

Draft Yarra Libraries Strategic Plan 2017-2020



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|--|----|
| Mayor's Message | 3 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Vision | 5 |
| Purpose | 5 |
| Developing priorities for Yarra Libraries | 5 |
| Our priorities for 2017–2020..... | 6 |
| Priority 1: Creating opportunities for learning and literacy | 6 |
| Priority 2: Putting people first..... | 7 |
| Priority 3: Connecting with our community..... | 8 |
| Priority 4: Discovering through technology..... | 9 |
| Priority 5: Curating inspired collections | 10 |
| Priority 6: Providing places for all people | 11 |
| What now? | 12 |
| Appendices | 13 |
| Appendix A: Annual Action Plan – Year One | 13 |
| 1. Creating opportunities for learning and literacy | 13 |
| 2. Putting people first | 15 |
| 3. Connecting with our community | 18 |
| 4. Discovering through technology | 21 |
| 5. Curating inspired collections | 23 |
| 6. Providing places for all people | 25 |
| Appendix B: Consultation | 27 |
| Laying the groundwork..... | 27 |
| Consultation activities | 27 |
| Our ongoing conversation | 28 |
| Results..... | 29 |
| Research | 29 |

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the Traditional Owners of the land, pays tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and gives respect to Elders past and present.

Mayor's Message

MESSAGE TO BE INCLUDED AFTER DRAFT ENDORSED

Draft

Introduction

This strategy is the blueprint that will guide Yarra's library services through the next three years.

Yarra Libraries, like all public library services, has recently undergone a complete transformation. Leaving no stone unturned, we have reinvented our spaces, collections, programs and activities – and ourselves – to meet the evolving needs of our community. And the transition will continue.

Libraries have become active, multi-use spaces that reflect the many different ways in which people want to use them. These spaces are not limited to our library buildings either. We are increasingly extending services into the community through outreach into people's homes and community meeting places, into parks and onto the street. Increasingly mobile technology enables a growing part of the library to be wherever people need it, 24-hours a day. Being agile and responsive to community need is a key priority for Yarra Libraries and informs everything we do.

Yarra's rapidly increasing population is living in closer quarters than ever before. With space at a premium, and more people living alone, having a place where we can go to pursue our interests and connect with other people is becoming increasingly essential.

A rich spectrum of people call Yarra home. For some residents, the library is a type of luxury, or extra, while for others, the library is a vital part of everyday life, providing access to resources and services that may not be freely available elsewhere. Importantly, the library is a place where all people are welcome, and everyone belongs, regardless of who they are and what has brought them the space. The library is an equal access space, partly because, in a world of user-pay systems, the library is free.

Public libraries first emerged from Mechanics' Institutes, which were established to empower working class people by providing more equitable access to information and education. There was a belief at the time that by making information freely accessible, people who were previously uneducated could rise up through the class structure to lead a better life. Today's public libraries continue this fundamental commitment to social justice – they remain freely accessible to all and provide a collective repository for local knowledge. Our staff support this by promoting access to information, resources and the many ways of learning. Recent research has demonstrated that, for every government dollar invested in libraries, the value returned to the community is at least 3.56 times more,¹ an impressive figure, even without considering the additional value provided through jobs and contribution to the state economy.

The community of library users has broadened since the Mechanics' Institute days, but the libraries' core business, the focus on empowering people through access to information and learning, has remained. Ongoing change is an essential part of this responsive relationship with the community and helps to ensure that Yarra Libraries will continue to be a welcoming, accessible and inspiring place – where people always come first.

¹ SGS Economics and Planning (2011), *Dollars, Sense and Public Libraries*, p. 5.

Vision

Connect Discover Inspire

Purpose

Our libraries provide a place for all people to connect with others, discover new things and find inspiration, both within the library walls and beyond.

Developing priorities for Yarra Libraries

Through an in-depth consultation process we identified six priority areas for this strategy (see [Appendix B](#) for consultation details). We asked library users, community service providers, Council staff, and the broader Yarra community what they would like Yarra Libraries to do, and developed the priorities from their answers.

Each priority is a strategic direction for Yarra Libraries to follow during the next three years. The priorities will guide development of an annual action plan, which will respond to our community's evolving needs. The action plan for the coming year is attached in [Appendix A](#), and should be read alongside the priorities so that the reason for each action will be clear.

Creating an action plan every year will ensure we have a mechanism to respond effectively to growth and change. Yarra Libraries approaches consultation with our community as an ongoing endeavour, seeking out the community's opinion on specific issues, such as services and collections, and encouraging general input from library users on a daily basis.

During the life of this strategy we will continue to:

- Encourage verbal feedback.
- Conduct surveys.
- Ensure inclusive engagement processes.
- Seek feedback following events and activities.
- Encourage people to contact us online, through the website and social media.
- Have hard copy feedback forms prominently available wherever we work.
- Target groups that are harder to reach with engagement methods that suit them.
- Consult with our Library Advisory Committee and other Council advisory groups as appropriate.

Through these measures we will keep up an ongoing conversation with the community, while building relationships and evaluating our work. As we capture and respond to feedback, we will use it to fuel a process of ongoing improvement.

Our priorities for 2017–2020

Priority 1: Creating opportunities for learning and literacy

First and foremost, Yarra Libraries provides opportunities and resources for learning, literacy and creativity.

The libraries are here for everyone and dedicated to learning needs at all stages of life. From creative play to scheduled learning activities, and basic to advanced skill levels, everyone can find an opportunity to learn and grow at Yarra Libraries. For some, this will be basic literacy, for others it may be learning to use, or having the opportunity to play with, technology.

Yarra Libraries is already providing one-on-one support for individuals with low literacy, digital literacy skills or limited access to technology, to navigate eGovernment platforms, fill out forms and apply for jobs online. These are partnerships we will continue to build.

Some people may want to create or join a special interest group, to connect with like-minded people in the community. Others will be looking for a resource-rich environment that feeds their creative impulses. Our ever-growing collections and resources support learning experiences at all levels, and our staff are here to facilitate connections.

And we're not just confining these opportunities to spaces within the library walls. We understand that not everyone is able to come to us, so we will continue to extend our services to wherever they are needed. As always, Yarra Libraries staff will be the key to finding out how our libraries, and their diverse programs, events, and collections, can best serve the Yarra community to learn throughout their lives.

'The library has extended my ability to spell correctly and my knowledge, enabling me to speak with authority when socialising.'

– Home Library user

Priority 2: Putting people first

We recognise that people use the library in many different ways, and we want to ensure that your library experience suits you.

Yarra Libraries is committed to providing excellent customer service by creating positive experiences for everyone. Our staff can connect you with programs, ideas, resources, collections and events, and help you with research or unfamiliar technologies. Or if you prefer to be left alone, you can use our facilities and online services independently, without any direct interaction.

We focus on people, and develop new programs and services that respond to the community's needs. Effective use of technology means that people can use the library independently, and when our staff are needed, they now have more time to spend with library users, helping with enquiries, delivering activities, and building programs. The ongoing conversations we have with everyone help us to better what is needed, and enable us to provide better service for all library users, especially those who can be hard to reach.

At Yarra Libraries we welcome and include everyone, irrespective of their background, persuasion, religion, abilities, age or interests. We will always ensure that our libraries have a personal touch, and look forward to finding new ways to extend our reach and create library experiences designed around people.

'I'm a long-time local to this neighbourhood, and I walked past the doors of the library for many years. My needs finally drew me in and it was the best thing I ever did.'

– Annette, Richmond

Priority 3: Connecting with our community

Libraries are vital hubs for connection and collaboration.

People love coming to the library to connect with other people, and we love being part of this. Whether through books, activities, study, internet access or relaxation, human connection is a big priority for everyone. For some, this might be the alone-together intimacy of reading in the company of others, while other people want to meet like-minded folks to share skills, knowledge and conversation.

During the community consultation for this strategy, people repeatedly told us that they come to libraries to connect with other people. This connection is one of the things that Yarra staff most love about working in the libraries, and it is a purpose that resonates with community service providers and officers from other areas of Council. That's why we are committed to keeping community connection a central focus in our day-to-day operations, and throughout our programs and activities.

The programs we run to create these connections are as diverse as the people who attend them. Some of the activities and events include food, cooking, craft, electronics, entertainment, genealogy, Indigenous storytelling, language clubs, homework and research. And we're discovering more areas of interest to explore all the time.

We will continue to reach out across the community to partner and work with other groups and organisations, to find ways to deliver our services beyond the library walls. We will also search for new ways of reaching the community by partnering with other services within Council itself. We will seek to increase collaborations in what we do to bring the best to our community.

'I support community libraries, particularly for young children and older people. It gives people who are isolated, for example, a connection to a community.'

– Ros, Fitzroy

Priority 4: Discovering through technology

Technology is changing the ways in which we learn, connect and collaborate.

As this change continues, it's vital that everyone has access to the kind of technology that suits them, and a chance to develop their digital skills.

Many people want library services to be available 24/7, and effective use of technology is the first step in making this happen. Through our website, we are working hard to develop our online presence, and we are expanding our digital services and resources. We will continue to explore technologies to support social connectedness, and we are keen to facilitate access to both basic and advanced technologies that people might not have at home.

Increasingly, digital technologies are an everyday part of life. People are required to interact with each other, with services and with government online, but not everyone in Yarra has a computer. Others have access to technology, but don't know how to use it, while some people have a basic understanding, but are seeking to improve their skills and discover new technologies.

Yarra Libraries is dedicated to bridging the digital divide to ensure that no one is left behind. For some, this will mean learning to set up an email account and accessing online services. For others, it will mean learning about social media and digital safety. And some people will want to learn how to code, build robotics or tinker with electronics projects.

It's not all about entry level support, we can also facilitate use of high-end technology for those who are looking to develop their existing expertise. Whether you're a tech-savvy expert looking to expand your skills, or an absolute beginner, Yarra Libraries' staff can link you with activities and programs, or help you take that first tentative step. The tech-world is marching ahead with ever-increasing pace and we want everyone to benefit from this.

How do you imagine Yarra Libraries in the future?

'Lots more interactive, more ways to link with technology, easier to find things, definitely don't think about hundreds of books!'

– Fitzroy local, Atherton Gardens Family Fun Day

Priority 5: Curating inspired collections

Our collections underpin everything we do at Yarra Libraries.

Many people have asked us whether there will be books in the library of the future. We're happy to say that yes, our much-loved book collections will still be there for browsing, discovering, reading and learning. Our collections will also continue to evolve so we can open doors to new and exciting ways to learn and share.

Heritage items, local history archives and environmental technologies are just some of our existing collection types, and where possible we will look to expand this to include other kinds of items in the future. The steady incorporation of ebooks and digital resources will complement the possibility of borrowing things like tools, gadgets and technology. We are also working towards the digitisation of collection items such as local history collections. Our focus will always be on increasing and supporting ways for people to learn, connect, make, imagine and discover.

Curating inspired collections relies on us understanding what inspires our community. We encourage everyone to keep us abreast of what they want to see and use in our libraries. We take requests to purchase items, encourage feedback and can help support individual research.

Our collections will continue to grow and develop according to diverse community needs. In some cases we may ask people to help build our collections too. This might include assisting people to curate, capture and share their own stories and local histories, or choosing what they want to see and use in our specialised language collections.

'Access to all requested books. Delightful book deliveries, cheerful and knowledgeable. The personal contact is very important, it makes you feel that the books are alive.'

– Home Library user

Priority 6: Providing places for all people

While the library spaces and the ways we use them are rapidly changing, our libraries remain free and accessible, and everyone is welcome.

Libraries are more than just places to search for and find books. They are community hubs for learning, creating, studying, relaxing, accessing technology, connecting with others or finding some personal space. Our library spaces are evolving to reflect the different ways that people want to use them.

More than this though, our libraries are no longer limited to the physical library space. We reach into homes through delivery services. We are on the street, in shopping centres and in local parks through various programs and pop-up events. We're in local neighbourhood houses and on housing estates through partnership activities. And increasingly, our libraries are online and virtual – and therefore 24/7. During our consultation for this strategy, we heard that everyone wants the library in all these places and more – and that's where we intend to go.

People also want to see more interconnectedness between other libraries, not just locally but around the world, and this is something we are striving to deliver. Yarra Libraries is a unique community asset, and we intend to continue to improve our buildings, our virtual spaces, our presence out in the community, and find new ways to make places for all people.

'I would like to say how very much I love Richmond Library. It's one of my happy spaces!'

– Meg, Richmond

What now?

Our priorities for the next three years continue the journey that Yarra Libraries began with our last strategy, *Building Community Discovery 2013–16*. The community's input for that strategy, along with the appetite for transformation that has swept through the public library sector, established a mandate for change in every area of our library service.

From spaces to collections, from staffing structures, to events and programs, we left no stone unturned as we reinvented Yarra Libraries. A success story in every way, our stats across all areas have been trending upward since that time, reflecting the hard work that led us to where we are now. We're thrilled with this result. During the last reporting period before this strategy, Yarra Libraries' memberships increased by 2.8%, library visits increased by 11.8%, and our wifi usage increased by a whopping 52%. In the current reporting period all of these figures have increased again with the opening of Bargoonga Nganjin, where loans have doubled, library visits have quadrupled, and demand for loans and use of our wifi is unprecedented.

Our staff continue to rise to each challenge, and remain the cornerstone in a solid foundation on which we will keep building.

Consultation for our current strategy has confirmed that community members, library staff, service providers, and our colleagues at Council and in other library services, are all on the same page as to where Yarra Libraries should head to next. We look forward to making the most of this collective energy to continue collaborating and evolving in response to our community's changing needs.

With an eye on industry trends, and a commitment to ongoing consultation, Yarra Libraries will keep seeking out new ideas, innovative work methods and opportunities to provide the best possible service for Yarra's diverse community.

Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Action Plan – Year One

Budget note: All actions in this plan have been costed within the existing resources of Yarra Libraries' operational budget.

1. Creating opportunities for learning and literacy

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|--|-------------------|---|---|
| 1.1 Ensure that lifelong learning programs reflect Yarra's cultural diversity and encourage different ways of learning and obtaining information. ² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Community Programs & Outreach team Library Digital team Aged & Disability Services | June 2018/ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise a range of communication and learning methodologies to engage people with limited literacy in learning opportunities within libraries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – accessible, free classes – community languages – large font materials – simple English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 1.2 Organise information and training sessions aimed at CALD communities and Libraries staff, which provide capacity building opportunities such as computer skills and use of MyGov. ³ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Digital Team Community Partnerships DHHS Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least four training sessions delivered to CALD communities. At least one information session run in collaboration with DHHS – in multiple community languages. At least one staff training session to enable them to assist CALD and other community groups to access E-Gov and E-business websites and tools. Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services to extend this assistance to young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

² This action also appears in Yarra's *Positive Ageing Strategy 2014–2017*

³ This action also appears in Yarra's *Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|---|-----------|--|---|
| 1.3 Run targeted events and programs promoting health, life-skills and life-issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Community Programs & Outreach Team • Library Children's & Youth Services Team • Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage guest speakers and subject matter experts. • Seek guidance from other areas of Council's Community Wellbeing division. • Encourage online discussions. • Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services to design a program around health and lifestyle for young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |
| 1.4 Purchase and display Aboriginal Languages of Victoria Map at all of our branches from Victorian Aboriginal Corporations of Languages (VCAL). ⁴ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Leadership Team | May 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact VACL to purchase. • Assess cost, raise PO. • Laminate and display in prominent area across five library branches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |

⁴ This action also appears in Yarra's *Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

2. Putting people first

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| 2.1 Work constantly to remove barriers to participation at Yarra Libraries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Leadership Team Library Development & Project Officer Yarra Libraries Access Ambassadors Aged & Disability Services Family, Youth & Children's Services | <p>August 2017</p> <p>August 2017</p> <p>September 2017 December 2017 March 2018 June 2018</p> <p>September 2017</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Yarra Libraries Access Ambassadors to promote accessibility at each library branch. Train Access Ambassadors in assistive technologies and other resources to enhance accessibility of library spaces and services. Promote Access Ambassadors accessibility program. Complete at least four accessibility facilities audits, using DHHS standards, and keep an issues log about library accessibility. Include accessible activities and events in programming. Children's & Youth Services Team Leader to work with Council's Family, Youth & Children's Services team to remove barriers to membership for young people under 18. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 2.2 Promote Libraries far and wide. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Marketing Team Leader Library Leadership Team All other Yarra Libraries staff | June 2018/ ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote libraries services to increase profile and reach. Build e-news membership and increase social media followers. Promote extended opening hours through social media, on signage and print media. Consult staff about extended opening hours and address any emerging issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 2.3 Maintain connection with Council's Aboriginal community activities through membership of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships Library Children's & Youth Services Team Leader Community Partnerships | July 2017– June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain RAP group membership of two library services representatives. Attend monthly meetings to report on Yarra Libraries and Aboriginal Community projects. Seek opportunities to build connections between libraries and other parts of Council. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|---|---------------|---|---|
| 2.4 Find ways to facilitate skills and knowledge sharing amongst people in the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Community Programs & Outreach Team • Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships • Library Children's & Youth Services Team Leader • Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and engage library users with specialised knowledge, skills or teaching experience who want to share their knowledge with other library users (eg. special interest groups, panel discussions etc). • Work with internal partners to identify opportunities to share creative work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |
| 2.5 Review structure and Terms of Reference for the Library Advisory Committee (LAC) to explore additional opportunities for input and involvement in library projects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Management Team | December 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold workshop with LAC members to identify opportunities for more active involvement. • Review and (if appropriate) revise LAC Terms of Reference. • Consider expansion of membership to include a greater diversity of ages and cultural backgrounds. • Work with other areas of Council, such as Family, Youth & Children's Services, to identify candidates to apply for any new committee positions. • Engage with other Council advisory groups for input. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|--|-----------|--|---|
| 2.6 Support opportunities which empower CALD communities, promote intercultural relations, combat racism, celebrate diversity and acknowledge the multicultural heritage of Yarra. ⁵ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Community Programs & Outreach Team • Community Partnerships | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote campaign 'Racism. It stops with me' campaign to community and Council staff in English and key community languages. • Promote council events within the libraries including Cultural Diversity Week/Harmony Day (March) and Refugee Week (June). • Work with Neighbourhood Houses on any activities and promotion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |

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⁵ A variation of this action appears in Yarra's *Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

3. Connecting with our community

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|--|----------------|---|---|
| 3.1 Celebrate National Reconciliation Week and deliver an internal event for Yarra staff. ⁶ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Ewing Trust Officer Arts, Culture & Venues Community Partnerships Communications & Engagement | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Reconciliation Action Plan group will be asked to attend and invite staff. Efforts made to encourage people to attend from across the organisation. High levels of staff participation from across Council. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.2 Yarra Libraries will continue to show a strong commitment to the Wurundjeri people by incorporating key events celebrating our first peoples. ⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Community Programs & Outreach Team Community Partnerships | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult Aboriginal Partnerships Officer on programming opportunities. Contact Wurundjeri Council to assess opportunities and associated costs. Include at least four events in the Yarra Libraries program that celebrate and promote Aboriginal Culture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.3 Participate in Indigenous Literacy Day 2017 by donating proceeds from a book sale to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, and organising a campfire storytelling event with Wurundjeri Elders. ⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Children's & Youth Team Leader Library Community Programs & Outreach Team Community Partnerships | September 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer to organise storytelling around the campfire as part of one of Yarra Libraries' Family Fun Days at Atherton or Edinburgh Gardens. Coordinate book sale on or close to Indigenous Literacy Day. Register book sale with Indigenous Literacy Foundation. Deposit book sale proceeds with Indigenous Literacy Foundation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

⁶ This action also appears in Yarra's *Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

⁷ A version of this action also appears in Yarra's *Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

⁸ A version of this action also appears in Yarra's *Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|--|-------------------|--|---|
| 3.4 Create and cultivate opportunities for cultural exchange between community groups, providing opportunities for sharing of traditions and cultural practices. ⁹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Community Programs & Outreach Team Library Children's & Youth Services Team Community Partnerships Children's Youth & Family Services Aged & Disability Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect CALD groups and individuals with Council departments, to link in to initiatives and projects, enhancing relationship and capacity building. Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services and Aged & Disability Services to identify opportunities for intergenerational CALD and cultural exchange activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.5 Provide opportunities for Council to build strong relationships with multicultural groups, and enable these groups to contribute to Council processes as active, informed citizens who are involved in the life of their communities. ¹⁰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Community Programs & Outreach Team Library Development & Projects Officer Community Partnerships | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and run at least six community-led programming and outreach activities to establish and strengthen links with ethno-specific multicultural groups and leaders in Yarra. Facilitate at least two networking and collaboration events per year, between groups, service providers and Yarra Libraries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.6 Take the library to hard-to-reach groups, including those who are culturally, linguistically and/or socially isolated. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Community Programs & Outreach Team Library Children's & Youth Services Team Library Digital & Community Learning Team Library Development & Projects Officer Family, Youth & Children's Services Community Partnerships | June 2018/Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services to identify ways to take the library to young people from a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Work with Community Partnerships to identify outreach opportunities. Run a pop-up library event at Balit Narrum, Northern Division Aboriginal Disability Network. Run a pop-up library at Billabong BBQ. Facilitate wifi and digital technology for Billabong BBQ. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

⁹ This action also appears in *Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

¹⁰ A version of this action also appears in the *Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*.

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|--|---------------|---|---|
| 3.7 Continue to develop welcoming and safe opportunities for young and middle years children, and young people, to exercise their sense of curiosity, develop new skills and enjoy learning with family and friends, such as through programs and activities at Yarra Libraries, playgroups and other options. ¹¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Children's & Youth Services Team Family, Youth & Children's Services | December 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of cross collaboration and communication. Number of early years' services and activities provided in Council facilities. Evidence of communication of programs to culturally and linguistically diverse and vulnerable residents and ancillary services. Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services to find ways to better integrate our respective school holiday programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.8 Maintain a strong connection with Yarra's Neighbourhood Houses. ¹² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships Library Leadership Team | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinator to attend regular meetings of the Yarra Neighbourhood Houses Network. Collaborate with Neighbourhood Houses to deliver programs and activities (e.g. movies in the park). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 3.9 Strengthen connections with public housing estates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships Family, Youth & Children's Services | December 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure regular representation at Atherton Gardens Residents Association meetings. Evaluate success of pop-up library services and outdoor cinema at Richmond Estate and plan future programs. Initiate contact with Collingwood Estate and Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and seek opportunities to collaborate and build links. Collaborate with Family, Youth & Children's Services to build links with the Youth Centre in order to deliver events and activities together. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

¹¹ A version of this action also appears in the *Early Years Strategy 2015–2018*.

¹² A version of this action also appears in the *Neighbourhood Houses Strategy and Action Plan*.

4. Discovering through technology

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|---|-------------------|--|---|
| 4.1 Provide opportunities for middle years children and young people to access information, connect and network via new web and mobile technologies and age-appropriate social networking tools. ¹³ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Digital Services Library Children's & Youth Services Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018/ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek feedback on digital services and programs for young people through youth and middle years networks eg. Youth Advisory Committee and Youth Ambassadors. Targeted promotion of programs through social media – using the platforms that target demographic use. Engage young people with creative technologies. Teach eSmart cyber-safety tools and resources for young people to stay safe online. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 4.2 Support opportunities for young people, and parents, carers and guardians to improve digital and information literacy skills. ¹⁴ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Digital Team Library Children's & Youth Services Team Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018/ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding to continue and extend Digital Bootcamp for young people and housing estate residents. Undertake ongoing evaluation of digital literacy programming to build successful, responsive programs and replace outdated programs. Engage young people in using creative technologies. Teach eSmart cyber-safety tools and resources for young people to stay safe online. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 4.3 Support and facilitate community access to technology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Digital & Community Learning Library Digital Team Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships | June 2018/ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue digital coaching or similar program to provide one-on-one digital support to people who need it. Provide comfortable learning environments for people at all stages of learning. Investigate models for loaning technology and/or connectivity devices (e.g. dongle with data allowance) to library members. Increase engagement through play and informal learning. Support programming for people with more | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

¹³ A version of this action appears in the *Middle Years Strategy Action Plan 2014–2017*.

¹⁴ A version of this action appears in the *Yarra Youth Policy 2013–2016*.

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|---|-------------------|--|---|
| | | | <p>advanced technological skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote use of eSmart cyber-safety tools and resources. | |
| 4.4 Run podcast and live stream events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Marketing Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships | June 2018/ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial Facebook Live as a platform for live streaming at least four events in a two month period. Record stats across multiple events to evaluate increased remote access library participation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 4.5 Complete first draft of Libraries IT Roadmap. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Coordinator Resource & Technology Library Manager ICT Services Team | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and write complete first draft of Libraries IT Roadmap. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 4.6 Promote eSmart cyber-safety tools and resources throughout Yarra Libraries' digital services and programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Digital Team All Library staff | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure principles of eSmart Libraries are embedded in our digital literacy services and programs. Promote the use of eSmart tools and resources to everyone who engages with Yarra Libraries digital facilities and services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

5. Curating inspired collections

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|---|---------------|---|---|
| 5.1 Strengthen the existing Aboriginal book, DVD and music CD collections at Yarra Libraries, particularly at the Fitzroy Library Branch. ¹⁵ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Collections Community Partnerships Library Development & Project Officer | November 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of Yarra Libraries Aboriginal book, DVD and music CD collections at Yarra Libraries, particularly at the Fitzroy Library Branch. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 5.2 Strengthen the diversity of collection content and material for youth to better reflect diversity of Yarra's readers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Collections Library Team Leader Children's & Youth Services Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Family, Youth & Children's Services to engage the Yarra Youth Advisory Committee (YYAC) and other youth groups to consult on the Young Adult Collection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 5.3 Undertake stage one of oral history project to build a repository of local knowledge as part of the Yarra Libraries history collection. ¹⁶ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Collections Library Team Leader Digital & Community Learning | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with communities and local history societies to develop a framework for an oral history project focused on capturing the voices of under represented heritage (including older residents, migrants and Aboriginal people). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 5.4 Capture the diversity of Yarra as seen through the lives of residents from many cultures. ¹⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Community Programs & Outreach Local History Librarians | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with communities and local history societies to capture a series of 'Inspiring Stories' in nine community languages. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

¹⁵ This action also appears in Yarra's *Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018*

¹⁶ This action also appears in *Yarra Heritage Strategy 2015–2018*

¹⁷ This action also appears in *Positive Aging Strategy 2014–2017*

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|---|-----------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged & Disability Services | | | |
| 5.5 Expand e-collections. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Collections Library Team Leader Marketing Library Team Leader Children's & Youth Services Library Coordinator Resources & Technology | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase promotion of ebooks and digital resources to the community. Develop the e-collection content. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 5.6 Facilitate access to the collection by artists, experts and researchers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Collections Library Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships Local History Societies Community Partnerships | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More specialist practitioners access the collection for specific projects. Investigate possible connections to Council's Community Grants program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 5.7 Facilitate better access to Yarra collections through digitisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team Leader Digital & Community Learning | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to digitise Yarra Libraries' Local History Collection. Digitise at least one more category of the collection (e.g. rates records, photographs, maps). Investigate the possibility of working with Arts & Culture to digitise the Art & Heritage collection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

6. Providing places for all people

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|---|--|-----------|--|---|
| 6.1 Make library spaces vibrant and inviting in collaboration with Arts and Cultural Services. ¹⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Leadership Team Arts and Cultural Services Family, Youth & Children's Services | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with Arts & Culture to facilitate exhibition of locally-relevant culturally and artistically diverse works through library spaces. Consult with Family, Youth & Children's Services to identify opportunities to include work by young people in library displays. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 6.2 Actively encourage vulnerable people to utilise libraries spaces and services, and support staff to engage with vulnerable library users. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Leadership Team All Yarra Libraries Staff | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with at least four community service providers who are working with vulnerable communities eg. homelessness, domestic violence, LGBTQI and older people. Run at least one training session with libraries staff on working with vulnerable communities (eg. responding to ice-affected people). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 6.3 Explore opportunities for ongoing renewal of facilities to ensure we meet emerging community needs and expectations. ¹⁹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Management Team Library Leadership Team | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore available funding sources within and external to Council to support building and infrastructure improvements in 2018–19. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |
| 6.4 Investigate opportunities to create connected outdoor/ indoor spaces in all of Yarra's libraries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Management Team | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult Open Space, Sustainability and Building Services branches to identify opportunities for 'greening' library spaces and improving the interface between indoors and outdoors, with a view to implement in years two and onwards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing operational resources |

¹⁸ A version of this action also appears in the *Arts and Cultural Strategy 2016–2020*

¹⁹ A version of this action also appears in the *Richmond South Community Infrastructure Neighbourhood Plan*.

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline | Measures | Budget |
|--|--|--------------------|--|---|
| 6.5 Work with Venues & Events team to improve access to bookable spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Manager • Coordinator Venues | June 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider promotion of bookable spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |
| 6.6 Create versatile spaces that don't sacrifice comfort or functionality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Management Team • Library Leadership Team | June 2018/ ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current library spaces to assess accessibility, including future-proof furniture, power points and public rest rooms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing operational resources |

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Appendix B: Consultation

Laying the groundwork

This strategy was developed through an in-depth consultation process run in the second half of 2016 and the beginning of 2017. It encompassed a series of workshops, targeted outreach consultations with hard-to-reach groups, an informal online survey (used as a conversation tool by library staff), and conversations with library users, community members, service providers and Council staff.

During the two years leading up to these consultation activities, we also conducted surveys on all aspects of the service. This provided a firm foundation for a deeper, qualitative approach. The data gathered was used to inform the development of the Yarra Libraries Learning Framework in 2015, and also as the basis of the consultation for this strategy. The findings, along with industry-based research, were drawn together in a discussion paper and project plan, which laid out the consultation path. There is a video available [here](https://youtu.be/gYu3bNEo5fQ) that shows what our community said in their own words during the initial consultation (or if you are reading this in hard copy, the link is <https://youtu.be/gYu3bNEo5fQ>).

The two library user surveys gathered feedback firstly on library service delivery, performance, and programs, and secondly on the library collections, gauging community interests, and current and future collection needs. Additionally, following a benchmarking process, we polled library users as to their preferred library opening times, from two different options.

The surveys were distributed electronically and made available at all library branches in multiple community languages. Our circulation of the surveys and the opening hours poll reached 32,247 people and had about a 10% response rate. The new opening hours have since been implemented, as has the Learning Framework, which is ongoing.

Thanks to this groundwork, when the 2016–17 consultation period was planned for this strategy, we were keenly aware that we were starting in a strong position to deepen the conversation with our community, instead of covering the same ground (and give our community consultation exhaustion!).

Consultation activities

We specifically sought out and engaged with particular groups who can be difficult to reach. Rather than formally surveying our library users, we had conversations with people in our venues and at our events, and we went out into the community to speak with people who both do and do not use our libraries to find out what they want, and what they need.

Consultation activities included:

- Four focus-group workshops
- Early childhood drawing activities

and

- Conversations with:
 - People attending craft activities
 - CALD community library users (including Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek and French language speakers)
 - The local Aboriginal community at Billabong BBQ

- People attending Family Fun Days and the Youth Services Block Party on the Atherton Gardens Estate
- The Yarra Aboriginal Services Network
- People from the LGBTIQ community at Midsumma Carnival
- Those who use our Home Library Service
- Local seniors groups
- Yarra Libraries' Advisory Committee
- Yarra's Disability Advisory Committee
- Community service providers
- Council officers
- Local schools
- Parents
- Children
- Young people

The consultation was publicised through various networks across Yarra through these channels:

- Yarra Libraries eNewsletter
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Posters
- Fliers
- Phone calls to existing and potential community partners
- And emails to:
 - Yarra Council's Community Grants List
 - Multicultural Partnerships network
 - Service providers who work with the Community Partnerships team
 - Yarra Libraries' Advisory Committee
 - Existing and potential community partners

Service providers and existing and potential community partners were all telephoned and encouraged to provide feedback, either on the spot or through further contact or a workshop. Throughout the consultation, word of mouth spread, and individual people who had heard about the consultation phoned, emailed or visited the Library Development & Projects Officer to feed ideas into the strategy.

Yarra Libraries' staff would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who took part in shaping this important future blueprint.

Our ongoing conversation

Yarra Libraries approaches consultation with our community as an ongoing endeavour. While we do regularly seek the community's opinion on specific issues, such as services and collections, we are open to, and encourage input from, our library users on a daily basis through our interactions with them. We accept and encourage verbal feedback, have hard copy feedback forms prominently available, and we make good use of social media.

As providers of a frontline Council service, library staff have regular, personal contact with everyone who comes into our libraries, and increasingly with other groups in the community through our outreach programs. This has ensured that we are involved in a continuous conversation with all of our library users. Our staff are familiar with them, and more broadly with the Yarra Community.

Through this dedicated approach to building relationships with the groups and individuals who use our spaces and services, we have come to know the community very well.

Results

The strongest theme that we identified through these conversations was the consistent desire for social connectedness, be it through activities, technology, or use of flexible communal space. Many people were also keen to find ways to share skills, knowledge and resources through the library.

On the whole, much of the feedback we received during this process was very positive and affirmed the path that Yarra Libraries is on. Where we found the biggest gap was in people's understanding of what Yarra Libraries offers. Communicating the breadth and scope of public libraries is an issue that largely results from the recent transformation of the sector to expand beyond books and collections, to focus on activities, technology, learning and outreach. While Yarra Libraries' profile has been raised considerably since the previous strategy was established, there is clearly some more work to do in this area, both for Yarra and the public library sector as a whole.

Overall, we are confident that Yarra Libraries will be able to continue strengthening our relationship with the community, and spreading the word that the libraries are a welcoming and inclusive place for all.

Research

Further to our consultation with the Yarra community, this strategy is informed by a wealth of knowledge held across many branches and units of Yarra City Council, as well as by industry research.

Relevant Council Documents

The various Council plans and strategies that intersect with Yarra Libraries' vision are:

- Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–18
- Access and Inclusion Plan 2014–17
- Arts and Cultural Strategy 2016–20
- Council Plan 2017–2021
- Early Years Strategy 2014–17
- Economic Development Strategy 2015–20
- Middle Years Strategy 2014–17
- Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015–18
- Positive Ageing Strategy 2014–17
- Strategic Community Infrastructure Framework
- Yarra Heritage Strategy 2015–2018
- Yarra Libraries Collection Plans 2016–17
- Yarra Libraries Learning Framework 2015
- Yarra Libraries Strategy 2017–20 Discussion Paper
- Yarra Youth Policy and Action Plan 2013–16

Relevant Industry Reports

1. ALIA (2015), *Australian Public Library Alliance National Strategy and Action Plan 2015–18*.
2. Library Board of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network (Revised 2014), *Framework for Collaboration*.
3. State Library of Victoria (2011), *Dollars, Sense and Public Libraries*.

4. State Library of Victoria (2015), *Reading and Literacy for all: A Strategic Framework for Victorian Public Libraries 2015–2018*.
5. State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network (2014), *Creative Communities: The cultural benefits of Victorian public libraries*.
6. State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network (2014), *Victorian Public Libraries: Our Future, Our Skills Research Report*.

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