



# MINUTES

## MEETING OF THE GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARY CORPORATION

Thursday 1 May 2025  
Board Members and Officers only

*The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nations as the Original Owners of the lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.*



## SECTION A - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

At 5.39pm GRLC Chair, Cr Liz Pattison (Mayor) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The meeting was held in person and via MS Teams. It was closed to the public and opened and closed in camera.

### 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Cr Pattison acknowledged the Traditional Owners of this land and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

*'The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nations as the Original Owners of the lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.'*

## 2. ATTENDEES

		Attendance		
Name	Council	In person	Online	Apology
<b>BOARD MEMBERS</b>				
Cr Isabelle Tolhurst	Borough of Queenscliffe (BoQ)	X		
Cr Elise Wilkison	City of Greater Geelong (CoGG)	X		
Cr Emma Sinclair	City of Greater Geelong (CoGG)	X		
Cr Rowan D. Story AM RFD	City of Greater Geelong (CoGG)	X		
Cr Trent Sullivan	City of Greater Geelong (CoGG)			X
Cr Mick McCrickard	Colac Otway Shire (COS)			X
Cr Owen Sharkey	Golden Plains Shire (GPS)	X		
Cr Liz Pattison (Chair)	Surf Coast Shire (SCS)	X		
Cr Chrissy De Deudg	Colac Otway Shire (CoS) delegate		X	
<b>COUNCIL OFFICERS</b>				
Damien Waight	General Manager, Community Life, SCS	X		
Amie Higgs	Manager Community Participation, CoGG			X
Anthony Basford	Executive Directory City Life, CoGG	X		
Gayatri Baskaran	Finance Coordinator, CoGG			X
Ian Seuren	General Manager Development & Community Services, COS			X
Martin Gill	CEO, BoQ		X	
Jo Wilson	Director Community Planning & Growth, GPS	X		
<b>GRLC OFFICERS</b>				
Vanessa Schernickau	Chief Executive Officer	X		
David Semmens	Director, Community Experience	X		
Skye Wilson	Director, P&C and Strategic Engagement	X	X	
Robbie Cullens	Director, Digital and Finance	X		
Vanessa Rechichi	Executive Assistant		X	
<b>GUEST</b>				
Lee Blashki	VAGO		x	

### 3. APOLOGIES

Ian Seuren, Cr Trent Sullivan, Cr Mick McCrickard, Amie Higgs and Gayatri Baskaran

The Chair welcomed Cr Chrissy De Deugd from Colac Otway Shire and Less Blashki from VAGO to the meeting.

### 4. INTERESTS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Nil

### 5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES DATED 27 FEBRUARY 2025 (ATTACHMENT 1)

**Recommendation:**

That the draft minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27 February 2025 be confirmed.

Moved: Cr Owen Sharkey  
Second: Cr Isabelle Tolhurst  
Passed: unanimously

## SECTION B – PRESENTATIONS

**GRLC Draft Audit Strategy Memorandum  
Lee Blashki, VAGO**

**ACTION: GRLC Audit Strategy Memorandum to be shared with Board members.**

**ACTION: VAGO report pre COVID to be shared with Board members.**

## SECTION C – REPORTS

### 1. CEO REPORT

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation

That the CEO Report be noted.

The Turning the Page Executive Steering Committee is reviewing the draft constitution with the draft library agreement to be presented for comment at the next meeting in May. Councillor briefings for each member Council will be scheduled for later in the year.

Director of Community Experience gave an update on Biyal-a Armstrong Creek Out of Hours access.

There are 10-20 people testing the out of hours access from 8am – 10am then from 6pm – 8pm during the pilot. A couple of surveys have been conducted with this pilot group to understand how it is working from the customer's perspective, and operationally in terms of opening the library, controlling that space and making sure the space is used appropriately.

The pilot has been successful. A broader media release has encouraged other people to come forward and we now have 38 members signed up.

We are capping numbers to 100 although we don't think that we would have 100 people there at one time. It is proving to be popular with young families who need to come in earlier than 10am and for those who want quieter space to work and study. The evenings are popular also.

We will continue to keep the Board updated.

The finance and HR/payroll systems migration from CoGG to inhouse is progressing well. Thanks to City of Greater Geelong team and new CFO, Gayatri, Anthony and Amie for working with us to progress. There are two options: 1 system that provides financial and HR solutions or 2 systems that integrate. We are currently going through an EOI process for the HR and payroll system and aiming for a 1 October transition. We will continue to update the Board.

## 2. **DRAFT GRLC BUDGET FY26**

**Robbie Cullen, Director Digital and Finance**

**Recommendation:**

**That the GRLC Preliminary Budget FY26 be endorsed.**

The commentary outlines changes from the draft presented in February.

The operating budget presented at the February Board meeting included a deficit of \$739k. An extensive secondary review of the budget has been completed and resulted in a significant improvement to a deficit of \$309K, despite a \$72k reduction in member contributions.

Implementing new systems will give us better visibility and more granular detail so that our budgeting will continue to improve in its accuracy.

The document is based on the local government model budget template.

The Board requested more information around the reduction of 200 services due the .5% contribution from City of Greater Geelong.

Director of Community Serviced confirmed the Executive team had a lot of discussion around what the impacts might be. Holding a vacancy for Digital Experience Activator, that provides digital programs at the Geelong Library. This includes 1-4 adult programs a week and it was agreed that this will incur the least amount of impact as we have other specialist staff in this library who can deliver similar programs.

CEO acknowledged Anthony, Amie and Ali from the City of Greater Geelong for the opportunity to discuss the various budget scenarios and impact.



The Board discussed the .5% reduction from the draft budget and narrative once on community exhibition.

**ACTION: Circulate the editorial from last year's Geelong Advertiser.**

**ACTION: Page 35 – balance sheet and total assets for this budget – actuals is lower than what it had been previously – take on notice.**

Mover: Isabell Tolhurst

Second: Cr Emma Sinclair

Approved unanimously

*Cr Rowan Story left the meeting and Damian Waight – 6.30pm*

### 3. MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Robbie Cullen, Director Digital and Finance

Recommendation:

That the Monthly Financial Report be noted

### ACTIVITY REPORT

David Semmens, Director Community Experience

Recommendation:

That the Activity Report be noted.

Snapshot of e-collection, e-books remain quite strong. The introduction of the ULibrary platform a couple of months ago has seen good engagement and hasn't detracted from Borrow Books.

Quick insight into our library of things and reservation of loans – lots of people wanting thermal cameras, significant waiting lists.

The Library of Things can be found through the app or web browser search for Library of Things.

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre is a destination library, includes lots of school visits as does Ocean Grove.

Outreach services, mobile library stops. Varies depending on frequency and the length of time and population of townships. Surf coast comparison with previous year reflects time off the road due to mechanical and staff issues.

Home Library Service review underway, looking at different ways to deliver with partners.

### 4. ACCESS & INCLUSION PLAN

Skye Wilson, Director People, Culture and Strategic Engagement

Recommendation:



That the Access and Inclusion Plan be noted.

## HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT - OCT (CONFIDENTIAL)

David, Director People, Culture & Strategic Engagement

Recommendation:

That the Health Safety and Wellbeing Report be noted.

### Other Business:

**ACTION:** CEO to confirm quorum obligations for the special budget meeting 12 June.

**ACTION:** CEO to confirm if the special budget meeting will go ahead.

### Next Meeting:

**Thursday 12 June, 5.30pm – special budget meeting TBC**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cr Liz Pattison  
Chair

Date of Confirmation:        /        / 2025



# **Geelong Regional Library Corporation**

## **Library Plan 2025 - 2029**

### **SUMMARY**

GEELONG  
REGIONAL  
LIBRARIES





## Our purpose

*— To create knowledge and connection for people and communities —*

Libraries are more than just buildings, they are places where people and ideas meet.

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

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

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

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

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

*“Where people and ideas meet”*

## Our priorities

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

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

### **Priority #1 – Encouraging personal curiosity**

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

### **Priority #2 – Evolving customer experiences**

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

### **Priority #3 – Enhancing community wellbeing**

Our libraries will continue to evolve as safe, welcoming and accessible public places where people from all walks of life connect with knowledge, ideas, and each other, for the betterment of local and wider society.

### **Priority #4 – Embracing our future**

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

**To create knowledge and connection for  
people and communities**

Priority #1  
**Encouraging  
personal  
curiosity**

Aspirations

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

Priority #2  
**Evolving  
customer  
experiences**

Aspirations

4. **Uplifting digital access and capability**
5. **Innovating our service experiences & quality**
6. **Enabling participation & productivity** – *work, study, collaborate*

Priority #3  
**Enhancing  
community  
wellbeing**

Aspirations

7. **Fostering connection & belonging**
8. **Celebrating difference & diversity**
9. **Creating places & spaces that people value**
10. **Supporting adoption of sustainable practices**

Priority #4  
**Embracing  
our future**

Aspirations

11. **Adopting a new governance model**
12. **Strengthening our financial sustainability**
13. **Strategically partnering across our region**
14. **Empowering our people to be their best**

## Priority 1 – Encouraging personal curiosity

### Aspiration #1 – Facilitating life-long learning – *literacy, creativity, heritage*

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

### Aspiration #2 – Empowering safety & responsibility online

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

### Aspiration #3 – Helping individuals navigate mis- & dis-information

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

1. **Facilitating life-long learning** – *literacy, creativity, heritage*
2. **Empowering safety & responsibility online**
3. **Navigating mis- & dis-information**

## Our Action Plan for Priority 1

ENCOURAGING PERSONAL CURIOSITY	Aspiration 1	Aspiration 2	Aspiration 3
Adapt our programs, collections and services to the changing world so that we are relevant, safe and accessible to more people who need our services in times of increased costs and social isolation, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting literacy development, through all ages and stages of life</li> <li>Enabling creativity</li> <li>Connecting to heritage stories</li> <li>Welcoming First Nations people and celebrating Traditional Owners' Heritage</li> </ul>	✓		
Continually improve and enhance our creative technology programs, collections and services, so that we remain on the cutting edge, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borrowable technology (coding kits, video gear)</li> <li>Immersive local history (VR/AR)</li> <li>Digitisation of heritage collection</li> </ul>	✓		
Design events to spark conversations and broaden horizons about current and emerging social issues / Advance regional knowledge in and constructive debate around complex challenges such as reconciliation, climate change, and social justice issues	✓	✓	✓
Deliver a suite of programs that support early years language and literacy; foster reading confidence in school-aged children; build digital and creative skills in teens and adults; and explore local and First Nations history through storytelling and arts-based experiences	✓		
Focus our programs from early childhood through to older adults to build critical thinking skills and promote safe and responsible online behaviour	✓	✓	✓

## Priority 2 – Evolving customer experiences

### Aspiration #4 – Uplifting digital access & capability

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

### Aspiration #5 – Innovating our service experiences & quality

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

### Aspiration #6 – Enabling participation & productivity – *study, work, collaborate*

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

## Our Action Plan for Priority 2

EVOLVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES	Aspiration 4	Aspiration 5	Aspiration 6
Improve the accessibility and experience of our digital services	✓	✓	
Launch a new website to support better digital engagement	✓	✓	
Help customers build digital literacy and navigate the online world, beyond our own digital services	✓		✓
Investigate the use of generative AI to connect customers with high quality information	✓	✓	✓
Develop a suite of programs to assist community in understanding and use of AI	✓	✓	✓
Increase “out-of-hours” access to library spaces		✓	✓
Support customers’ hybrid and entrepreneurial work practices through the provision of spaces, facilities and specialist tools and expertise		✓	✓
Provide job and career development tools, resources and programs		✓	✓
Explore co-location and/or complementary service opportunities with our partners, so that customers have access to a broader range of services		✓	✓
Innovate our outreach library service offerings to maximise access		✓	✓
Deliver our outreach service review findings to innovate our library service offerings to maximise access and engagement for harder to reach communities		✓	✓
Ensure we are providing quality customer experiences in service areas through obtaining targeted feedback, service design and continuous improvement methodologies	✓	✓	

## **Priority 3 – Enhancing community wellbeing**

### **Aspiration #7 – Fostering connection & belonging**

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

### **Aspiration #8 – Celebrating difference & diversity**

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

### **Aspiration #9 – Creating places & spaces that people value**

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

### **Aspiration #10 – Supporting adoption of sustainable practices**

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



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

## Our Action Plan for Priority 3

ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELLBEING	Aspiration 7	Aspiration 8	Aspiration 9	Aspiration 10
Undertake targeted engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities to understand what we could do better	✓	✓	✓	
Reduce barriers for diverse communities and people experiencing vulnerability by creating safe and accessible spaces, programs and resources	✓	✓	✓	
Advocate with other regional leaders and partners to deliver programs, events and services that contribute to community wellbeing, local economies and place activation			✓	
Promote and deliver a service that is a place for social connection through programming and informal opportunities	✓		✓	
Deliver a trauma-informed heritage service that is guided by the principles of safety, trust, transparency, choice, collaboration and empowerment / Embed subject-centred collection management	✓	✓		
Curate and expand collections that reflect community languages, cultural diversity, and local stories, including digitised First Nations and heritage content	✓	✓		
Ensure collections celebrate cultural diversity, promote inclusion, and provide resources on health, sustainability, and social connection for the community	✓	✓		✓

## **Priority 4 – Embracing our future**

### **Aspiration #11 – Adopting a new governance model**

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

### **Aspiration #12 - Strengthening our financial sustainability**

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

### **Aspiration #13 - Strategically partnering for improved services**

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

### **Aspiration #14 - Empowering our people to be their best**

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

11. Adopting a new governance model

12. Strengthening our financial sustainability

13. Strategically partnering across our region

14. Empowering our people to be their best

## Our Action Plan for Priority 4

	Aspiration 11	Aspiration 12	Aspiration 13	Aspiration 14
Ensure best practice governance frameworks and approaches through the transition to a not-for-profit governance model	✓			
Develop and implement a sustainable funding strategy, including implementation of Fundraising Strategy	✓	✓	✓	
Develop and implement a Partnership Plan that explores opportunities and formalises relationships with existing & new partners that share our values			✓	
Provide a healthy, safe, inclusive, accessible and welcoming work environment, so that our people feel well, valued and involved				✓
Build and support a diverse workforce that reflects our diverse community, so we can best serve our community				✓
Stand with our professional bodies such as Public Libraries Victoria and Australian Libraries and Information Association, to advocate for sustainable resourcing, free community access to wide ranging ideas and writing, and to contribute to collaborative professional development and knowledge sharing.				✓
Explore volunteer and student placement opportunities				✓
Safeguard our digital infrastructure against current and emerging risks for our organisation and our customers				✓
Ensure our people have the right tools, training and support they need to perform their roles effectively in a continually changing world. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital literacy and safety</li> <li>Use of existing and new technology, including AI</li> </ul>				✓





# **Geelong Regional Library Corporation**

## **Library Plan 2025 - 2029**

[DN – Drafting Notes to be addressed via Graphic Design process highlighted throughout]

GEELONG  
REGIONAL  
LIBRARIES



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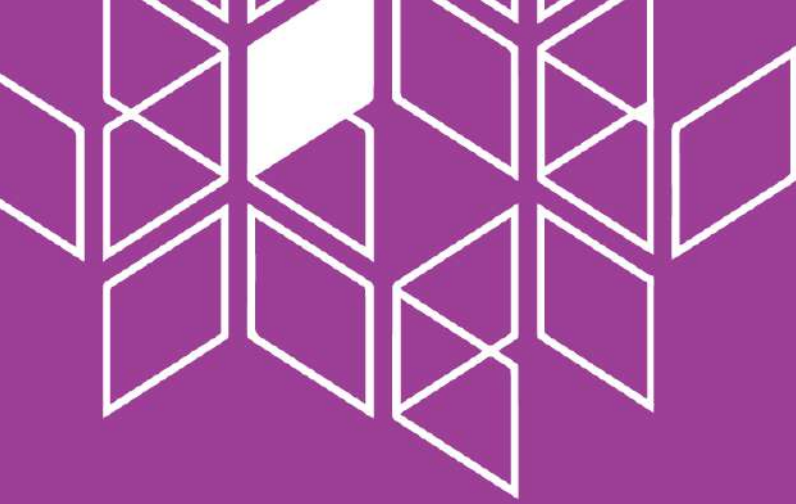
## Acknowledgement of Country

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

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







## Welcome

[Welcome message from CEO and Board Chair] – VANESSA

## Context

### *— Responding to our rapidly changing world —*

Public libraries have long held a unique place in the heart of communities. There are no other places quite like them - vibrant and inclusive hubs of knowledge, connection and creativity, free for all people of every age and stage of life.

Today, the role of libraries has never been more vital, or more complex.

As a service deeply embedded in the day-to-day life of communities, libraries have always adapted nimbly to the changing needs of its customers.

This responsiveness was never more urgent, or more impactful, than during Covid-19. Libraries stepped up and stepped in as a vital community link, connecting people to essential services and trusted information, and in doing so, reshaped perceptions of what a library can be.

The profound social shifts brought about by the pandemic redefined how we live and connect. Since then, the world has only continued to transform in new and unexpected ways.

The ripple effects of global influences, like world conflicts, political extremism and the rise of disinformation, are increasingly felt at a local level, and libraries continue to appear at the frontline, helping communities navigate the ongoing complexity and uncertainty of our times.

Other forces, such as climate change, cost of living pressures and rapid technological advancement, are shaping our services and spaces and evolving the ways our communities rely on us. With parts of our region among the most disadvantaged in the country, the library is seen more and more as a community hub and social support network.

This plan is framed around 'responding to a rapidly changing world', which is both a rousing and challenging call to action for libraries.

*"I really love the direction our libraries are taking! It's exciting and I wonder what will be next!"*

- Community member

As we mould ourselves to deliver a greater depth of services to meet the needs of the community, so too do we navigate an increasingly constrained financial environment. Rapid population growth, demographic changes and the growing expectations of libraries will continue to place demands on our budget, but will also offer opportunities to think of new ways we can make the most of our resources to deliver the best value for our community.

Changes to our corporate governance model that will take effect during the life of this plan will open up exciting opportunities to attract diverse partnership opportunities, but will also call on us to define ourselves more clearly and communicate and advocate for the unique benefit we bring to communities.

As we continue to evolve, it's important we remain grounded in the legacy that has enriched the lives of generations of library-goers. As our services and spaces adapt to our changing world, our purpose has never been more clear or relevant - to provide knowledge and connection for people and communities.

*"I think libraries are kind of already a big, exciting idea, and if they were introduced now, people would think it's insane"* - Community member

## Context

### Where do libraries fit in our changing world?

#### The digital landscape

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

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

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

#### A new corporate governance model

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

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

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

#### Disinformation and extremism

In a world of fake news, deep fakes and increasingly polarised views, libraries are safe and trusted institutions that offer access to reliable, balanced information. But that role isn't without risks. Libraries are increasingly dealing with pressure over programs, collections and inclusive

events, and staff are on the frontline of those conversations. Helping communities build media literacy, engage respectfully, and think critically will be an ongoing role for us.

### **Environmental and economic change**

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

## How do our libraries fit within our growing region?

### Servicing our growing population

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Adapting to our changing economy

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

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

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

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

Our libraries have a role to play in servicing all aspects of our changing economy.

### **Honouring our First Nations People**

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

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

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

We are developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan to enshrine the steps we are taking to honour First Nations perspectives and experiences and to walk with our Traditional Owners and community on the journey towards Reconciliation.

### **Aligning with our regional & state partners**

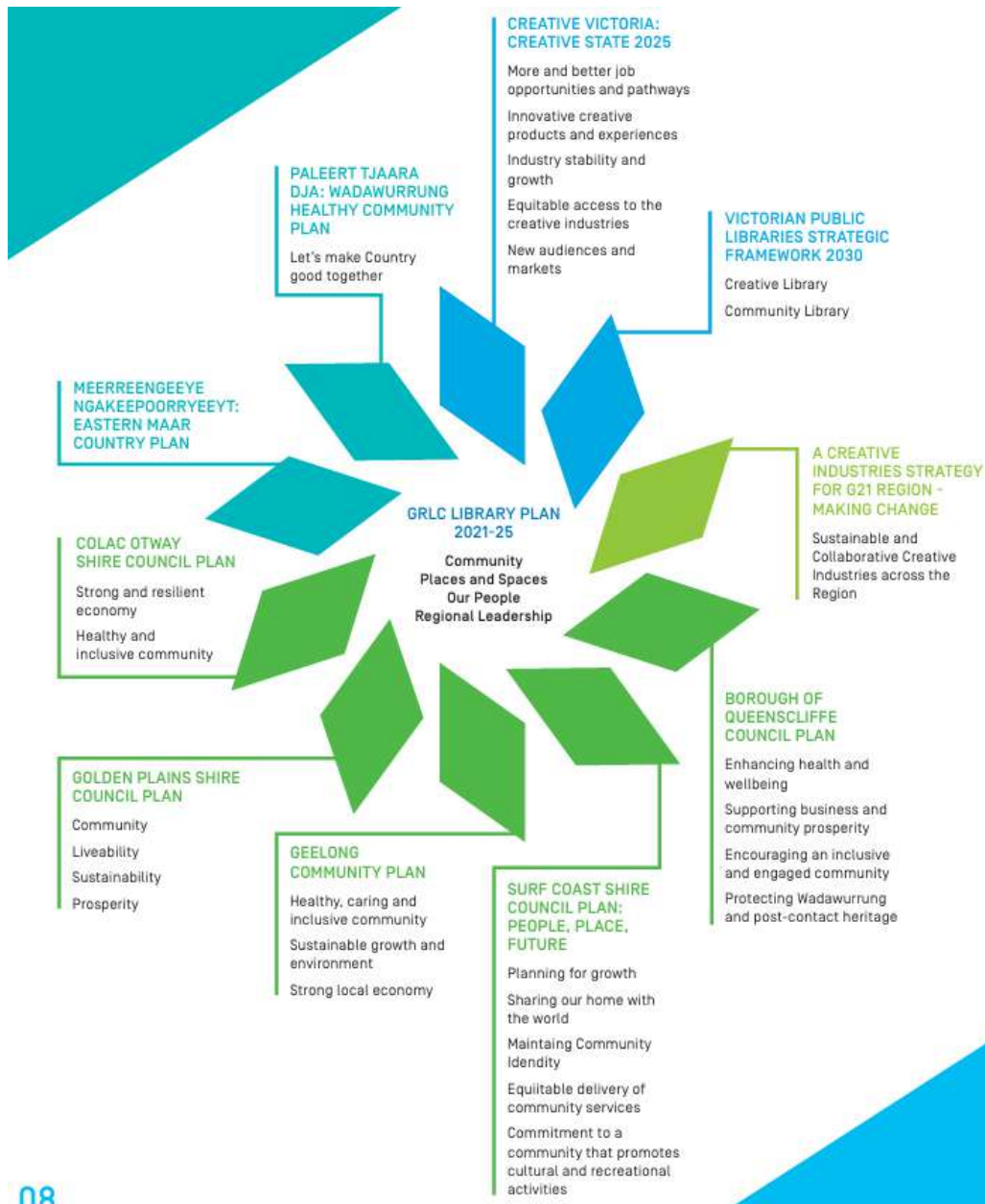
Our Library Plan integrates with plans from our regional and state partners.

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

Examples of where our libraries can play a role include:

- Enhancing community health and wellbeing and inclusive, connected communities
- Supporting and celebrating innovation and our creative industries
- Celebrating our heritage and culture
- Learning from and honouring First Nations perspectives on the journey towards Reconciliation

- Supporting liveable, sustainable and resilient communities
- Supporting prosperous local economies
- Contributing to the visitor experience in our region.



[DN: Diagram to be redrawn without dot points underneath each plan, also to highlight which plans are still in draft at this stage (to be progressively updated as Plans are finalised)]





[DN: Map of region to be updated with current libraries]

## Developing this Library Plan

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

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

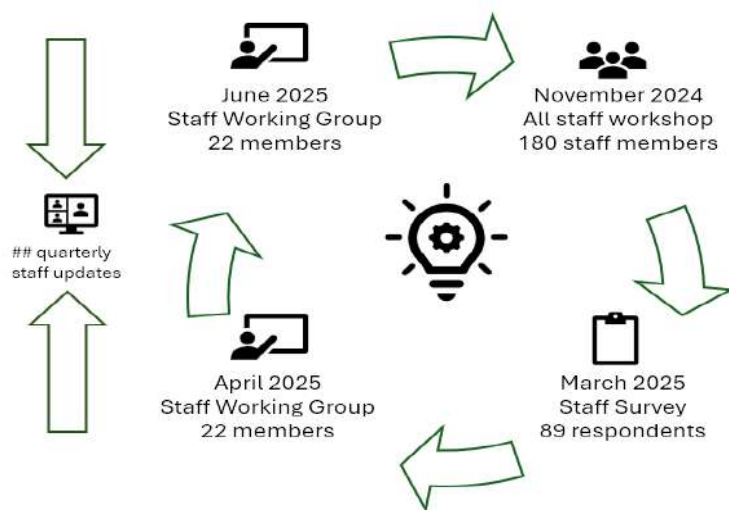
### Our people

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

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

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

[DN: To be depicted as an infographic like this....]



## Our community

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

Featuring 10 key questions, the survey explored what people value and find unique about their library. It encouraged participants to reflect on the future and consider how libraries might do things differently and better meet the changing needs of the community. To inspire imaginative thinking, respondents were also asked to share one “big, exciting idea” for the future of libraries - something bold that might seem out of reach today, but would be amazing if it became a reality.

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

[DN: Key stats for infographic]

3414 responses

Open from 1 - 31 March 2025

10 key questions exploring values, issues and ideas

Public consultation period July / August 2025

[placeholder here for # of submissions / responses]

## Our council partners

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

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

[DN: Key stats for infographic]

February - March 2025

5 x 1:1 meetings with councils

April 2025

Council Working Group meeting

6 attendees

June 2025

Council Working Group meeting

5 attendees

## Our purpose

*— To create knowledge and connection for people and communities —*

Libraries are more than just buildings, they are places where people and ideas meet.

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

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

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

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

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

*“Where people and ideas meet”*

## Our priorities

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

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

### **Priority #1 – Encouraging personal curiosity**

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

### **Priority #2 – Evolving customer experiences**

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

### **Priority #3 – Enhancing community wellbeing**

Our libraries will continue to evolve as safe, welcoming and accessible public places where people from all walks of life connect with knowledge, ideas, and each other, for the betterment of local and wider society.

### **Priority #4 – Embracing our future**

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

## To create knowledge and connection for people and communities

### Priority #1

#### Encouraging personal curiosity

##### Aspirations

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

### Priority #2

#### Evolving customer experiences

##### Aspirations

4. **Uplifting digital access and capability**
5. **Innovating our service experiences & quality**
6. **Enabling participation & productivity** – *work, study, collaborate*

### Priority #3

#### Enhancing community wellbeing

##### Aspirations

7. **Fostering connection & belonging**
8. **Celebrating difference & diversity**
9. **Creating places & spaces that people value**
10. **Supporting adoption of sustainable practices**

### Priority #4

#### Embracing our future

##### Aspirations

11. **Adopting a new governance model**
12. **Strengthening our financial sustainability**
13. **Strategically partnering across our region**
14. **Empowering our people to be their best**

## **Priority 1**

- Encouraging personal curiosity**



## Aspiration #1 – Facilitating life-long learning – literacy, creativity, heritage

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

We will continue to play an important role in supporting people who may face barriers to education or access, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and vulnerable communities.

Our spaces are not just for reading - they're places where creative minds come alive. We will continue to reimagine our libraries as makers' spaces that provide opportunities for our creative community to flourish, through creative offerings using the latest technology and the different experiences and access points it offers.

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

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

*Community member*

*“I use the creative spaces at the new Armstrong Creek library to learn new skills and further my studies.” - Community member*

## Aspiration #2 – Empowering safety & responsibility online

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

*“For older people a place to learn about technology and all that entails, safety, privacy, scams, etc is really important. We all need to help one another, technology changes so quickly, you learn one thing and suddenly there's a new way, watch out....” - Community member*

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

### Aspiration #3 – Helping individuals navigate mis- & dis-information

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

#### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

*“[The libraries can play a role in] ensuring 'fake news' is counteracted.*

*Libraries contain truth” - Community member*

*“[Libraries can] include key reliable non-book items within the catalogue to make searching for trustworthy information easier for community*

*members” - GRLC staff member*

1. **Facilitating life-long learning** – literacy, creativity, heritage
2. **Empowering safety & responsibility online**
3. **Navigating mis- & dis-information**

## Our Action Plan for Priority 1

ENCOURAGING PERSONAL CURIOSITY	Aspiration 1	Aspiration 2	Aspiration 3
Adapt our programs, collections and services to the changing world so that we are relevant, safe and accessible to more people who need our services in times of increased costs and social isolation, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting literacy development, through all ages and stages of life</li> <li>Enabling creativity</li> <li>Connecting to heritage stories</li> <li>Welcoming First Nations people and celebrating Traditional Owners' Heritage</li> </ul>	✓		
Continually improve and enhance our creative technology programs, collections and services, so that we remain on the cutting edge, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borrowable technology (coding kits, video gear)</li> <li>Immersive local history (VR/AR)</li> <li>Digitisation of heritage collection</li> </ul>	✓		
Design events to spark conversations and broaden horizons about current and emerging social issues / Advance regional knowledge in and constructive debate around complex challenges such as reconciliation, climate change, and social justice issues	✓	✓	✓
Deliver a suite of programs that support early years language and literacy; foster reading confidence in school-aged children; build digital and creative skills in teens and adults; and explore local and First Nations history through storytelling and arts-based experiences	✓		
Focus our programs from early childhood through to older adults to build critical thinking skills and promote safe and responsible online behaviour	✓	✓	✓



## **Priority 2**

- Evolving customer experiences**

## Aspiration #4 – Uplifting digital access & capability

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

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

*“I imagine libraries with cool learning spaces, like virtual reality, 3D printing, and robotics workshops. These would give people free access to new technology and hands-on experiences, making libraries places for creativity and fun learning.” - Community member*

## Aspiration #5 – Innovating our service experiences & quality

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

*“I have the convenience of ordering my books online and then being emailed when they are available.” - Community member*

*“[The libraries could do] Pop up libraries, library tour, library festival - using underutilised spaces in our region to showcase what GRLC does and can do.” Community member*

## Aspiration #6 – Enabling participation & productivity – *study, work, collaborate*

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

*“[The libraries provide a] modern meeting venue for personal and business use. It allows locals to book in the space. There is nowhere else that offers a professional space for the low cost.” - Community member*



**4. Bridging the digital divide**

**5. Innovating our service experiences & quality**

**6. Enabling participation & productivity** – *work, study, collaborate*

## Our Action Plan for Priority 2

EVOLVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES	Aspiration 4	Aspiration 5	Aspiration 6
Improve the accessibility and experience of our digital services	✓	✓	
Launch a new website to support better digital engagement	✓	✓	
Help customers build digital literacy and navigate the online world, beyond our own digital services	✓		✓
Investigate the use of generative AI to connect customers with high quality information	✓	✓	✓
Develop a suite of programs to assist community in understanding and use of AI	✓	✓	✓
Increase “out-of-hours” access to library spaces		✓	✓
Support customers’ hybrid and entrepreneurial work practices through the provision of spaces, facilities and specialist tools and expertise		✓	✓
Provide job and career development tools, resources and programs		✓	✓
Explore co-location and/or complementary service opportunities with our partners, so that customers have access to a broader range of services		✓	✓
Innovate our outreach library service offerings to maximise access		✓	✓
Deliver our outreach service review findings to innovate our library service offerings to maximise access and engagement for harder to reach communities		✓	✓
Ensure we are providing quality customer experiences in service areas through obtaining targeted feedback, service design and continuous improvement methodologies	✓	✓	

## **Priority 3**

**– Enhancing community  
wellbeing**

## Aspiration #7 – Fostering connection & belonging

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

*"It is the heart of our village life." - Community member*

*"I enjoy the peace and quiet when choosing books or reading in a quiet corner but still have the hum of voices in the background making me realise I am connected to other like-minded people." - Community member*

## Aspiration #8 – Celebrating difference & diversity

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

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

*“I'm a new person in Australia and English is not my native language, that's why it is difficult for me to get the information I need by myself. The ladies in the library always help! They help me to understand a lot about the culture, traditions and a lot of other stuff. I love to come to Torquay library.” - Community member*

## Aspiration #9 – Creating places & spaces that people value

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

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

*“My child loves it for the space/ craft activities/ welcoming staff. She chooses it as a destination very often.” - Community member*

## Aspiration #10 – Supporting adoption of sustainable practices

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

- 7. **Fostering connection & belonging**
- 8. **Celebrating difference & diversity**
- 9. **Creating places & spaces that people value**
- 10. **Supporting adoption of sustainable practices**

## Our Action Plan for Priority 3

ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELLBEING	Aspiration 7	Aspiration 8	Aspiration 9	Aspiration 10
Undertake targeted engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities to understand what we could do better	✓	✓	✓	
Reduce barriers for diverse communities and people experiencing vulnerability by creating safe and accessible spaces, programs and resources	✓	✓	✓	
Advocate with other regional leaders and partners to deliver programs, events and services that contribute to community wellbeing, local economies and place activation			✓	
Promote and deliver a service that is a place for social connection through programming and informal opportunities	✓		✓	
Deliver a trauma-informed heritage service that is guided by the principles of safety, trust, transparency, choice, collaboration and empowerment / Embed subject-centred collection management	✓	✓		
Curate and expand collections that reflect community languages, cultural diversity, and local stories, including digitised First Nations and heritage content	✓	✓		
Ensure collections celebrate cultural diversity, promote inclusion, and provide resources on health, sustainability, and social connection for the community	✓	✓		✓

## **Priority 4**

**– Embracing our future**



## Aspiration #11 – Adopting a new governance model

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

## **Aspiration #12 - Strengthening our financial sustainability**

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

### **What we will achieve by 2029**

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

## Aspiration #13 - Strategically partnering for improved services

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

*“We should really start thinking about combining libraries and community centres together, or at least have them close together. Oftentimes, librarians have to offer low-key social work support to the customers.” -  
GRLC staff member*

*“[Libraries can play a role in] Helping the elderly link into services that may assist them to live independently in the community.” - Community member*

## Aspiration #14 - Empowering our people to be their best

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

### What we will achieve by 2029

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

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

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

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

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

11. Adopting a new governance model
12. Strengthening our financial sustainability
13. Strategically partnering across our region
14. Empowering our people to be their best

## Our Action Plan for Priority 4

	Aspiration 11	Aspiration 12	Aspiration 13	Aspiration 14
Ensure best practice governance frameworks and approaches through the transition to a not-for-profit governance model	✓			
Develop and implement a sustainable funding strategy, including implementation of Fundraising Strategy	✓	✓	✓	
Develop and implement a Partnership Plan that explores opportunities and formalises relationships with existing & new partners that share our values			✓	
Provide a healthy, safe, inclusive, accessible and welcoming work environment, so that our people feel well, valued and involved				✓
Build and support a diverse workforce that reflects our diverse community, so we can best serve our community				✓
Stand with our professional bodies such as Public Libraries Victoria and Australian Libraries and Information Association, to advocate for sustainable resourcing, free community access to wide ranging ideas and writing, and to contribute to collaborative professional development and knowledge sharing				✓
Explore volunteer and student placement opportunities				✓
Safeguard our digital infrastructure against current and emerging risks for our organisation and our customers				✓
Ensure our people have the right tools, training and support they need to perform their roles effectively in a continually changing world, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital literacy and safety</li> <li>Use of existing and new technology, including AI</li> </ul>				✓

## Our Next Steps

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

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

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

Dimension	Objective	Measure
Customer	To measure how hard our overall collection is working with relation to ongoing population changes	<i>Loans per Capita (population)</i>
	To measure our overall visits to service with relation to ongoing population changes in our communities	<i>Members per capita</i>
	To measure the changing balance over time between high volume programs or more focussed programs	<i>Visits per Capita</i>
	To measure the changing balance over time between high volume programs or more focussed programs	<i>Avg. attendances to programs and events</i>
	To measure customer experience of our high-volume customer journeys, over time.	<i>Voice of customer results</i>
	To measure overall customer satisfaction	<i>Service Customer Satisfaction</i>

Dimension	Objective	Measure
Internal Processes	To measure how hard our collection is working	<i>Loans per collection item</i>
Learning & Growth	To measure the changes over time of staff engagement and associated actions.	<i>All Staff Survey Engagement Score</i>
	To understand our internal engagement, organisational culture and effectiveness of recruitment processes	<i>Staff turnover Rate</i>

Dimension	Objective	Measure
Financial	To track investment into the collection as our population changes	<i>Collection Expenditure per Capita</i>
	To measure successful efforts to secure alternate funding	<i>Revenue from Alternate Sources YTD</i>
	To measure how the level of investment into operating the corporation changes over time with population changes	<i>Operating Cost per Capita</i>

*82% of survey respondents said that the libraries play a role in helping people connect with each other and feel less lonely.*

## **What we heard ...**

### **Key insights from our community**

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

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

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

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

*91% of survey respondents said that libraries make their life better because they can use and borrow books, magazines and other resources.*

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

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

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



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

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

*48% of survey respondents said accessing a diverse collection for free is something you can only do at the library.*

### **Libraries offer community connection through their spaces and services**

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

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

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

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

*“I can’t always afford to buy a newspaper so being able to read a newspaper at the library is something I appreciate.” - Community member*

### **Opportunities to improve library spaces and access**

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

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

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

*31% of 'big ideas' for the future of our libraries related to improving library spaces and facilities.*

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

*90% of staff said that libraries make community life better by helping people learn new skills.*

## Key insights from our people

### **Libraries are crucial places of learning for the community**

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

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

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

### **Maintaining free access to resources and services is important**

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

*78% of staff said that free access is something that only libraries can offer.*

*“Anyone can walk through the door and no one will ask them anything other than 'Can I help you?'" – GRLC staff member*

*93% of staff said the libraries can play a role in providing opportunities for people to connect with each other and feel less lonely.*

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

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

### **Opportunities to enhance community connection, digital services and access**

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

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

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

*52% of staff said they would like to see our libraries' resources, collection and services expanded.*

*“I would love our libraries to truly be community spaces - I love seeing big activities and events in our libraries when they happen, and I would love to see more of these. I would also love us to offer a diverse range of programs: programs for library lovers and library novices alike.”*

*– GRLC staff member*

*Libraries play a unique role in fostering community connection*

## References

- Borough of Queenscliffe (2021) - Community Vision 2021 - 2031
- G21 Geelong Region Alliance (2023) - Region Plan 2050
- City of Greater Geelong (2024) - 2024 Geelong Preventative Health Survey Report
- City of Greater Geelong (2025) - City of Greater Geelong Council Plan [draft]
- Colac Otway Shire (2021) - Community Vision 2050
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (2015) - Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt Country Plan
- Golden Plains Shire (2025) - Golden Plains Shire Council Plan [draft]
- Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre on behalf of Creative Victoria (2024) - Audience Atlas Victoria 2024
- Public Libraries Victoria & State Library Victoria (2021) - Libraries for Health and Wellbeing 2024
- Public Libraries Victoria & State Library Victoria (2022) - Findings of the Victoria Public Library Survey and Victorian Public Library Census.
- Public Libraries Victoria & State Library Victoria (2022) - Victorian Public Libraries 2030 Future Trends
- Public Libraries Victoria (2023) - Public Libraries Victoria Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027
- Public Libraries Victoria (2025) - The Impact of Victoria's Libraries as Community Hubs [Vanessa to confirm whether this is still embargoed]
- Surf Coast Shire (2021) - Community Vision 2021 - 2031
- Tyzack, J, Change Playbook on behalf of Geelong Regional Libraries Corporation (2024) - Customer Experience Discovery Report
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (2020) Paleert Tjaara Dja: Let's make Country together 2020-2030
- Waller, S (2022) - Public Libraries Victoria Strategic Issues Paper 2022 - 2030

## Images/ Credits

## List of branches / mobile stops

BRANCHES		MOBILE LIBRARY STOPS
<b>Geelong Library &amp; Heritage Centre</b> 51 Little Malop Street T 4201 0600	<b>Highton</b> Roslyn Road (cnr Belle Vue Avenue) T 4201 0662	Aireys Inlet
<b>Apollo Bay</b> 6 Pengilley Avenue T 5237 1013	<b>Lara</b> 5 Walkers Road T 4201 0668	Anakie
<b>Bannockburn</b> 25-27 High Street T 4201 0661	<b>Leopold</b> Leopold Community Hub 31-39 Kensington Road T 4201 0675	Anglesea
<b>Barwon Heads</b> Barwon Heads Primary School, Golf Links Road T 4201 0653	<b>Newcomb</b> cnr Bellarine Highway & Wilsons Road T 4201 0657	Beeac
<b>Belmont</b> 163 High Street T 4201 0665	<b>Ocean Grove</b> Presidents Avenue (cnr The Avenue) T 4201 0655	Beech Forest
<b>Chilwell</b> 51 Russell Street, Newtown T 4201 0651	<b>Queenscliff (temporary location)</b> 18 Hesse St ('The Tavern') T 4201 0663	Birregurra
<b>Colac</b> 173 Queen Street T 5231 4613	<b>Torquay</b> Surf City Plaza, Beach Road T 4201 0667	Cape Clear
<b>Corio</b> Cox Road (cnr Moa Street) Norlane T 4201 0658	<b>Waurin Ponds</b> 230 Pioneer Road Grovedale T 4201 0670	Coragulac
<b>Drysdale</b> 18-20 Hancock Street T 4201 0656	<b>Western Heights</b> Western Heights College, Vines Road, Hamlyn Heights T 5277 1177	Cressy
<b>Geelong West</b> 153A Pakington Street T 4201 0660		Deans Marsh
		Dereel
		Enfield
		Forrest
		Gellibrand
		Grenville
		Haddon
		Lavers Hill
		Linton
		Lorne
		Meredith
		Portarlington
		Rokewood
		Smythesdale
		St Leonards
		Winchelsea

[DN: To be updated to include Biyal-a Armstrong Creek and permanent location of Queenscliff]



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## Geelong Regional Library Corporation

# BOARD MEETING SNAPSHOT

Items of Interest - Thursday 27 February

### Public Libraries Benchmarking Presentation

- Ian Phillips, I & J Management services provided a benchmarking update financial year 2023/24 for Geelong Regional Libraries.
- The report demonstrated that GRLC is performing well against key indicators when benchmarked with all Victorian public libraries.

### CEO Report

- ULibrary - new platform increasing access to eBooks. 100 members can read the same book at the same time.
- Customer Survey that will inform our Library Plan is about to go live.
- We are required to develop a library plan under the Local Government Act that will inform our strategic direction for the next 4 years.

### GRCL Preliminary Budget FY26

- The GRLC Preliminary Budget FY26 Report was noted.
- The Draft Budget will now be prepared for the April Board meeting.

### Transition to a Company Limited by Guarantee

- It is a requirement that all regional Library Corporations transition to a new business model. In 2024, the Board approved GRLC transition to a Company Limited by Guarantee. An Executive Steering Committee with representation from each member Council is guiding the planning and key decisions so that Councils can make informed decisions for this transition to occur.







Geelong Regional Library Corporation

# BOARD MEETING SNAPSHOT

Items of Interest - Thursday 27 February

## Activity Report

- Allowing for Biyal-a Armstrong Creek library opening in August, total collection loans are up as well.
- Torquay visitation and loans has gone up since the opening of Biyal-a Armstrong Creek, despite anecdotal visitation to the new library.
- eCollections - ULibrary is popular. Thermal cameras, as part of the Library of Things are very popular with customers on a waiting list to borrow these items used to check 'hot and cold spots' where they live.
- Geelong Library and Heritage Centre continues to be a popular destination, including for school groups of all ages.

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