describing branch libraries as boutique because they provided collections to meet local does not distinguish branch, community or sub regional libraries from each other.

It would appear that the characteristics of the catchment area – the size and nature of the population, co-location with other community services, proximity to retail and commercial centres, budget and the availability of developable land have been major influences in the development outcomes and service, and not necessarily whether the library was deemed to be a branch or sub regional service.

In terms of the scope of the service to be provided, that is a decision to be made by member Councils in consultation with the GRLC. Library services are evolving with less emphasis on floor space devoted to collections and more space available for a range of related community uses. In the future, spaces in branch libraries will be more flexible and multifunctional to meet a range of uses.

Summary and Conclusions

For the GRLC there is no practical reason for a distinction to be drawn between the sub regional and the branch libraries. The Community and e library service delivery framework should be retained. Standards provided by the Australian Library and Information Association, People Places and the benchmarks provided by the Public Libraries of Victoria Network can also be used to inform service and infrastructure developments.

Further consideration should be given to the addition of guiding principles that address questions of equity and the management of a viable and sustainable service.

5 BUDGET OUTLOOK AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The quality of the GRLC service has improved dramatically in the last eight years. Increased Council operating and capital funding and the delivery of forward thinking well-targeted plans has helped the service meet the changing needs of the community.

When compared with other library services, the GRLC's operating and administrative costs per loan and visit are amongst the lowest in the state. Other efficiencies have been achieved through the early adoption of new technologies like RFID, never-the-less, planned future growth in the number and size of branches and services will require increased investment.

6.1 GRLC Budget and Strategic Resource Plan

The GRLC has prepared a Strategic Resource Plan (SRP) for the four years 2014-15 to 2017-18 as part of its ongoing financial planning. The GRLC is committed to; prudently managing financial risks relating to debt, assets and liabilities; considering the financial effects of the library service's decisions on future generations and to provide full, accurate and timely disclosure of financial information. For the GRLC the priority is financial sustainability in the medium to long term underpinned by the following objectives:

- Maintenance of existing service levels;
- Maintain a capital expenditure program on the library collection;
- Achieve a balanced budget on a cash basis.

The SRP includes a budget to support the delivery of strategies foreshadowed in the current Plan, although the current SRP does not include the operating costs of the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre. There are some key assumptions in the SRP that relate to funding and growth including;

- Member Council contributions are forecast to increase for the 2014-15 and following years at an average 5% per annum.
- State Government Grants are forecast to increase for the 2013-14 and following years at 1.5% per annum.
- Employee costs – increased by 5% each year to cover Enterprise Agreement increases and salary banding increments. There are no increases in staffing levels proposed in the SRP.
- All other expenditure categories have been increased by a CPI of 2.4% in each year.
- Capital expenditure – a 5% increase in collections spending from 2014-15 onwards in order to reach the library industry standard of the provision of 2 collection items per capita. A 2.4% CPI increase in library branch equipment and IT infrastructure from 2014-15 onwards.

Changes in any of the assumptions will impact on the capacity of the GRLC to maintain and improve services in line with the current Library Plan, and require an examination of budget management measures which could include, but not be limited to:

- Closure of the non-viable branches and/or reduce services at the least viable services.
- Reduce program and specialist staff at libraries.
- Review work practices to assign work to lower band personnel wherever possible.
- Reduce branch opening hours.
- Defer, reduce or cancel expenditures on key capital programs such as the IT upgrades.
- Defer the repayment of the superannuation liability.
- Reduce branch staffing levels to the minimum required to comply with workplace health and safety regulations.
- Withdraw the reservations service or introduce charges based on full cost recovery.
- Exploration of other funding sources including grants, sponsorship, donations and fees.

6.2 The GRLC Funding Model

As per the Regional Library Agreement¹⁰, the direct costs of each service point and mobile service are borne by the member councils in whose municipal district the service is delivered. The Corporation generates income from member Councils by charging the actual costs of providing services per branch and the redistribution of regional costs based on the latest visits and loans data for each Council. Variations in member contributions from year to year occur when there are changes to the numbers of visitors and loans to particular services i.e. moving from a mobile library to a static service. Table 11 is a summary of the income sources of the GRLC.

With the opening of the new GLHC it is predicted that there will be an increase in the number of visitors to the Central Library from around 150,000 to 300,000 per annum. In years to come this will impact on the contribution COGG will make to the indirect or regional costs of the service as well as increased operating costs arising from the expanded service.

As mentioned earlier the current SRP does not include any of the costs of running the new GLHC or any of the other proposed library development projects. The budget for the new GLHC is anticipated to be in the order of \$1.4m annually, substantially higher than the former Geelong City Library budget which was \$504,808 in 2014/15.

GRLC Income Sources 2014/15		
Member Council Contributions	State Government Contribution	Other Income
\$8,541,051	\$1,755,343	\$325,359

Table 12

6.3 Limitations to Government Funding

There are new pressures being brought to bear on Council budgets. The Federal Government's decision to pause the indexation of the Financial Assistance Grants means that Councils have to absorb more of the costs related to inflation. It is likely Councils will be looking for efficiencies in

¹⁰ Regional Library Agreement, Clause 7.9.

service delivery; to reduce services or increase revenue from other sources. In 2013/14 this change created a \$91 million hole in revenue to local government across Victoria. It has a big impact on rural and regional councils, and the community services and library funding particularly.¹¹

The decision of the new State Government to freeze or cap local government rates will put further pressure on the pool of funds available for services like libraries. Without a cap on rate rises GRLC member Council’s projected rate increases over the next 4 years were around 4-5%. State Government funding for libraries has risen by around 2% per annum over the last 5 years and as a proportion of overall library funding continues to decline.

While the many of the initiatives outlined in the Library Plan are achievable through the development and reallocation of existing resources and grant funding, there are commitments like the digital library and improvement to IT infrastructure that will require new ongoing funding or savings from elsewhere.

6.4 Comparative costs for the Library Service

As discussed earlier, the GRLC is a low cost service on most financial efficiency measures compared with other services in the state i.e. operating expenditure per capita (14th lowest of 42), cost per loan (7th lowest of 42) cost per visit (3rd lowest of 42) and cost per hour open (3rd lowest of 42). Comparisons by branch can also be made and Table 14 shows branch costs per visit to illustrate the variation that exists within the service.

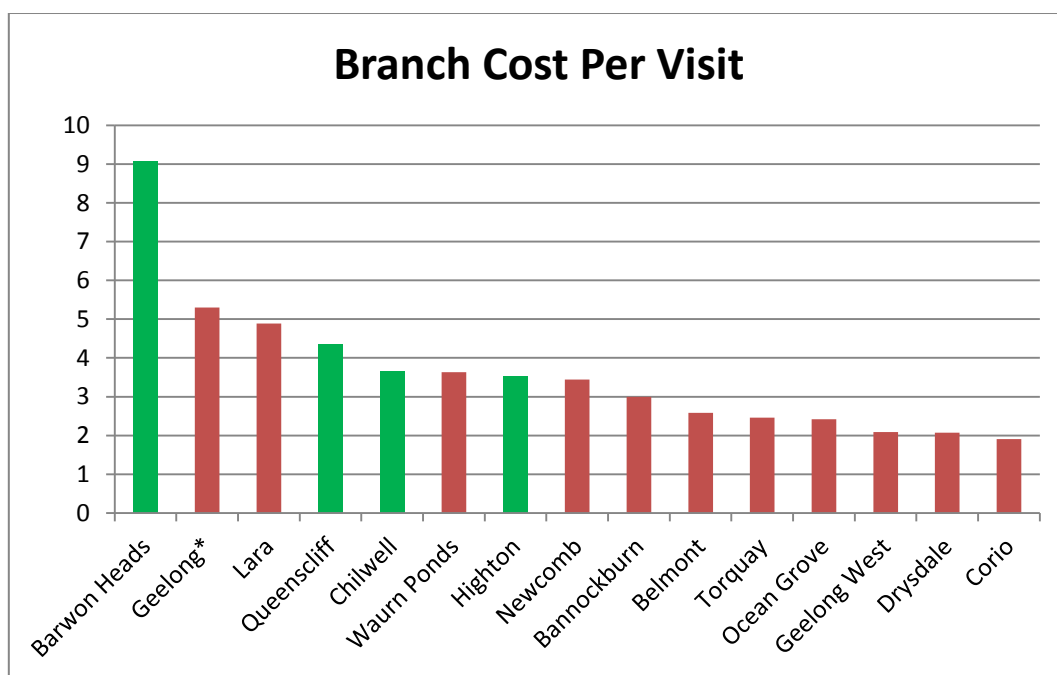


Table 13 *These are figures for the temporary Geelong Library

This table tells us something of the cost benefits of larger, newer, well located services. The costs for Barwon Heads and Queenscliff Libraries are well above the average, while Chilwell and Highton Library are slightly above the average. The patronage of the Geelong Library has declined significantly in the temporary location. The higher than would be anticipated costs per visit for the

¹¹ MAV press release July 2014

Lara Library require further investigation. The Waurm Ponds Library is still developing an audience and the fact that the service is offered on two floors impacts on the staffing required. Fine tuning of opening hours and staffing levels will help address other variations between branches.

6.5 Savings with branch closures

If the COGG were to close the non-viable branches in the City – Highton Chilwell and Barwon Heads there would be an annual saving of \$309,818 based on the 2014/15 operating costs. These are three of the cheapest services run by the GRLC because of their floor size, staffing levels and limited opening hours. Further savings would be achieved in a reduction in the contribution to the regional costs based on the visits and loans. COGG would also have reduced maintenance and utility costs for the sites.

Summary and Conclusions

There have been big improvements in the standard of the Library service over the last eight years. This is due to increased Council capital and operating funding for libraries and the delivery of well targetted Library Plans by the GRLC. Although a big program of capital improvements are foreshadowed across the network, the SRP does not currently include the likely increases in operating budgets.

The proposed library developments in the region will be occurring in an environment where Government funding is becoming more constrained. There are limited opportunities to find savings in this relatively lean and efficient organisation. But there is evidence that some branches are unviable and not cost effective. Savings could be achieved with out impacting significantly on people's access to and overall satisfaction with the library service. Other efficiencies could be achieved through the careful review of opening hours, staffing, programs and specialist staff in some locations and future library developments should be planned with a view to minimising operating costs. The GRLC should also be pursuing other income from donations, grants, sponsorship and fees.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review has sought to critically assess the existing Library Branch Network and make recommendations for a viable and sustainable network that can meet the ongoing challenge of providing a relevant and high quality library service. There are 16 static branches in the GRLC network and this is the largest number of branches managed by a library service in the State. The larger, new branches are, in the main, performing well and being progressively improved. The general level of satisfaction of users of the service is very high in both the new larger branches and the smaller branches. Never-the-less the use of smaller and less viable libraries continues to decline and this pattern has been observed over a period of years.

While it is not the role of the GRLC to close branches in the network, there is value in the GRLC having a clear understanding of the relative performance of all branches. If changes in funding arrangements were to occur, or further efficiencies within the service were required, the GRLC should be able to identify strategies to maintain the quality of the overall service. A number of recommendations have been made accordingly;

1 REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STATIC LIBRARIES IN THE NETWORK TARGETING THE LESS VIABLE BRANCHES. THOSE BRANCHES INCLUDE;

a) Chilwell Library. The rationale for this recommendation is:

- The Chilwell Library has achieved 3 to 4 non-viable measures in 2005, 2010 and 2014.
- The Chilwell Library catchment is over-serviced. Within 2 km or a 6 minute drive of the library, are the GLHC, Geelong West and Belmont Libraries.
- The Library is small with limited capacity to host the range of programs and activities being offered at the larger GRLC libraries.
- Over the last five years loans have continued to decline and visits are down by 12%.
- The collection is small and there are more items returned to this library than are borrowed.
- 35% of the time members of Chilwell Library use other nearby libraries to borrow items.
- Redevelopment plans prepared in 2009 for the Library were not adopted by Council and there is no indication that the recommended investment in the building will occur.
- Evidence gathered through this process confirms the recommendations of the 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network which concluded that, “continuation of the service represented an uneconomic utilisation of resources because of low usage and proximity to other larger libraries”.

b) Reduce community access to the Barwon Heads Library and examine alternative service delivery models. The rationale for this recommendation is;

- In 2005, 2010 and 2014 Barwon Heads Library was the only library in the network that was non-viable across all four measures. It has the lowest visits per hour open,

loans per hour open, internet session per hour open and stock turnover of any branch in the network.

- The library is very small and is located in a primary school with limited community opening hours (13) per week. The small space limits the collection size to just over 6000 items, which is less than recommended for a viable library.
- There is another branch in the catchment. Ocean Grove Library is 4.2 km or a 7 minute drive away.
- The 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network and the 2009 Development Strategy both recommended that Barwon Heads Library be closed.
- Alternate service delivery models could include improved digital access and the identification of locations for pick up and returns.

c) Highton Library. The rationale for this recommendation is:

- The library is the smallest in the network at 135sqm with a limited capacity to provide the range of services and programs identified in the Library Plan.
- The Highton Library catchment is over serviced. The Belmont Library is 1.8 km away from Highton and 4 km from the Waurin Ponds Library.
- The 1999 Review of the Greater Geelong Branch Library Network also made the above observation and noted the “doubtful” cost benefit of extensions or refurbishments to the building in a revitalised branch library network.
- 68% of members of this Library prefer other libraries to borrow items and many more items are returned to this library than are borrowed from it.
- Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 loans have fallen by 23%. Over the same period the visits to the library have also declined by 25%.
- It is likely that there will be a further decline in the patronage of this service when the GLHC opens in late 2015.
- The Branch only marginally exceeds the visits and loans per hour non-viability.

2 MONITOR AND REVIEW PERFORMANCE OF LIBRARY BRANCHES TO ENHANCE EFFICIENCY TARGETING THE FOLLOWING BRANCHES;

a) Review the service and usage at Queenscliff Library.

The small catchment is a major contributor to the low scores on the non-viability measures. The Branch ranks highly on costs per visit, has high rates of membership from the local community and is well supported by the local community and Council. There are plans afoot that may result in improvements to the building and other initiatives should be explored to increase the use and efficiency of the service.

b) Review the service and usage at the Lara Library.

This is a relatively new branch that ranks highly on costs per visit and below average on visits per hour open and PC usage. A review of staffing, programming, the collection, promotion and the opening hours will identify opportunities to improve the performance and viability of this valued local service.

- c) **Monitor the performance of the Geelong West Library after the opening of the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre.**

The GLHC is 1.4 km from the Geelong West Library. Changes in use of the Geelong West Library should be monitored following the opening of the GLHC and opportunities to modify the service delivery model should be explored.

- d) **Complete the branch library network and opening hours review to ensure equitable access to library services across the region. (as per the Library Plan)**

3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- a) **Establish strategic library development working group with the COGG.**

Given the number of library development projects being considered by the COGG, a formal working group including key COGG and GRLC staff should be established to discuss scope, timing and funding of projects.

- b) **Revise the Service Hierarchy Model and remove the distinction between the Branch and Sub-regional library service.**

Standards provided by the Australian Library and Information Association, People Places and the benchmarks provided by the Public Libraries of Victoria Network provide comprehensive frameworks for library service and infrastructure development. These guides more adequately inform library development than the current sub-regional and branch library definitions.

APPENDIX A

SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND VIABILITY MEASURES FOR GRLC BRANCHES 2013/14

Library	Costs	Staff EFT	Members	Collection	Visits	Loans	Public access internet sessions	Wireless sessions	Hours per week	Hours open per year	Vists per hour open	Loans per hour	Internet sessions per PC/hour	Stock turnover
Bannockburn	\$ 210,414	3.16	3,015	16,643	68,774	91,877	3,538	11,363	36.50	1898	36.23	48.40	0.3	5.52
Barwon Heads	\$ 65,259	0.64	574	6,199	6,870	13,158	594	439	13.00	676	10.16	19.46	0.29	2.12
Belmont	\$ 721,182	9.54	15,575	52,048	278,941	434,228	37,186	22,487	63.00	3276	85.14	132.50	0.7	8.34
Chilwell	\$ 120,246	1.39	1,398	14,239	33,028	59,471	2,839	964	30.50	1586	20.82	37.49	0.42	4.17
Corio	\$ 449,964	6.22	10,475	39,299	235,075	218,137	30,357	58,892	50.00	2600	90.41	83.89	0.6	5.5
Drysdale	\$ 279,473	3.75	6,478	20,438	134,584	198,290	12,272	6,802	50.50	2626	51.25	41.36	0.51	9.7
Geelong**	\$ 504,808	6.4	13,942	43,827	169,726	265,169	16,871	11,616	42.50	2210	76.79	111.98	0.76	1.73
Geelong West	\$ 425,917	5.87	11,601	39,255	203,478	353,584	29,199	39,755	58.00	3016	67.46	117.23	0.8	9
Highton	\$ 133,662	1.61	2,703	11,038	37,866	62,051	1,676	1,909	28.85	1500.12	25.24	39.10	0.55	5.62
Lara	\$ 335,675	3.68	4,232	17,541	68,615	95,582	9,809	9,333	47.00	2444	28.07	66.00	0.28	5.44
Newcomb	\$ 372,775	4.57	8,305	25,301	108,120	192,819	13,835	11,451	42.50	2210	48.92	36.97	0.62	7.62
Ocean Grove	\$ 354,373	4.99	8,674	27,243	145,949	232,729	10,199	11,519	49.50	2574	56.7	34.42	0.6	8.54
Queenscliff	\$ 134,414	1.65	2,675	14,939	30,904	58,649	3,447	1,856	30.50	1586	19.48	42.50	0.4	3.92
Torquay	\$ 219,939	3.04	6,362	19,862	89,320	156,329	18,420	15,190	45.50	2366	37.75	87.24	0.64	7.87
Wairn Ponds	\$ 510,804	6.71	6,242	31,505	140,378	244,902	15,000	19,257	60.00	3120	44.99	75.51	0.48	7.77
All Static Libraries *	\$4,838,905	63.22	101,617	379,377	1,751,628	2,676,975	205,242	222,833	648	33688.12	699.41	974.05		92.86
Website visits, online reservations, ebook loans					770,516						av = 47	av = 65	av .53	av = 6.19
* Static Libraries not including the Western Heights Library														
**Added in 2011/12 figures Geelong Library for loans and visits dues to closures in the 12/13 in preparation for the opening of the new GLHC														

Table 1

APPENDIX B

BRANCH OVERVIEW BY LGA

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

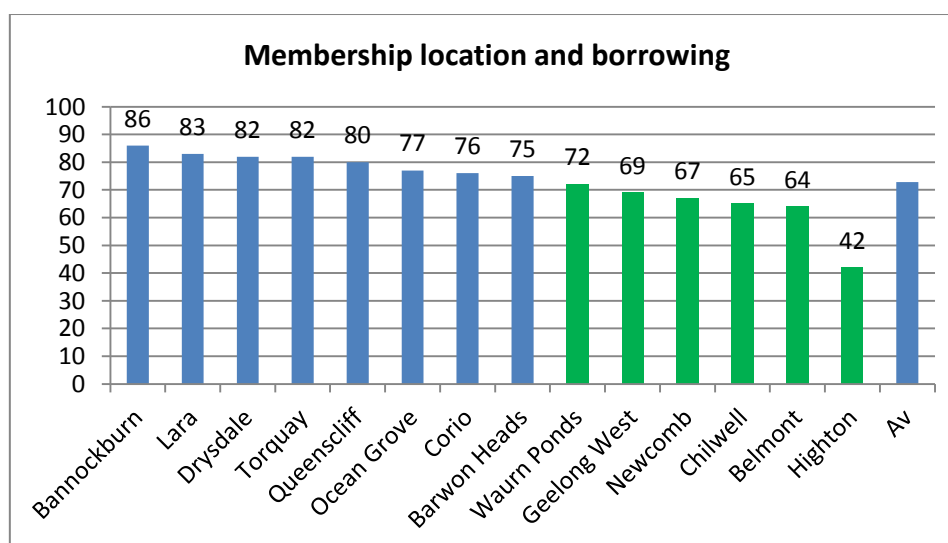
Buildings

Thirteen of the 16 branches in the GRLC are in the City of Greater Geelong (including the Western Heights College). There is an big range in the size and amenity of branches from the smallest branch in Highton at 135sqm to over 900sqm at Corio, Waurn Ponds and Belmont and 6000m at the yet to be opened GLHC. Over the last eight years there have been refurbishments at Belmont, Geelong West, Drysdale, Newcomb and Ocean Grove and new libraries in Lara, Waurn Ponds and Central Geelong.

While the long term future of the Highton and the Chilwell branches remains unclear, limited investment in the buildings has occurred. The GRLC has eight libraries - Corio, Geelong West, Geelong City, Chilwell, Highton, Belmont, Waurn Ponds and Western College servicing an area of just over 50sq km in the centre of Geelong. The Chilwell and Highton branch libraries struggle in a crowded catchment with better services so close, as the following tables show.

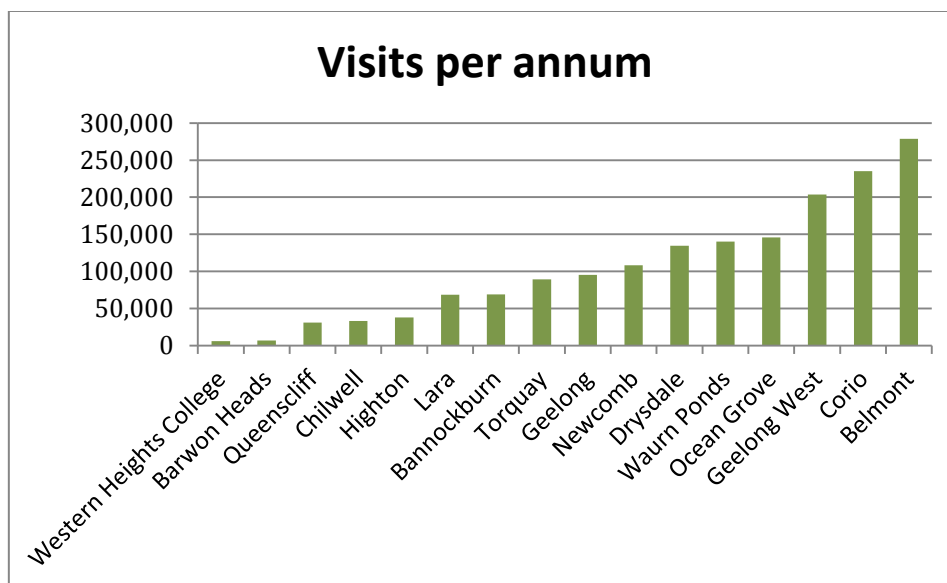
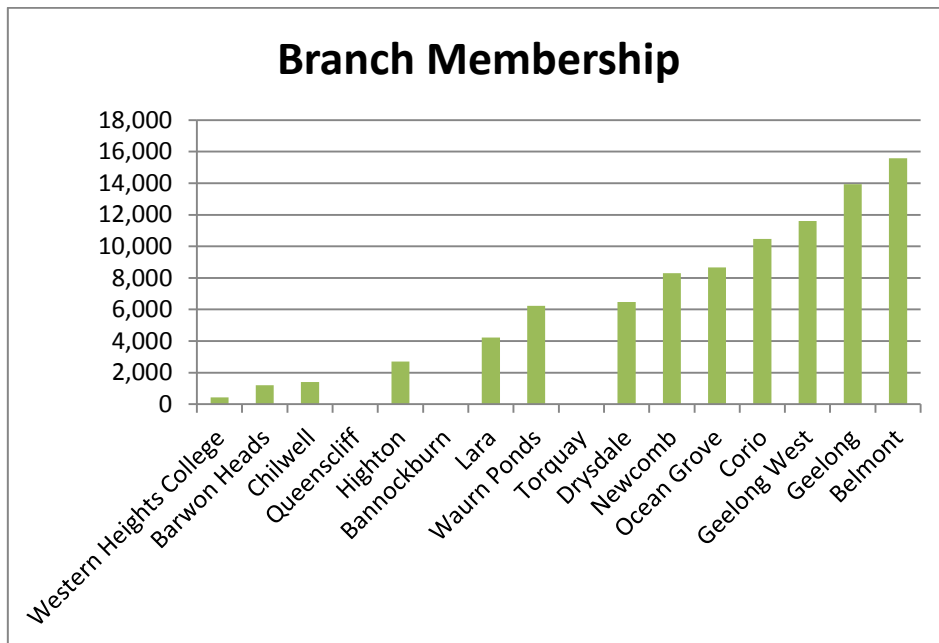
Travel time and distances between Chilwell and Highton and Central Geelong Libraries			
	Travel time in car	Distance	
Chilwell Library	6 min	2.8 km	Belmont Library
	6 min	1.8 km	GLHC
	5 min	1.9	Geelong West Library
Highton Library	3 min	1.8km	Belmont Library
	8 min	4 km	Waurn Ponds Library

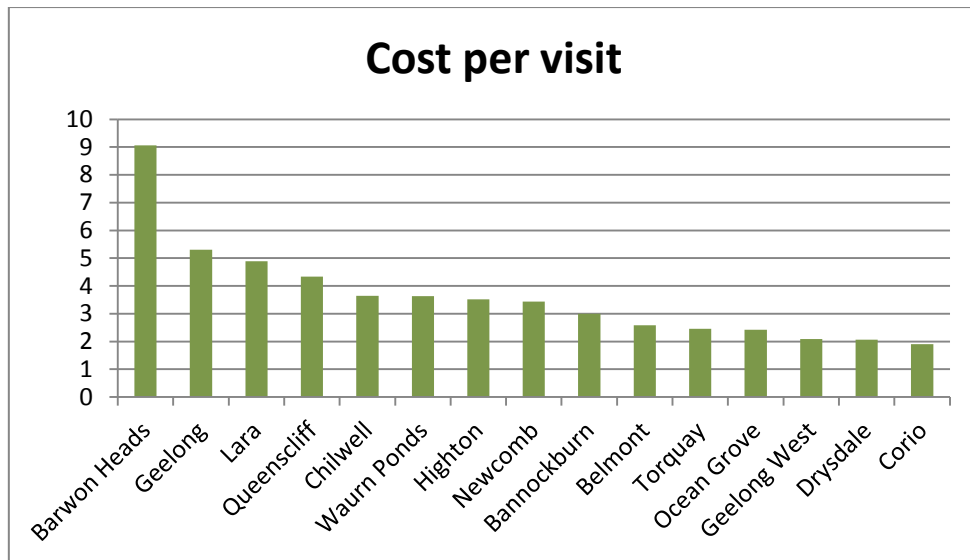
The Membership Location and Borrowing graph below shows the percentage of times members use the library they belong to for borrowing. It is an illustration of how members of the central libraries in Geelong utilise other branches because of their proximity and to access larger collections.



Activity levels in relation to other Branches

The three following tables illustrate the wide variety in the performance of the COGG branches.





Activity levels at different branches are influenced by a range of factors and there are some key measures of activity that tell us about the use and viability of different branches. Factors that influence library use include;

- The size of the population catchment around the branch
- The proximity of other library branches
- Size of the building and its capacity to accommodate collections, programs and other activities.
- The design and amenity of the library space
- Location and access including the availability of parking and proximity to other retail and community services
- Quality and range of items in the collection
- Number of staff and skills

The cost per visit tells us something of the cost benefits of larger, newer, well located services. The costs for Barwon Heads Library are the highest in the GRLC and Chilwell and Highton Libraries are slightly above the average. The patronage of the Geelong Library has declined significantly in the temporary location impacting on its operating costs per visit. The higher than would be anticipated costs per visit for the Lara Library require further investigation. The Waurn Ponds Library is still developing an audience and the fact that the service is offered on two floors impacts on the minimum staffing requirements. Fine tuning of opening hours and staffing levels will help address other variations between branches.

Viability Measures

Four key operational measures have been identified to assess the viability of GRLC branch libraries. Three of these viability measures were used by JL Management Services Pty Ltd in reviews of the Geelong libraries in 2005 and then again in 2010. The viability measures have been defined as follows:

- Visits per hour open as a broad measure of a library's appeal.
- Loans per hour open as a measure of how well a library performs its core function.

- Internet sessions per PC as a measure of the library’s appeal to users of new technologies
- Stock turnover as the primary measure of a library collection’s relevance, appeal and performance.

The following table includes scores achieved by Geelong branches (minus the Western Heights Library) on non-viability measures as defined in the body of the Review.

Non - Viability Indicators 2013/14				
Branches	Visit per hour open (<24)	Loans per Hour (<33)	Internet session per PC per hour (<.4)	Stock Turnover (<4.7)
Barwon Heads	10.16	19.46	.29	2.12
Chilwell	20.82	37.49	.42	4.17
Highton	25.24	39.10	.55	5.62
Lara	28.07	66.00	.28	5.44
Waurin Ponds	44.99	75.51	.48	7.77
Newcomb	48.92	36.97	.62	7.62
Drysdale	51.25	41.36	.51	9.7
Ocean Grove	56.7	34.42	.6	8.54
Geelong West	67.46	117.23	.8	9
Geelong	76.79	111.98	.76	1.73
Belmont	85.14	132.50	.7	8.34
Corio	90.41	83.89	.6	5.5

2014 Survey Results

There is a wide variety of responses in the survey at a branch level. Respondents reported increased satisfaction with all nearly aspects of the service when compared to the 2012 survey. Improvements were sought by increasing the size of libraries with particular emphasis on more room for study and reading, extension of opening hours including evenings and weekends and management of noise. Respondents also sought access to power points for laptops and other mobile devices.

Issues and Opportunities

There are 13 static branches in the GOGG (including Western Heights College) and 8 are concentrated in a relatively small area in the centre of Geelong. The larger branches are, in the main, performing well and being progressively improved. The general level of satisfaction of users is very high in the large and small branches. Never-the-less the use of smaller and less viable libraries continues to decline and this pattern has been observed over a period of years.

The recent survey contains a great deal of valuable information that the GRLC staff and management should review to ensure that the service continues to improve and meet the needs of users. The impact of the new GLHC on libraries in central Geelong will need to be closely monitored. Ideally the new Library will attract large numbers of new members and increase library visitation and borrowing – and not just drain away usage from existing libraries. The GRLC must work to ensure the same high quality services are available from all branches.

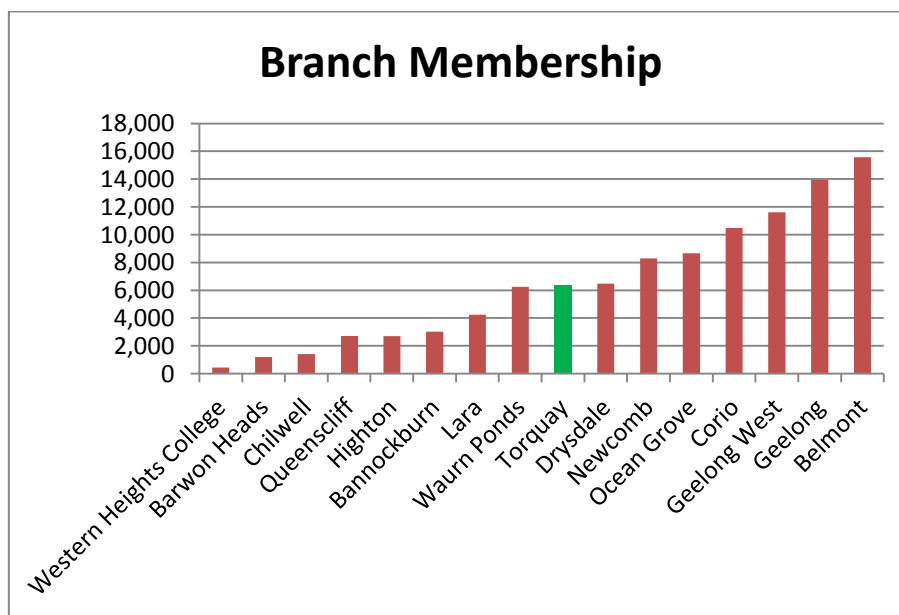
BRANCH OVERVIEW BY LGA

TORQUAY LIBRARY - SURF COAST SHIRE

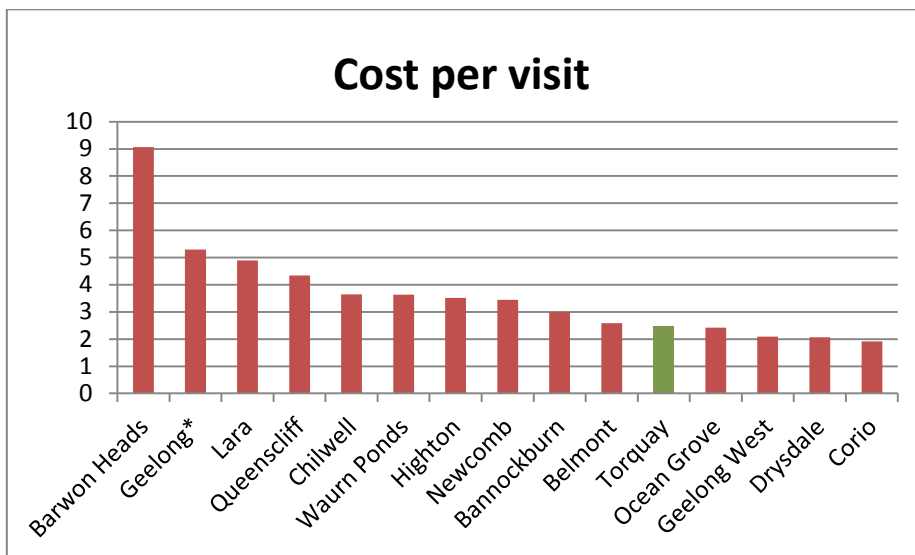
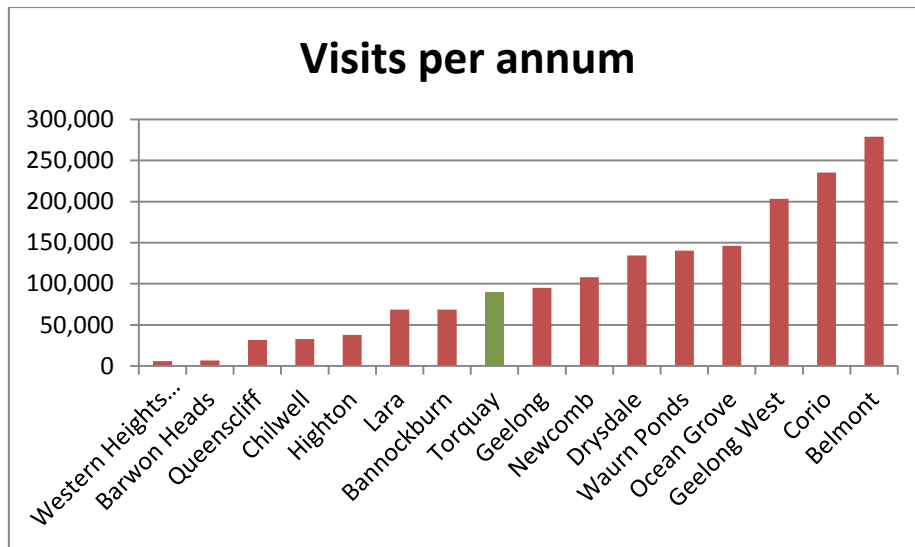
Building

The Torquay Library is well located in Beach Rd Torquay, in the north west corner of Surf City, with the entrance beside that the Surf World Museum and Community Hall. The library is open for 45.5 hours per week and has 3.04 EFT and a collection with 19862 items. In 2013 there was a \$300,000 upgrade to the library that almost doubled the available floor area to 325sqm and provided more space for seating and programs, shelf space for collections, plus an increase to eight public use computers with internet access.

Activity levels in relation to other Branches in 2013/14



The Torquay Library services a quite defined community and catchment and a significant proportion of members are using the Torquay as their main Library. The other main library used is the mobile service that covers other parts of the Shire.



The Torquay Library is below the average on costs per visit and this is related to the opening hours and staffing levels. This library particularly is affected by seasonal variations. During holiday periods visits increase as people access free Wi-Fi services and borrowing for holiday reading viewing and listening.

2014 Survey Results

The bi-annual GRLC user survey asks a range of questions about satisfaction with the service. 241 people from a membership base of 6362 filled in this survey in 2014. The survey results show the popularity of the service amongst members with an overall satisfaction rating of 4.6 (out of 5).

The suggested improvements at the Torquay Library included better management of noise. Problems are emerging from the different uses of the limited space particularly with children’s activities. A larger library, more technology, access to power points, extended opening hours-particularly on the weekends and more support from staff, were other common themes in the feedback.

Viability Measures

Four key operational measures have been identified to assess the viability of GRLC branch libraries. Three of these viability measures were used by JL Management Services Pty Ltd in reviews of the Geelong libraries in 2005 and then again in 2010. The viability measures have been defined as follows:

- Visits per hour open as a broad measure of a library's appeal.
- Loans per hour open as a measure of how well a library performs its core function.
- Internet sessions per PC as a measure of the library's appeal to users of new technologies
- Stock turnover as the primary measure of a library collection's relevance, appeal and performance.

The Table below shows that the Torquay Library is well above all of the non-viability measures and below the GRLC average only on the number of visits per hour.

Performance against non-viability measures 2013/14				
Branch	Visit per hour open (<24)	Loans per Hour (<33)	Internet session per PC per hour (<.4)	Stock Turnover (<4.7)
Torquay	37.75	87.24	.64	7.87
Av	47	65	.53	6.19

Issues and Opportunities

This Branch is the only service provided in the local catchment and Surf Coast residents use this library and the mobile service to meet their library needs. Members are interested in seeing noise in the space better managed and technology needs better met. Promoting the capacity to access all parts of the collection through the catalogue and bookings system would be worthwhile. Ensuring staffing is adequate to meet the demands placed on the service to due to seasonal fluctuations could improve customer satisfaction.

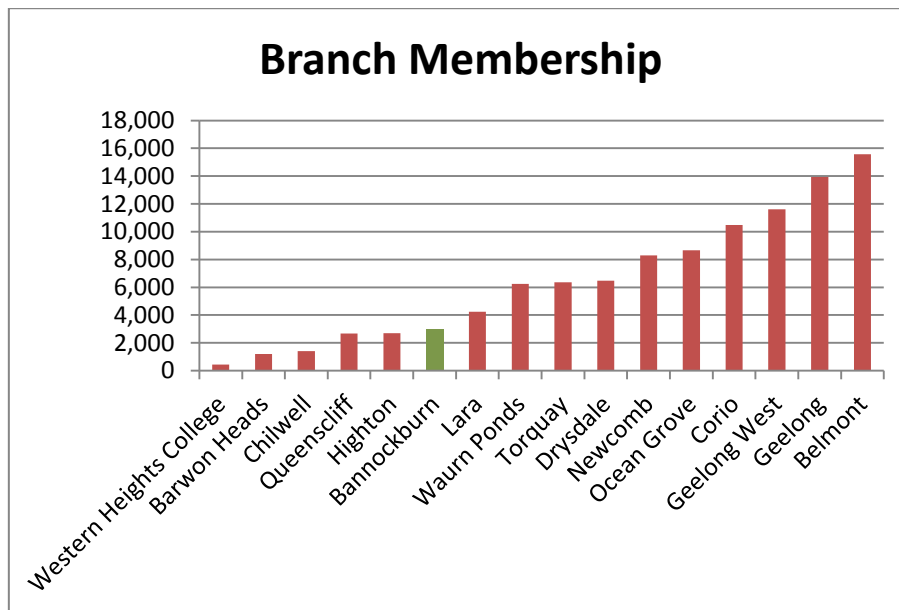
BRANCH OVERVIEW BY LGA

BANNOCKBURN LIBRARY – GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

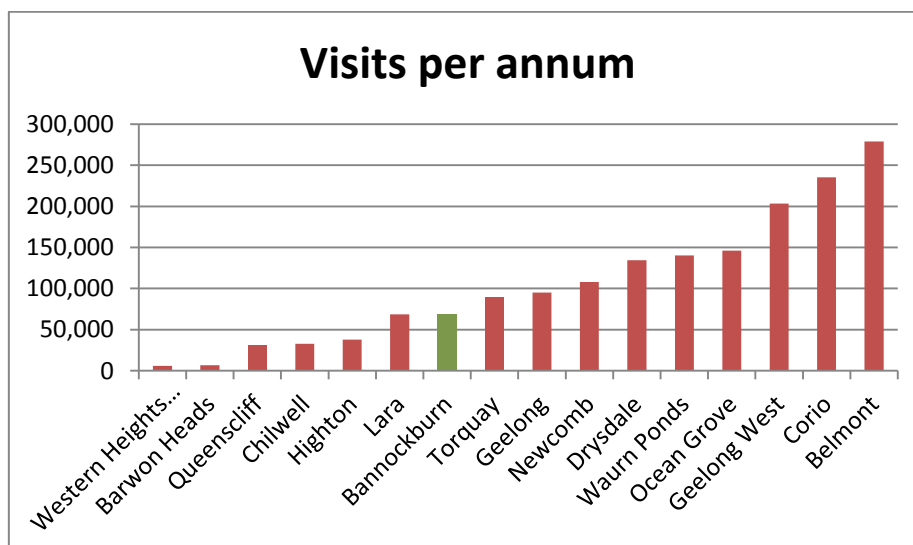
Building

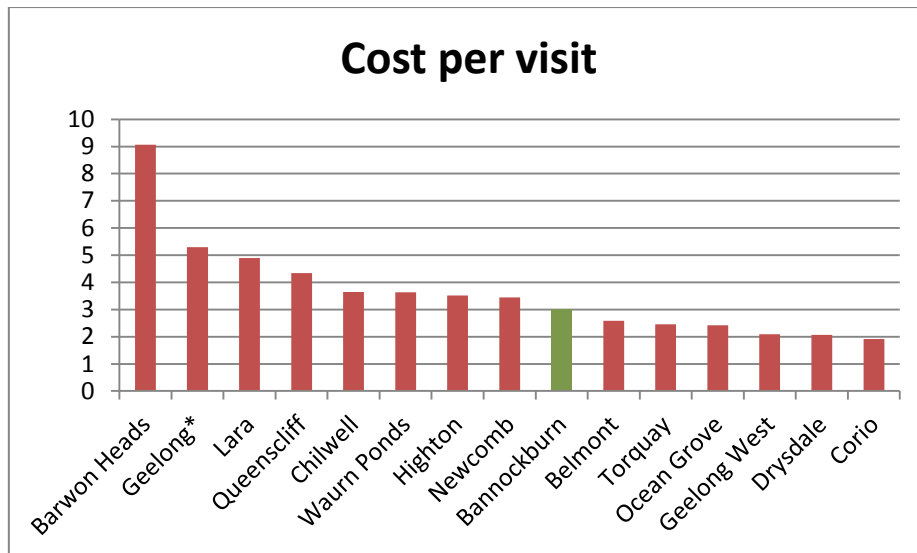
The Bannockburn library opened in May 2012 and is a modern flexible library space collocated with other community facilities. The building is 400sqm in size with meeting and activity spaces and is open 36.5 hours per week including one evening and Saturday mornings and operates with 3.16 EFT. There are 15,000 print and multimedia items in the collection and 6 public internet/multipurpose computers.

Activity levels in relation to other Branches in 2013/14



The Bannockburn Library has been open for nearly 3 years and services a large catchment from a town with population of just over 3,500 people. The library has 3015 members and users of this branch are also using the mobile service that covers other parts of the Shire.





The Bannockburn Library is below the branch average on costs per visit and that is related to the opening hours and staffing levels. This library is not open on Mondays.

2014 Survey Results

The bi-annual GRLC user survey asks a range of questions about satisfaction with the service. 169 people from a membership base of 3015 filled in this survey in 2014. The survey results show high levels of satisfaction from users across the Board, particularly in relation to the building – 4.8 out of 5 and above average ratings on all measures related to staff.

The suggested improvements at the Bannockburn Library included Monday opening, and earlier opening time - 9.00am to coincide with school drop off times. Improved access to the external book return chute was suggested and better access to the lower shelving. The feedback indicates that more marketing and promotion of different elements of the service would be valuable.

Viability Measures

Four key operational measures have been identified to assess the viability of GRLC branch libraries. Three of these viability measures were used by JL Management Services Pty Ltd in reviews of the Geelong libraries in 2005 and then again in 2010. The viability measures have been defined as follows:

- Visits per hour open as a broad measure of a library's appeal.
- Loans per hour open as a measure of how well a library performs its core function.
- Internet sessions per PC as a measure of the library's appeal to users of new technologies
- Stock turnover as the primary measure of a library collection's relevance, appeal and performance.

The Table on the next page shows that the Bannockburn Library exceeds all of the non-viability measures and is below the average of all libraries in the GRLC. This is not surprising given the small population catchment and the large catchments and libraries that are included in the comparative data.

Performance against non-viability measures				
Branch	Visit per hour open (<24)	Loans per Hour (<33)	Internet session per PC per hour (<.4)	Stock Turnover (<4.7)
Bannockburn	36.23	48.4	.3	5.52
Av	47	65	.53	6.19

Issues and Opportunities

This is a relatively new Branch and the only static library in the Golden Plains Shire. Residents use this library and the mobile service to meet most of their library needs. Commuters and visitors to Geelong are also using the Geelong West Library. Generally people are delighted that there is a library branch in their community and the staff are performing well. Improvements users seek relate to Monday opening, and earlier opening. Access to the external chute should be reviewed and the use of lower shelving needs to be assessed. More marketing and promotion of different elements of the service would be valuable.

BRANCH OVERVIEW BY LGA

QUEENSLIFF LIBRARY -BOROUGH OF QUEENSLIFFE

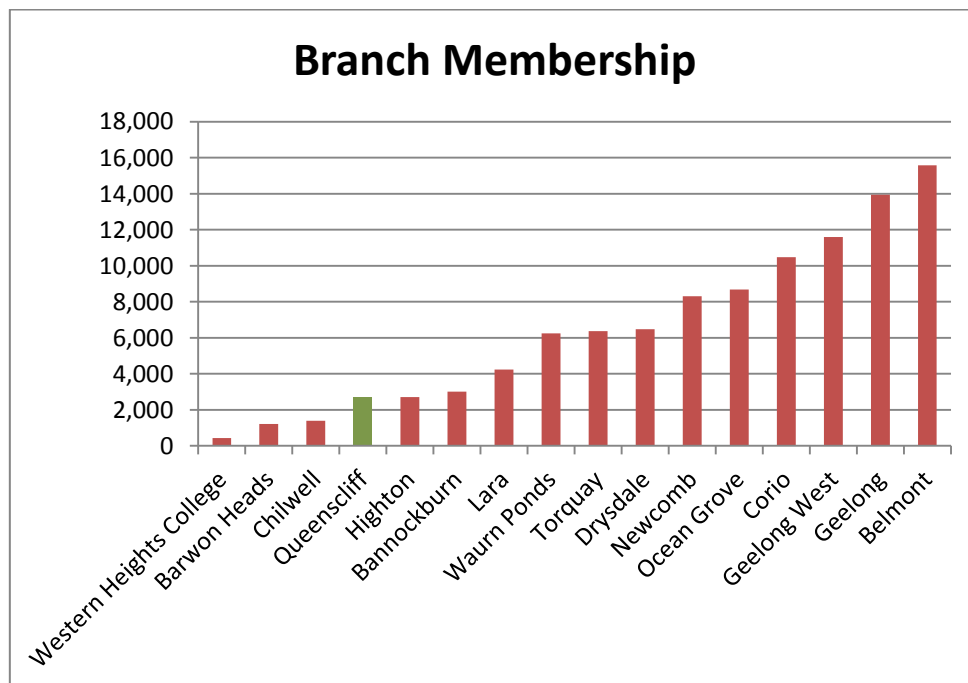
Building

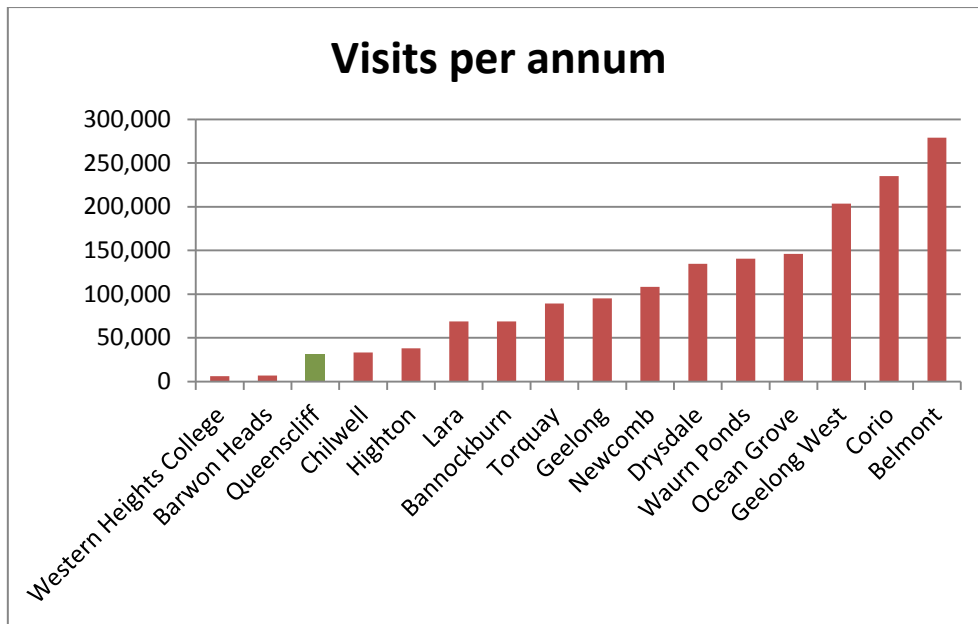
The Queenscliff Library is well located in an historic building in the main street of Queenscliff and is collocated with the local Tourist Information Centre. The library is open for 30.5 hours per week and has 1.65 EFT and a collection size of 14939 items. The floor area of the library is 268sqm. Council is investigating opportunities to increase the size and the access to the Library through the Queenscliff Hesse Street Hub Project.

The Hesse Street Hub Project is a building development project that co-locates the Queenscliff Museum, the Visitor Information Service and the Library under one roof. A development of this nature aligns well with the Public Library Building Development Strategy and the principle that libraries be developed in partnership with or located with other services. In what could become a civic landmark development, the role of the library is of the key anchor tenant attracting the highest usage and the broadest spectrum of the community.

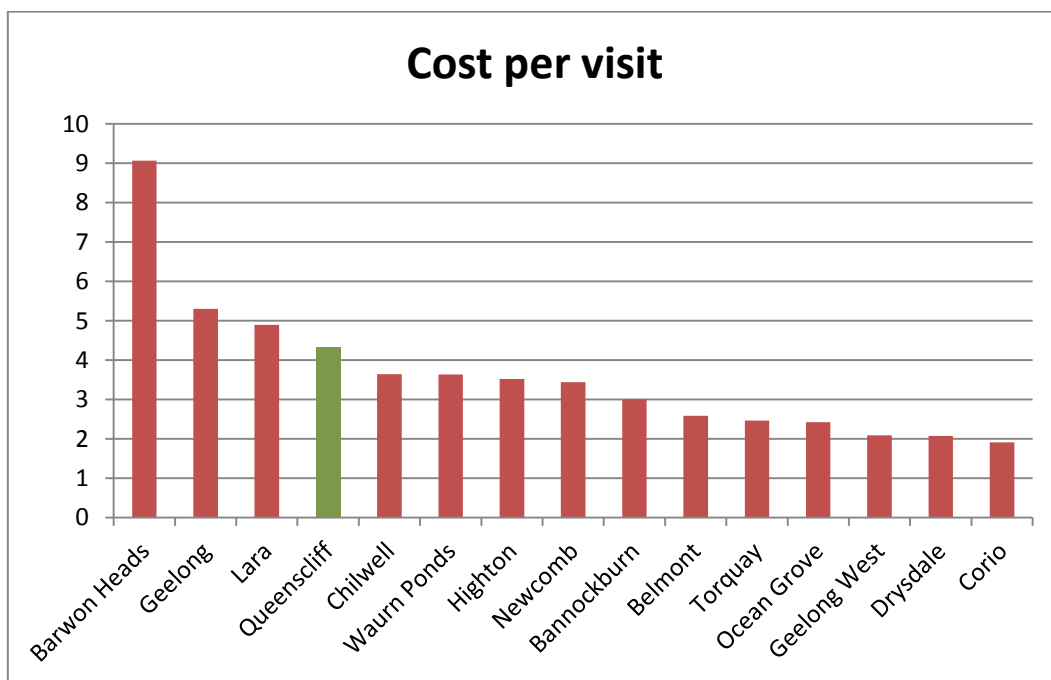
The development would see the floor area of this small library extended by ??? sqm. This presents a number of opportunities to improve the service by increasing the area available for programs, events, study and research. New technology will be introduced into the building including self-check out, more PC's and technology to enhance the Museum services

Activity levels in relation to other Branches





The Queenscliff Library is a small branch servicing a small catchment. It is not surprising that relative to other branches the service is at the lower end of memberships (although a large proportion of the local community belong to the library) and visits.



There are a range of factors that contribute to the cost per visit, i.e. opening hours, appropriateness of collection, promotion. Improvement in this area towards the median will impact on the viability of the service over time.

2014 Survey Results

The bi-annual GRLC user survey asks a range of questions about satisfaction with the service. 155 people from a membership base of 2675 filled in this survey in 2014. The survey confirms the popularity of the service amongst members with an overall satisfaction rating of 4.8 (out of 5).

The improvements people sought for the Queenscliff Library included refreshing the collection, increased space and seating and tables for study and work. This is another library that sees peaks in usage related to holiday seasons and the management of this “busyness” is a both a challenge and opportunity for staff. Better promotion of the opening hours would be beneficial.

The only significant deviations from the average, in terms of the survey, were the high number of long time users; the frequency with which people talk with staff, meet others they know and other people in the community outside their usual social circle. It should be noted that there is currently no self check-out at this library.

Viability Measures

Four key operational measures have been identified to assess the viability of GRLC branch libraries. Three of these viability measures were used by JL Management Services Pty Ltd in reviews of the Geelong libraries in 2005 and then again in 2010. The viability measures have been defined as follows:

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Non - Viability Indicators 2013/14					
	Branches	Visit per hour open (<24)	Loans per Hour (<33)	Internet session per PC per hour (<.4)	Stock Turnover (<4.7)
2	Queenscliffe	19.48	42.5	.42	3.92

The Queenscliff Library triggered the non-viability measures on the number of visits per hour open and the stock turnover in this Review. Given it is the only library in the Borough of Queenscliffe, the small population catchment and the distance to other services it is appropriate to continue to monitor the performance of the Branch to identify opportunities to increase the relevance and appeal of the service.

Issues and Opportunities

This Branch is the only service provided in the local catchment. The nearest library is 14.3 km and 18 min drive away at Ocean Grove. This is a highly valued and popular service in a local community that has an older demographic. The size of the library will impact on the viability of the service, but small libraries are not necessarily unviable. Increasing visitation and a review of the size and composition of the collection will impact on the viability measures. Improvements to the building to increase the programmable spaces and areas available for reading and study could impact positively on the performance of the Branch.