

GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARIES OPENING HOURS PROPOSAL

Frequently Asked Questions

as at 14 February 2020

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback on our opening hours proposal so far; we are honoured to be an important part of the communities we serve. We have received a lot of feedback, both constructive and positive. As we are half way through the community engagement process (which closes on 29 February), we wanted to provide answers to some of the most common questions we are seeing in the survey and through our branches.

Why are you standardising opening and closing times?

We have consistently received feedback that the different opening hours across our libraries are confusing. The other consistent feedback was asking for an earlier opening time for libraries that opened at 10am; our communities told us that an earlier start time would make it easier for them to build library visits into their lives, particularly around school times. This feedback, along with improved operational measures such as rostering, made standardisation of library hours a priority where appropriate or applicable. The proposal is that morning openings will be 9am, early evening closing at 6pm and late evening closing at 8pm.

Will you really listen to our feedback; can it really make a difference?

Yes, your feedback can make a difference. We are committed to a genuine and comprehensive community engagement process. When the consultation period is closed, individual feedback will be reviewed and used to find common themes arising across the community (specific individual requests may not necessarily appear in the final recommendations).

This will be taken into consideration alongside the criteria set at the commencement of the project namely: that the final proposal must be budget-neutral (meaning no increase in operational costs), address equity and access to library services, and standardise (wherever possible) opening and closing hours across the library network. We will then report back to the community on what we heard and following a final opening hours proposal being adopted, we will share any changes that are made as a result of community feedback, as well as address any common themes or requests that were unable to be implemented.

Is your survey biased? Is the only option in the survey 'I agree with the proposed changes?'

No. The community survey gives you a genuine chance to have your say, in a format that makes gathering the information straightforward. It includes several opportunities for feedback; one for each of the 13 libraries with proposed changes - 'What is your opinion on the proposed changes?' and the final question asks for 'any other comments, questions or concerns'. The survey design was reviewed by an independent statistician and expert survey designer and their feedback was built in to the final survey.

Is this a cost-saving exercise? Are you cutting hours?

No, this proposal is not about cutting costs; in fact, under the current proposal, the library network will gain six additional hours per week. The purpose of the review was to make sure that opening hours are allocated equitably across the library network and where they provide the most community benefit. Under the current proposal:

- 11 of our 17 branches would open their doors earlier
- 2 x branches would open on days they are currently closed
- 6 x branches would be open for more hours per week
- 5 x branches have no changes recommended, and
- 6 x branches would have reduced opening hours.

Why can't I see your survey properly?

We have received some feedback that despite comprehensive testing and using one of the world's largest survey providers in Survey Monkey, it seems that if filling out the survey on a tablet, you may need to scroll to see the second radio button labelled 'I have an additional suggestion'.

If you are experiencing issues, please fill the survey out on a desktop computer or a smart phone.

Why are you proposing less after-school opening hours at Chilwell Library?

The proposed changes for Chilwell Library were strongly driven by community feedback (especially the introduction of opening on Wednesdays, which has been consistently requested for many years, as well as moving to an earlier 9am start time to allow for parents and carers with babies and toddlers to visit the library after dropping children off at school). The proposal also reflects usage data, which shows how and when people are currently using the library.

Feedback about Chilwell Library's opening hours from the community will be considered as part of our review of community feedback received; see 'Will you really listen to our feedback; can it really make a difference?' for more information.

Do the opening hours really 'need' to change?

Yes. The opening hours review, which resulted in the proposal we have shared with the community, was deemed an organisational priority in 'Reading Ahead – Geelong Regional Library Corporation Library Plan 2017 to 2021', page 22, with a specific action to 'Complete and implement opening hours review to ensure equitable access to library services across the region.'

The Library Plan was advertised for public comment prior to adoption in 2017. The annual priorities for 2019/20 were advertised for public comment over May/June 2019 for a period of four weeks. The need for change was established in our review, in order to meet our goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable access to library services across the region.

How do you measure 'usage' of a library?

We measure usage in a number of ways; our libraries have counters on the doors, as well as tracking interactions with library services, such as borrowing items, holds placed, memberships created, renewals, WiFi sessions, enquiries and returns, bookings and use of resources (such as computers, iPads and meetings rooms) and attendance at events and programs.

Are you placing some communities' needs over others? Is this proposal 'unfair'?

No; the proposal aims to make the opening hours across our region fairer. The need for change to our opening hours was established in a 2019 opening hours review, where we found some communities, particularly those of high need, did not have enough access to library services; for example, there was no library open on a Sunday in the north of our region, and this proposal recommends Corio Library introduce a Sunday afternoon opening. This proposal aims to meet our goal of ensuring inclusive access to our services for the whole of the Geelong region in an equitable fashion, without increasing our operational costs.

What if I prefer the status quo?

Please let us know by filling out our [online survey](#)! This is your chance to have your say. The community consultation period closes on 29 February.

I'm concerned that the changes to some of the smaller library opening hours are the start of further changes that could negatively impact the library's future; is this the case?

No; these changes aim to have a positive impact on the community, and increase engagement with library services. There are no plans to close any library branches.

Why is there no plan for changing the opening hours at Bannockburn, Queenscliff, Torquay and Western Heights?

Bannockburn Library

Bannockburn Library's opening hours were reviewed and updated mid 2018, so it was agreed with Golden Plains Shire that the opening hours will be reviewed as part of future stages of the Bannockburn Heart project. Golden Plains Shire residents are still welcome to have their say about the opening hours proposal.

Torquay Library

Torquay Library opening hours will be considered as Council conducts a study into a future Cultural Facility including a new library. Surf Coast Shire residents are still welcome to have their say about the opening hours proposal.

Queenscliff Library

Queenscliff Library opening hours are scheduled for review as a part of the Queenscliffe Hub project. Borough of Queenscliffe residents are still welcome to have their say about the opening hours proposal.

Western Heights Library

Western Heights Library opening hours were updated in January 2019, so no further changes were recommended at this time.