



Yarra Libraries Annual Report 2020-2021

Libraries
Change Lives



MAYOR'S MESSAGE



I am proud to present Yarra Libraries' 2020/21 Annual Report.

Our libraries are vibrant community hubs full of wonderful resources, programs and staff. Although COVID-19 restrictions prevented our community from visiting much this past year, our libraries have adapted their service to overcome barriers and delivered more outreach and more online programming than ever before.

Our libraries have risen to the challenge of being deemed 'non-essential' and have proven that Libraries Change Lives. From coordinating thousands of emergency food and material relief packages to preparing hundreds of activity packs with critical health information and links to their impressive online resources of downloadable audiobooks, magazines and movie streaming, our libraries are paving the way to building an engaged and resilient community and positioning themselves as a truly essential service in our community.

Cr Gabrielle de Vietri
Mayor, Yarra City Council

LIBRARY MANAGER'S MESSAGE



We achieved so much this year despite the many hurdles COVID-19 presented us. We challenged what a traditional library could offer and teamed up with our partners to support our community with food relief, free Wi-Fi with our new Wificycle, Binge Bundles and more online programming than ever. I am so proud of everything we have achieved together.

As we move into the next financial year and begin to develop our new library strategy I am excited to write the next chapter for our service and to continue delivering the life-changing services and programs we are known for.

I would also like to thank our Library Advisory Committee for their support and encouragement over the past 12 months, led by Cr Claudia Nguyen and Cr Sophie Wade.

Felicity Macchion
Manager, Yarra Libraries

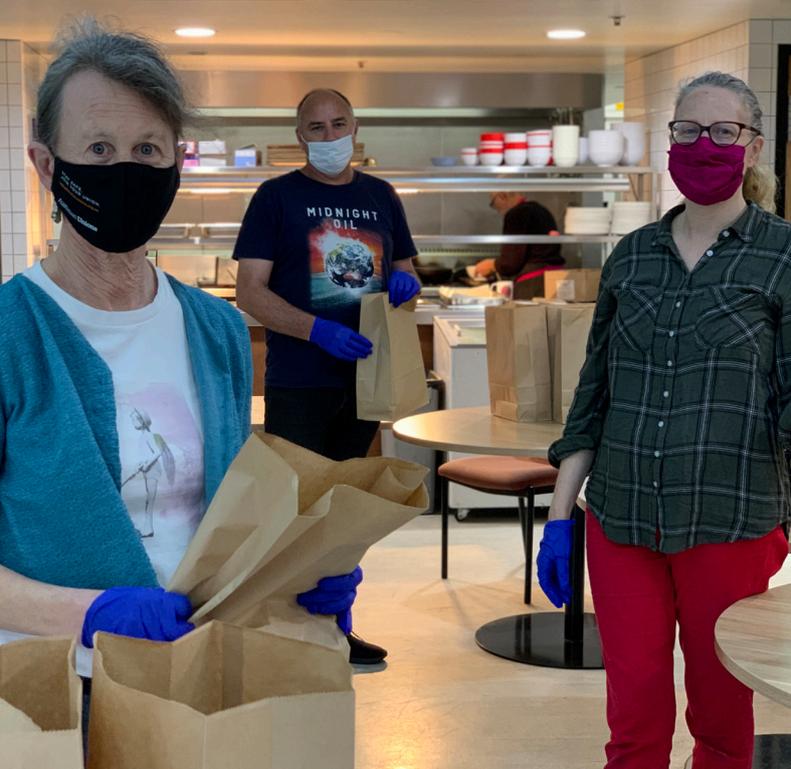
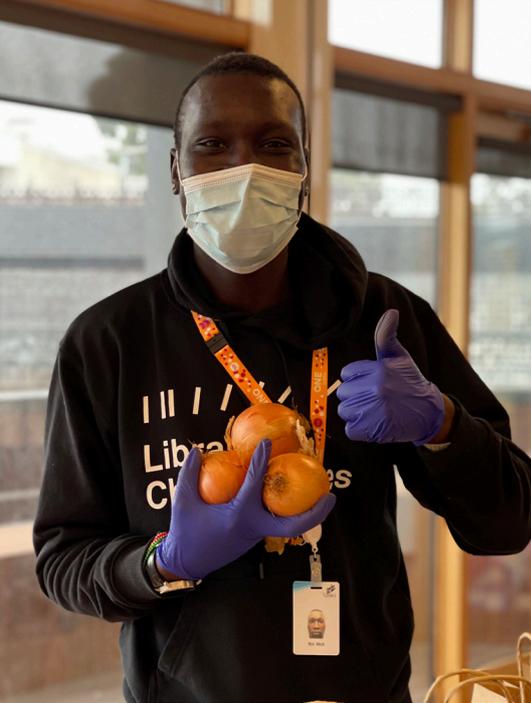
THE INTERNET'S GOT WHEELS!

The WiFicycle is a new initiative from Yarra Libraries that provides free Wi-Fi to residents. It also has a storage compartment that can be used to transport books and other supplies. The WiFicycle is green (in values and in colour!), which means it can move through the City of Yarra without leaving a carbon footprint.

Access to information via the internet has become a human right across the globe but 1 in 10 houses across Australia are still without a home internet connection. The WiFicycle aims to bridge the digital divide by creating convenient access to the internet alongside skilled staff to help troubleshoot technology and navigate online service websites.

Keep an eye out for the WiFicycle in our local parks, housing estates and parked outside community organisations throughout Yarra. If you'd like to request the WiFicycle to make an appearance at a community event or location, email yarralibraries@yarracity.vic.gov.au





LIBRARIES *ARE* AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

Yarra Libraries continued to challenge the label of being deemed a 'non-essential service' during the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing our emergency food and material relief service into 20/21.

Working closely under the direction of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, we stood front-line at the public housing estates to support residents with critical health information, data entry and preparing food and material relief packs to those who were directed to isolate. Our food stations were set up near the testing sites to encourage residents to talk to us and get tested.

The emergency food relief distribution centre established at Bargoonga Nganjin earlier in 2020 continued as a base of operations and we worked with Open Table, Cultivating Community, SecondBite, Oz Harvest, Fareshare and Foodbank to prepare and deliver 17,600 packages totalling 75,600 meals. This rescued 25 tonnes of food from landfill and provided us the opportunity to deliver critical health information, masks and activity packs for children.

We also supported St Mary's House of Welcome to pack and deliver 696 daily food parcels to our homeless community, totalling 13,920 parcels a month and 125,280 meals throughout the year.

Throughout July-October we also delivered up to 30,000 pre-loved library books; approximately 6,000 of these books were donated to the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Toy Drive and distributed across Australia.

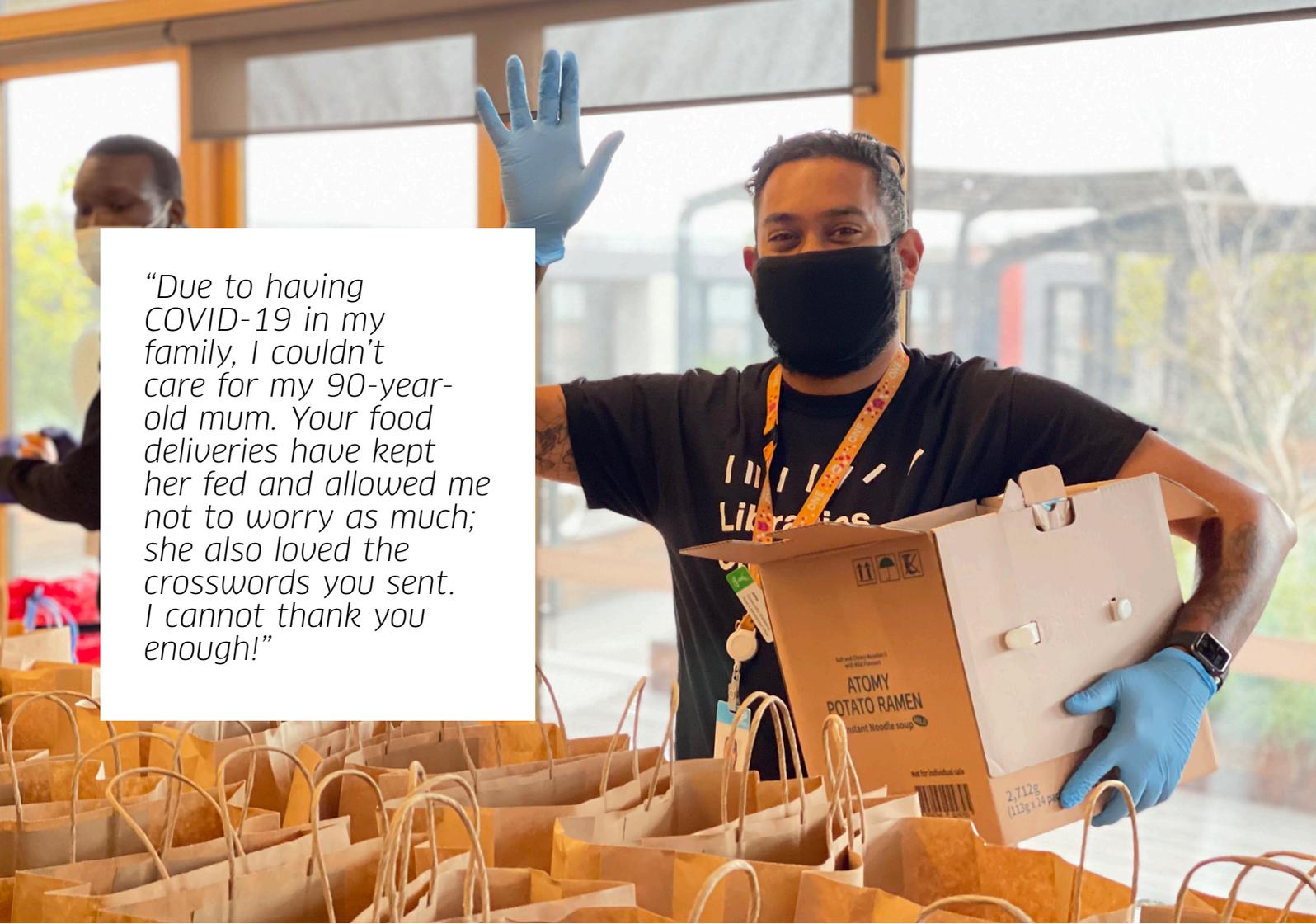
As COVID-19 cases eased towards the end of October and we were allowed to return to a semblance of 'normal', we continued to provide food relief with a number of new initiatives. In partnership with Lentil As Anything and Kinfolk, we distributed pre-made meals to international students ineligible for government support. Meals could be collected weekly from Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library and gave us an opportunity to reach out to offer information for additional support services (including free printing and photocopying).

Throughout the year we also worked in partnership with Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and Collingwood Neighbourhood House to support the Lifting Spirits food relief program.

In December we developed our own weekly food relief market in Atherton Gardens, Fitzroy with Cultivating Community and Open Table. This gave residents the opportunity to collect free and fresh food, pre-made meals, masks, pre-loved books, clothing and health information as needed; an average of 137 residents attended each week. We intend to continue the market as an ongoing library outreach program to lead the recovery of our community and restore our resilience post-COVID.

By donating our pre-loved library books, we saved **77 tonnes of CO₂E** entering the atmosphere; the equivalent of taking **39 cars** off the road for a full year!





“Due to having COVID-19 in my family, I couldn’t care for my 90-year-old mum. Your food deliveries have kept her fed and allowed me not to worry as much; she also loved the crosswords you sent. I cannot thank you enough!”



COMMUNITY WELLBEING (WORKING FOR VICTORIA)

In December 2020, City of Yarra was successful in obtaining a grant from State Government through Jobs Victoria to recruit 65 new employees as part of a new scheme to keep Victorians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic gainfully employed.

Yarra Libraries welcomed 21 new Community Wellbeing Officers to deliver additional programming focused on community strengthening and skill development in partnership with local community organisations, building on our efforts to provide emergency food and material relief.

By expanding on and deepening connections within the wider community, this project highlights our work in supporting, teaching, and facilitating the capacity of City of Yarra residents and challenges traditional conceptions of library services. Highlights from this project include:



- **Digital drop-in and coaching**

In partnership with Carringbush Adult Education, Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and City of Yarra's Aged & Disability team, our officers delivered one-on-one and group digital coaching sessions

- **Homework help and mentoring**

In partnership with Young Assets Foundation, our officers supported secondary school students with their homework and provided support with career path planning and personal development

- **Volunteer training**

In partnership with Fitzroy Learning Network, our officers provided support to produce volunteer handbooks, engagement frameworks and training manuals



- **Megaphone**

In partnership with Artful Dodgers Studios, this event showcased the work of young musical artists and provided a performance space at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library

- **Storytimes and music therapy**

In partnership with AbleLink, our officers co-facilitated sensory-friendly storytimes and activities that incorporated music therapy practices for adults with disabilities



- **Youth Services program support**

In partnership with Yarra Youth Services, our officers supported regular youth programs at the Fitzroy and Richmond Youth Hubs, including Art Studio, Fitness Club and Beat Making workshops

- **Bread-making**

In partnership with Cultivating Community, participants learned how to bake sourdough loaves which were then sold on-site at the High Rise Bakery

The program is scheduled to conclude in July 2021 but many of the initiatives started by the Community Wellbeing team will be integrated into our service and/or sustained by volunteers.

Some of the initiatives that will continue include:



- **Wellness Booth**

As part of the Working for Victoria program we employed a social worker to provide direct support and referral pathways to the community. One of the ways we were able to deliver this was through the Wellness Booth, a pop-up kiosk found at all of our branches one day per week. The Wellness Booth offers a range of tailored assistance from basic digital literacy support to referrals within the aged care system, as well as creating space for general social connection and conversation.



- **Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library Community Pantry**

The community pantry is a communal shelving unit in the foyer at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library where community members are welcome to donate or take packaged food, household and sanitary items as needed. It is an embodiment of the good nature and generous spirit of our community and the culmination of several other initiatives that sought to reduce food waste, address food insecurity and foster a strong, connected community.





COMMUNITY WELLBEING - A SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS

85,000

Emergency food relief packs made by our team and delivered from Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library between July 2020 and June 2021

700

Craft kits made by our children's and youth service librarians for families to continue Storytime fun while at home/in lockdown

400

Activity packs delivered to isolating families in the Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond public housing estates

327

Visitors to our Footpath Library and pop-up shower/laundry service (delivered in partnership with Orange Sky)

211

Community Wellbeing programs delivered between February and June 2021

24

Lifting Spirits food and book markets held (in partnership with Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House & Collingwood Neighbourhood House)

17

Food relief markets held in Atherton Gardens, Fitzroy (in partnership with Cultivating Community and Open Table)

16

Officers successfully secured employment with City of Yarra (expected to start in July 2021 or later)

10

Weeks supporting international students with pre-made meals from Kinfolk and Fareshare





CLIMATE ACTION MURAL AND COURTYARD RENOVATION

In October 2020, Yarra Libraries and City of Yarra's Sustainability team partnered with local artist John Lawry to produce a climate action mural on the wall of the Carlton Library courtyard.

The 12m x 8m mural depicts two young people, with one holding a small seedling, suggesting the importance of caring for our land and country. Around these central figures are a series of line drawings which show some of the ways in which we can take climate action. The mural provides an inspiring backdrop to library activities especially those with a climate or sustainability theme, and serves as a conversation starter about the climate emergency and what we can all do to take action. It also includes new tables and seating and heaters for the cold winter months.

Our Community Wellbeing team also helped to create an outdoor garden with indigenous plants, completing a minor renovation in the courtyard which saw us install new shade cloth, outdoor seating, heaters and a fresh coat of paint. A new entrance was added making the courtyard publicly accessible for the first time. It is expected that in warmer weather, the space will be used for programming around the messages painted in the mural.





LARGER THAN LIFE MURALS FOR RICHMOND LIBRARY

In December 2020, Richmond Library received some new shelving (though not the usual kind!) thanks to acclaimed street artist Baby Guerilla. The Church Street side of our library is now adorned with larger-than-life bookshelves and intricately detailed illustrations, including some of Baby Guerilla's iconic 'floating' characters. On the Charlotte Street side, a realistic illustration of a father with their child on their back is surrounded by the words "libraries change lives" and represents the possibilities and wonders to be found in the library.

The refresh has given some much needed colour and vibrancy to the streetscape with some community members remarking they didn't even know the building contained a library!

In the month following the installation, visits to Richmond Library increased by 15% and 74 new membership applications were received (despite being affected by capacity limits and other COVID-19 restrictions).

CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Lockdown restrictions inspired us to develop new ways of connecting with our community. Throughout the year we trialled a variety of online, in-person and ‘hybrid’ program models to find the right balance of delivery methods and ensure meaningful moments were made. We expanded our online presence and made pre-recorded videos, podcasts and hosted live events via Zoom.

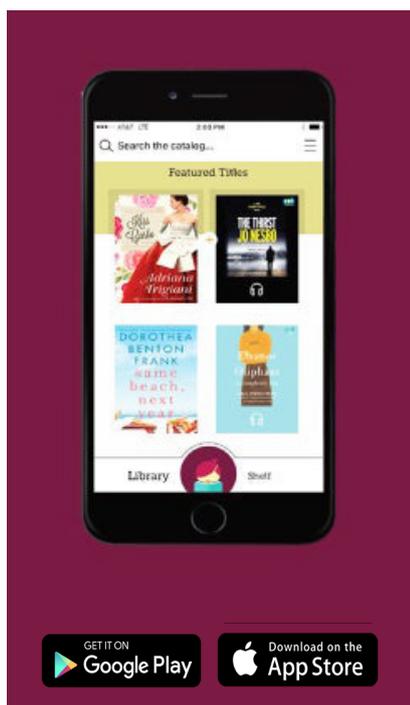
iPad lending program

Our iPad lending program continued to be a valuable service for our elderly and isolated community throughout the several lockdown periods in 2020/21. Our pilot participant Peter typed us a letter expressing just how much the program meant to him:

*“Dear Library Staff Members,
I wish to express my gratitude for having been the first recipient of the [iPad lending program]. It did change a lot of things for the better; the COVID-19 pandemic cut me off from most of my personal communications as the library’s computers are currently inaccessible.”*



ONLINE RESOURCES/COLLECTIONS UPDATE



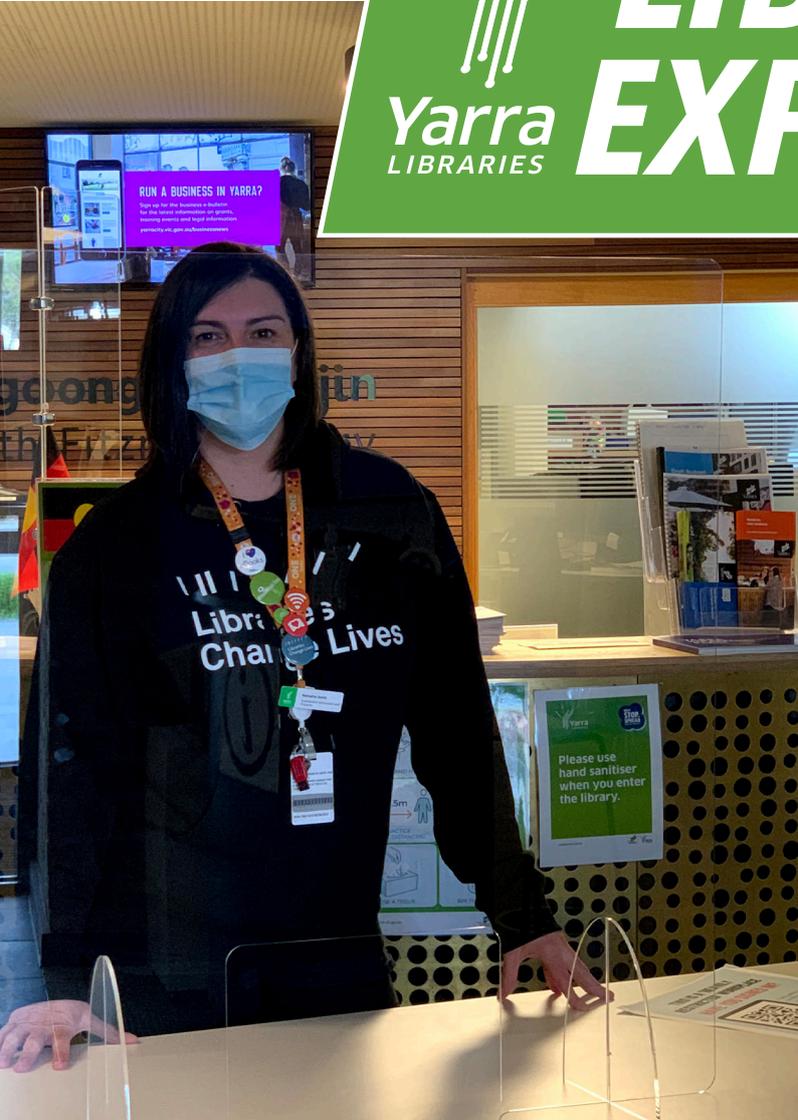
In March 2021, we migrated our RBdigital audiobooks and digital magazines moved to Libby, a new mobile application from Overdrive. The decision to do this was driven by our aim to make our collections more easily accessible, and since the acquisition of RBdigital by Overdrive we saw an opportunity to consolidate and reduce the number of applications are members need to use.

The mobile app consolidates the number of applications needed by library members to find and enjoy our collections and offers a very user-friendly experience. Multiple library cards (from other services) can be added to create an even larger selection of audiobooks and magazines.

Our eBook collection remains available on Cloud Library only, while an additional selection of audiobooks can also be found on Borrowbox.



LIBRARY EXPRESS
Yarra LIBRARIES





Library Express and Binge Bundles (July/August 2020)

As Victoria was faced with another series of lockdowns, our team pivoted to provide Binge Bundles (curated selections of library materials) and posted them to our members. When we could offer click-and-collect services from September, we rebranded our services as “Library Express” and operated with various restrictions throughout the year (as set by State Government). The children’s area at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library was repurposed to house the many reservations made when we first announced the service.

282

Binge Bundles packed and posted between July-August 2020

4,330

Holds placed in the week after we announced “Library Express”

“I’m 32-year-old with a full-time job who goes to the library about once a week to read and discover new things. The library was one of the things I’ve missed the most during COVID-19 (far more than shops) so I really appreciated the Binge Bundles. A lot of my friends who live within other council areas are very upset they don’t have Binge Bundles and can’t order them!”

Learn How to Create a Curious Creature



1,547

Read Along with Fitzroy Readers: A Fat Cat



1,479

TOP 4 ONLINE VIDEOS 20/21

A combined total of 19 days (equivalent) was spent watching our content on Vimeo in 2020/21; many of our school holiday programs were pre-recorded and we partnered with the Aged & Disability Services team to deliver online programs for Willowview Centre visitors.

Toddler Aerobics: #1



732

Chair Yoga with Christine from Willowview Centre



667

YARRA LIBRARIES PODCAST 20/21 TOP 5 EPISODES

The Yarra Libraries podcast amassed a total of 6,352 listens this year; a variety of topics were explored, including a special series for Mental Health Week in which we explored the benefits of volunteering and mindful meditations in the forest.

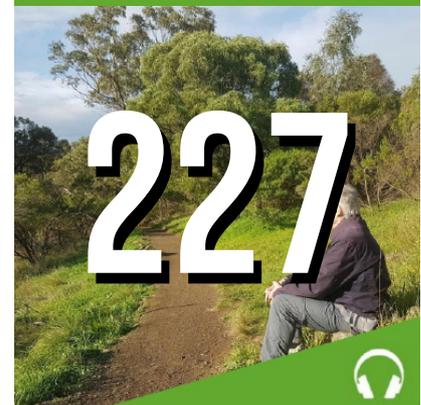
Kids' Shelf: Stay at Home Baby Storytime



545



Forest Therapy for the Forestless



227



Why volunteering is good for you & your community



143



Short Story Club: "The Embassy of Cambodia"



129



Our Favourite Reads of 2020



122



PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SECTOR

Victoria Reads

In the spirit of collaboration and in recognition of how COVID-19 has shaped the way we work online, public librarians across Victoria joined forces to co-develop and deliver a series of online events. Yarra Libraries was proud to take a leading role in the development of two partnership events:



The Dressmaker's Secret

In celebration of the Australian Reading Hour (12 November 2020), we supported Public Libraries Victoria to host an online evening with Rosalie Ham, Brian Nankervis, Libby Gorr and Jacinta Parsons. The panel delivered a live-reading/performance of a chapter in Rosalie's new book, *The Dressmaker's Secret* (debuted on the day of the event) before attendees were broken into smaller discussion groups to talk about some of their favourite books.

Stalin's Wine Cellar

In October 2020, we hosted an evening with authors John Baker and Nick Place who shared their experiences in researching and writing *Stalin's Wine Cellar*, a quasi-autobiographical tale about the search for a hidden crate of wine. The in-conversation took place on Zoom and was supported by The Ewing Trust, Penguin Random House and many other public library services who promoted the event to their communities.

Over 100 people attended each event and received positive feedback from public library service managers and each featured book's publisher who found the collaboration to be an effective way to reach a wider audience, especially during a year when so many of us were isolated and unable to visit events in-person. Collaborations like this may become more common in the future and we look forward to supporting them where possible.

Culture Counts

In response to the Victorian Auditor General's Office report on the efficiency of public libraries, and in preparation for the development of our new strategic plan, we subscribed to a new evaluation tool called Culture Counts and joined the Public Libraries Evaluation Network. The tool enables us to collect quality feedback and data about the cultural, social and economic impact our services and programs deliver to community, and our participation in the Network enable us to effectively benchmark and compare our performance with other public libraries across Australia.



Game of Loans Battle Royale

Building on the success of our summer reading program Game of Loans, in December 2020 through January 2021, we partnered with Melton City Libraries to deliver a competitive reading challenge (dubbed a 'Battle Royale').

A total of 152 children participated and collectively read 2,413 books over the school holiday period. Up to 521 activities were logged during the program which included attending an online author encounter with Shaun Tan, live magic performances and a range of STEAM activities children could complete at home.

Ultimately the battle was won Melton City Libraries' participants reading 112 books more than Yarra Libraries' participants. The line has been drawn and we look forward to collaborating more broadly with other public libraries to develop and deliver more fun summer reading experiences.

Creative Tech Fridays

In partnership with State Library Victoria and Melbourne City Libraries, we develop Creative Tech Fridays - a six-part weekly video series aimed at showcasing a variety of creative technologies and teaching new skills. Our Digital and Community Learning team showed participants how to use our new Cricut craft cutting machine to embellish a handmade boro bag (a Japanese style of patchwork construction), how to make beats with a Teenage Engineering Pocket Operator using the sounds of the library and how to design a book display stand and manufacture it with our laser-cut machine.

Scan the QR code to watch the series on YouTube.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Art+Feminism: Wikipedia Edit-a-thon

To recognise International Women's Day, we partnered with Women's Art Register (Australia's living archive of women's art practice) for a fun, interactive, and coffee-filled Edit-a-thon at Richmond Library.

The booked-out session also attracted several walk-ins who were excited to contribute to Wikipedia – many for the first time. Prue Mitchell from Wikimedia led a presentation on how to add a page on a woman artist before everyone got stuck into editing, chatting and helping each other learn about the rather unique coding of Wikipedia.

One participant had drafted 10,000 words in preparation for the event, while others had just the name of a woman artist they admired. Library resources – including the Women's Art Register archives (kept on-site at Richmond Library) were used to increase the representation of women on Wikipedia and boost their search result rankings.

Over the course of the event, 7 new articles about women (15,000 words in length) were created, and a total of 281 edits were made to existing articles. The event launched a unique activation of the Richmond space, which received positive feedback from all those who attended and another session is being considered.

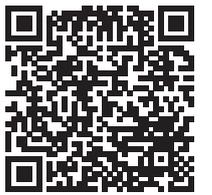
**WOMEN'S
ART REGISTER**



Choose to Challenge

Also in recognition of International Women's Day, we hosted a presentation by the Professional Migrant Women Group (PMWG) that celebrated migrant women leaders in the Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room. A panel of speakers including PMWG founder Fabiola Campbell and mentor Clarenz Sanchez spoke about visibility, their aspirations for other diverse women taking up leadership roles across the community, how they challenge stereotypes and combat gender bias and discrimination. Supported by the Ewing Trust.

THE EWING TRUST



Fitzroy Walking Tour - podcast series

To celebrate Fitzroy's historic architecture and raise its profile as Melbourne's first suburb, a new series of podcasts have been commissioned in partnership with the Fitzroy Historical Society. Each episode features local experts sharing old and new stories about the many landmarks and iconic buildings throughout the suburb. The podcasts were developed to be walking tours and downloadable maps are available from our website to guide you through the streets, but they're also great to listen from home.

Studio J Bollywood Dance and Laughter Therapy

We are proud to support this joyful initiative from Joshinder at Studio J - a weekly video series of inclusive Bollywood dance classes and laughter therapy sessions - made possible by the Yarra City Arts' *Stimulate Yarra* grant. Between February and June, 'Studio Joy' videos were watched 1,296 times and the Laughter Therapy classes were watched 1,646 times.

Participants are invited to follow along at home each week. Catch up via the links on our website - follow the QR code below.



FITZROY WRITERS FESTIVAL

The highly successful Fitzroy Writers Festival returned for another year as a hybrid event with a mix of online and in-person events. Highlights from this year's event include:

Big Work: Making a graphic novel

An audience of 37 gathered at the Fitzroy Town Hall (one of few in-person events held this year due to COVID-19 restrictions) to hear three acclaimed local illustrators (Bernard Caleo, Mandy Ord and Chris Gooch) share insights on how they combine aspects of storytelling, art, comics, and literature to make a graphic novel.

Clementine Ford and Alice Robinson

Fearless feminist author Clementine Ford and award-winning author Alice Robinson delivered a sold-out in-conversation (that was simultaneously live-streamed on Facebook) and discussed each other's writing and lived experiences as female authors. Mayor Gabrielle de Vietri opened the event and in-person attendees were gifted with a free festival tote bag.

Climate Change and Fiction

Authors Sean O'Beirne, Alice Robinson and Khalid Warsame (After Australia) led a panel discussion on the ramifications of climate change and how the prospect of environmental disaster is influencing contemporary Australian fiction writers. The conversation covered the moral challenges facing writers when addressing climate change and was recorded as a podcast.

Eleni Hale & Anna Spargo-Ryan

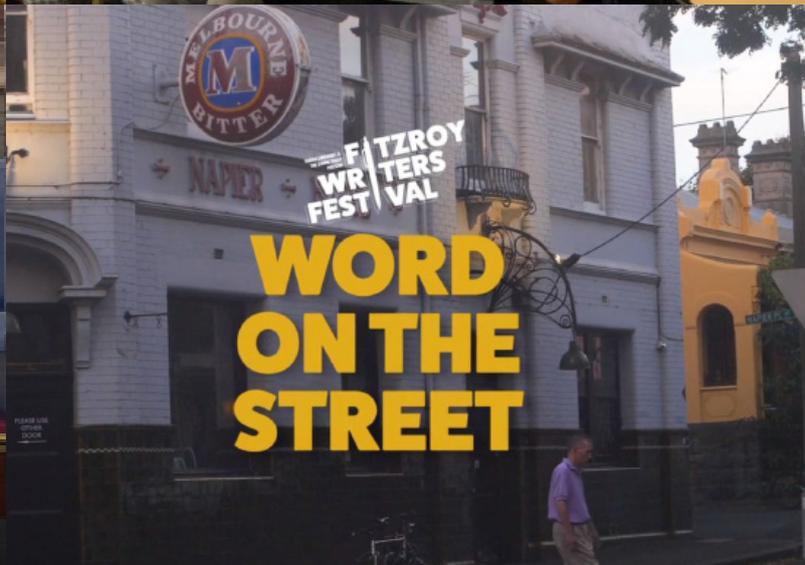
In partnership with Fitzroy Legal Service, we recorded author Eleni Hale in-conversation with fellow author Anna Spargo-Ryan for the Yarra Libraries Podcast. The pair discussed Eleni's debut, *Stone Girl*, which explores Victoria's youth justice system through the eyes of its young protagonist. **Scan the QR code to listen to the recording and others from the Festival.**



Word on the Street

Three poets—selected by our friends at Melbourne Spoken Word—premiered new poems we filmed and released during the Festival. 2019 Adelaide Fringe award winner Scotty Wings, 2020 Australian Poetry Slam Champion Ren Alessandra and 2019 Melbourne Spoken Word Prize winner Thabani Tshuma each debuted a poem in the video, all filmed at iconic Fitzroy locations. **Scan the QR code to watch.**





#PARTNERSHIPSFORTHEGOALS

Dog Ears

In partnership with Canine Comprehension, we piloted a new reading and confidence building program with students at Sacred Heart Primary School in Fitzroy. 'Dog Ears' offers a furry, non-judgmental ear and a supportive environment in which children are encouraged to read aloud in the company of a friendly companion dog. 8 sessions were held with a total of 65 children participating in the pilot. Each earned stickers to track their progress and received a certificate at the end of the program.

The program will be revised and offered to other local schools next year – subject to COVID restrictions.



Dinosaur SQUAD - Midsumma event

Selected as a PRISM program for the 2021 Midsumma program, we were honoured to host the launch of a storytelling and community-building initiative with Drummond Street Services and Alice's Garage on Saturday 17 April 2021.

In the Reading Room at Fitzroy Town Hall we heard "The Roar", an intergenerational fairytale written by Sally Gardner and Jax Wake – two transgender writers separated by 57 years of age. The generational differences and shared life experiences between these two culminated in the development of the story, and the solidification of a support network known as "The SQUAD" (Storytelling QUEers Against Discrimination). It is the aim of Alice's Garage and Drummond Street Services to foster more SQUADs for LGBTIQ+ youth and for more stories to be developed.

Yarra Libraries and Midsumma support this aim and we look forward to working with them in future; the project is also supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Victoria Police.





NAIDOC Week (in November)

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the National NAIDOC Committee opted to move NAIDOC Week from July to November 2020. Faced with ongoing lockdowns and uncertainty about holding large in-person events, we partnered with Aboriginal Housing Victoria to produce a series of online videos.

Alice Skye, The Merindas & Uncle Kutcha Edwards delivered online music performances (pre-recorded from their homes/studios) while chef Nornie Bero from Mabu Mabu gave us a mouth-watering damper making workshop that showcased Australian native ingredients and flavours.

Koori Storytime

We are proud to have a culturally and linguistically diverse team here at Yarra Libraries and leverage opportunities for our team to celebrate their cultural diversity, promote their cultural history and provide opportunities for the community to learn and engage with cultural activities. This year we piloted Koori Storytime, a regularly occurring event delivered at Carlton North Railway Neighbourhood House and The Wellington (Collingwood) by Sharyn, a proud Gundjimarara woman and one of our library officers. The sessions are open to families with pre-schoolers and include a structured activity and a variety of storytelling and is something we hope to expand to more Neighbourhood Houses and branches in the near future.



CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS PROGRAMMING

Building a Zero-Emissions Future

In partnership with the Sustainability team, we delivered a three-part webinar series throughout August 2020 to promote Council's commitment to taking action on the climate emergency, and to present the pandemic recovery and rebuild as an opportunity to 'build back better' and create a safe, healthy zero-emissions future.

- **A renewables led recovery: Towards a safe, healthy, zero-emissions future**

Speakers included Amanda McKenzie (CEO, Climate Council), Zoe Whitton, (Board member, Investor Group on Climate Change and Head of ESG Research at Citi (Asia chapter)) and John Iser (former chair of the Victorian chapter of Doctors for the Environment). Then-Mayor Cr Misha Coleman moderated the event with up to 200 attendees watching live.

- **Campaigning for Climate Action to drive the recovery**

Speakers included Lavanya Pant (Environment Victoria), Laurence Newmann (Digital Campaigner, Australian Conservation Foundation), Joel Marlan-Tribe (Mobilisation Coordinator, Australian Conservation Foundation) and Anna Langford (Act on Climate Convenor, Friends of the Earth). Sam Green (Climate Emergency Officer, Yarra City Council) and Geoff Golden (Convenor, Yarra Climate Action Now) moderated the discussion with up to 150 attendees participating.

- **The how, why and when to transition from gas to an efficient electric home**

At this session, an expert from Renew (previously called Alternative Technology Association) taught an audience of 100-150 people how, why and when to transition away from gas to an efficient all-electric home.



Fight for Planet A

Also in partnership with the Sustainability Team, we supported a three-part conversation series in response to the ABC TV show, *Fight for Planet A*. Special guests included Taryn Lane (Hepburn Wind), Clive Attwater (Australian Electric Vehicle Association) and Jess Panegyres (Forests at The Wilderness Society). An average of 75 participants attended each week and feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. Participants said they enjoyed the relaxed, conversational feel of the sessions and appreciated the opportunity to connect with others and talk directly to experts.

Each week, participants were asked to make a pledge to commit to achievable future actions to address the climate emergency; these ranged from converting to solar, eating less red meat and seeking to purchase an electric bike for transport.

Choosing a Plant-Based Diet: Taking Climate Action through the Food We Eat

Rounding out our series of climate-conscious programming this year, we hosted an online event in March 2021 with Melbourne's poster-child of plant-based bites, Shannon Martinez (Smith & Daughters). In-conversation with Gemma Plesman (the Wilderness Society), the pair discussed their views on why we need to change the way we eat to effectively address the climate emergency and gave practical advice (and recipes) for transitioning to a plant-based diet. Learnings from our climate-conscious programs were referenced, allowing the 80 participants to 'round-out' their knowledge on how to 'build back better' and contribute towards a zero-emissions future.



School Strike 4 Climate Podcast

As part of the National Sustainable Living Festival, we sat down with young climate activist, Nina Pasqualini, to talk about her work with School Strike 4 Climate. Nina spoke about how she got involved in School Strike, the realities of being a young person growing up in a climate emergency, and how to take part in ongoing protests. The interview launched on the Yarra Libraries Podcast in March and has had 74 listens to date.

Scan the QR code to listen.

"Each time I go into a Library now, I look for a familiar face (generally hidden behind a mask) among the staff to compliment them on their good work.

I doubt that any of you have a true sense of what a wonderful service you provided during COVID and how much it was appreciated."



DIGITAL & COMMUNITY LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS

Philosophy Begins in Wonder

One of our most successful online programs this year has been the 'Philosophy Begins in Wonder' courses facilitated by the Melbourne School of Philosophy. Each session has been fully booked at 50 people with significant community interest, leading us to expand the program with more regular courses offered. Moving this program online has made it more accessible for the community – one participant in particular gave feedback that it had been one of the few positives to come from COVID-19 restrictions as it had given them the opportunity to meet other people in the community and had learnt a lot about patience, mindfulness and emotional intelligence.



Sunday Sounds: Music Yared on the Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library Rooftop

In the breezy afternoon warmth of early autumn (March 2021), we hosted a live performance by Music Yared (new name ChikChika) in the Bargoonga Nganjin rooftop garden. Music Yared thrilled around 70 community members with their groovy African sounds and flawless performance, with many attendees asking for more musical events in the rooftop garden. The event had a true community feel, with library regulars, new faces and children and adults of all ages coming along to enjoy the show. The sound traveling from the rooftop even drew people from the street upstairs, and the event truly activated our beautiful rooftop garden space.

Make Your Own Escape Room

On Saturday 27 March (in partnership with Shang Lun and Alex from local game design studio PlayReactive) we delivered a workshop aimed at teaching participants puzzle design concepts they could use to make their own games, escape rooms or treasure hunts. 15 participants - a mix of children and adults - worked together to create a prototype and converted the meeting room at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library into an escape room! The feedback we received for the event was overwhelmingly positive. One participant said *"I love workshops or events where it would appeal to a whole family; that's part of what I loved about this one."*

Tech Talks

In late April we launched a new online video series called Tech Talks. Our Digital and Community Learning Liaison reached out to computer science experts to deliver in-depth yet accessible talks on topics including securing your small business online, protecting yourself from cyber-attacks and how to promote a positive computer coding culture with your children.

Scan the QR code to watch the series on Vimeo.





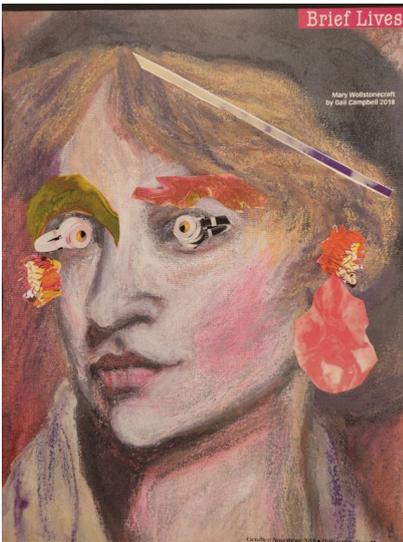
Speedcubing

A Speedcubing holiday program was offered twice at Bargoonga Nganjin Library as part of a new partnership with Speedcubing Australia, and Kerrie and Myles Jarman. Sponsorship was provided for 100 speedcubes to enable each participant to take a cube home following the session, along with a laminated “how to” instruction sheet. A combined total of 50 children (plus parents/carers) attended the sessions and left the workshop with a taste of what it is like to be a speedcuber and with foundational skills in solving puzzles.

Lo-Fi Hip-Hop

Participants with zero music production experience were invited to produce some “extremely chill and vibey lo-Fi hip-hop” with our new Teenage Engineering Pocket Operators (PO-33) at a series of workshops held in March 2021. Our Digital and Community Learning team gave 18 community members an introduction to the art of sampling and beat programming. Scan the QR in the image below to listen to one of the tunes made at the workshop.





Collage and Photomontage online

In 2020, our online collage/photomontage program moved to an evening timeslot. Each fortnight, an average of 15 participants would 'zoom in' to learn how to use open source software (e.g. GIMP and Photopea) and discover where to find public domain/creative commons collections to use in their art. When restrictions eased in early 2021, we approached local artist Aylsa McHugh to facilitate an-person Collage Club at the new location of Richmond Library. 20 participants came (the maximum gathering size allowed as per State Government restrictions at the time). One participant, traveling from Hampton said *"This made my week, was really good to be able to meet some new people and attend with my carer"*.

Yarra STEAM Labs

On Monday 19 April, we launched Yarra STEAM Labs, a reimagining of our much-loved after-school programs for kids. Designed to provide a fun and inclusive place for kids to discover more about science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, these Labs can be found at all branches throughout the week and will run during school term:

- Art Lab (formerly known as Kids Creative Club)
- Maker Lab (formerly known as Tech Club)
- LEGO Lab (formerly known as LEGO Club)

Yarra STEAM Labs have been developed to help support a digitally enabled community, by providing access to smart technologies and encouraging broad participation so everyone can share the benefits of our smart city.





School Holiday and After-School Programs Online

Due to COVID-19 restrictions throughout 2020/21, we kept our school holiday and after-school programs online as a way of ensuring more children and their families could participate safely. Our Children's and Youth Service team came up with some creative and new programs during this time, often filming from home. Two new programs were developed this year: Toddler Aerobics (an active rhymetime for toddlers inspired by 1980's style TV shows, with lots of movement, dance and song to keep children active while at home) and Cooking the Books (a cooking class for children that utilises simple recipes and one of our team member's professional background as a chef).

Curious Creatures: Children's Book Week

For Children's Book Week (17-23 October 2020) we partnered with The Little Bookroom to deliver a drawing competition. Local illustrator Lucinda Gifford delivered a workshop on how to draw curious creatures and invited children in Yarra to have a go drawing their own. Congratulations to Aurora, Tilman and Angus for winning the major prize in their age category (a \$200 gift voucher to spend at The Little Bookroom), and to Nina, Rosie, Abuk, Helina and James for being runner-up (each winning a \$100 gift voucher to spend at The Little Bookroom).

National Simultaneous Storytime

To celebrate National Simultaneous Storytime this year, we held two live Storytime sessions: one at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library and another in the Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room. A combined total of 113 children (and their parents/carers) attended to hear our storytellers read *Give Me Some Space!* by Philip Bunting. As an extra special treat, attendees also watched the book being read live by an astronaut from the International Space Station.



20/21 STATISTICS

KPI	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	VARIANCE
Loans	922,576	556,195	208,872	-62.5%
The impact of COVID-19 continues to have a significant effect on the key performance indicators of our service, most notably our loans, visits and public computer usage.				
Visits	820,202	520,886	226,566	-56.5%
Website Visits	717,572	398,499	261,051	-34.5%
With our branches closed or operating under capacity restrictions, visits to the library and library website both fell. This is partly due to our public PCs loading our website upon booting.				
Membership	64,433	67,649	47,534	-29.5%
Program Attendance	57,130	56,454	121,473	+115%
Program attendance includes an estimated number of people served through the extensive emergency food and material relief program coordinated by our service (~85,000).				
Acquisitions	33,600	28,331	29,646	+4.6%
Reference Enquiries	39,017	2,604	2,362	-9.2%
With our branches in lockdown during the regular reporting period, we were unable to accurately record the number of reference enquiries undertaken by our customer service team.				
Computer Usage	83,538	60,170	18,471	-69.8%
Wi-Fi Usage	717,572	398,499	261,051	-34.5%
Public computer and Wi-Fi usage is lower than previous years due to ongoing lockdowns and restrictions placed on library visitation throughout the year.				

THE YEAR AHEAD - WRITING OUR NEXT CHAPTER

COVID-19 may have disrupted our year and forced us to defer some key projects but the future is looking bright for Yarra Libraries! In the year ahead we plan to embark on an extensive community consultation campaign to hear from our community what they want to see from us into the future; this feedback will inform the development of our next library strategy.

We'll also continue our work to reduce barriers to access and aim to provide greater access to our library spaces and collections with extended opening hours at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library and Richmond Library; we'll keep showing up where our community are and will provide the services and information they need in the moment, and we'll deliver on our commitment to building an engaged, productive and multi-literate community with progress towards meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

If you see us in a park in Yarra, at the foot of our public housing towers, come and say hello. Libraries Change Lives - how can we change yours?



"Thanks for creating a bit of normal in allowing us to have our visit with Sensitive Santa this year in a COVID-safe way. This program is the highlight of our year; it's truly magical, and I cannot thank you enough for the difference this program makes to our family."





Yarra City Council PO Box 168 Richmond VIC 3121

Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library
182 St Georges Road, North Fitzroy
Carlton Library 667 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton
Collingwood Library 11 Stanton Street, Abbotsford
Fitzroy Library 128 Moor Street, Fitzroy
Richmond Library 415 Church Street, Richmond

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