

WAGGA WAGGA CITY LIBRARY REVIEW



City of
Wagga Wagga



Cover: National Science Week 2018
Photo: Jack of Hearts Studio

CONTENTS

Acknowledgement of Country

Wagga Wagga City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Wiradjuri people, and pays respect to Elders, past and present and emerging.

We honour the living heritage of the world's oldest continuous culture, and we celebrate the contemporary creativity of our First Nations communities. We acknowledge the ongoing connection between First Nation communities and this land.

The Wagga Wagga City Library Review 2020 has been compiled in consultation with the local Wiradjuri and First Nations Communities with the aim of building a city that thrives on positive relationships and cultural diversity.

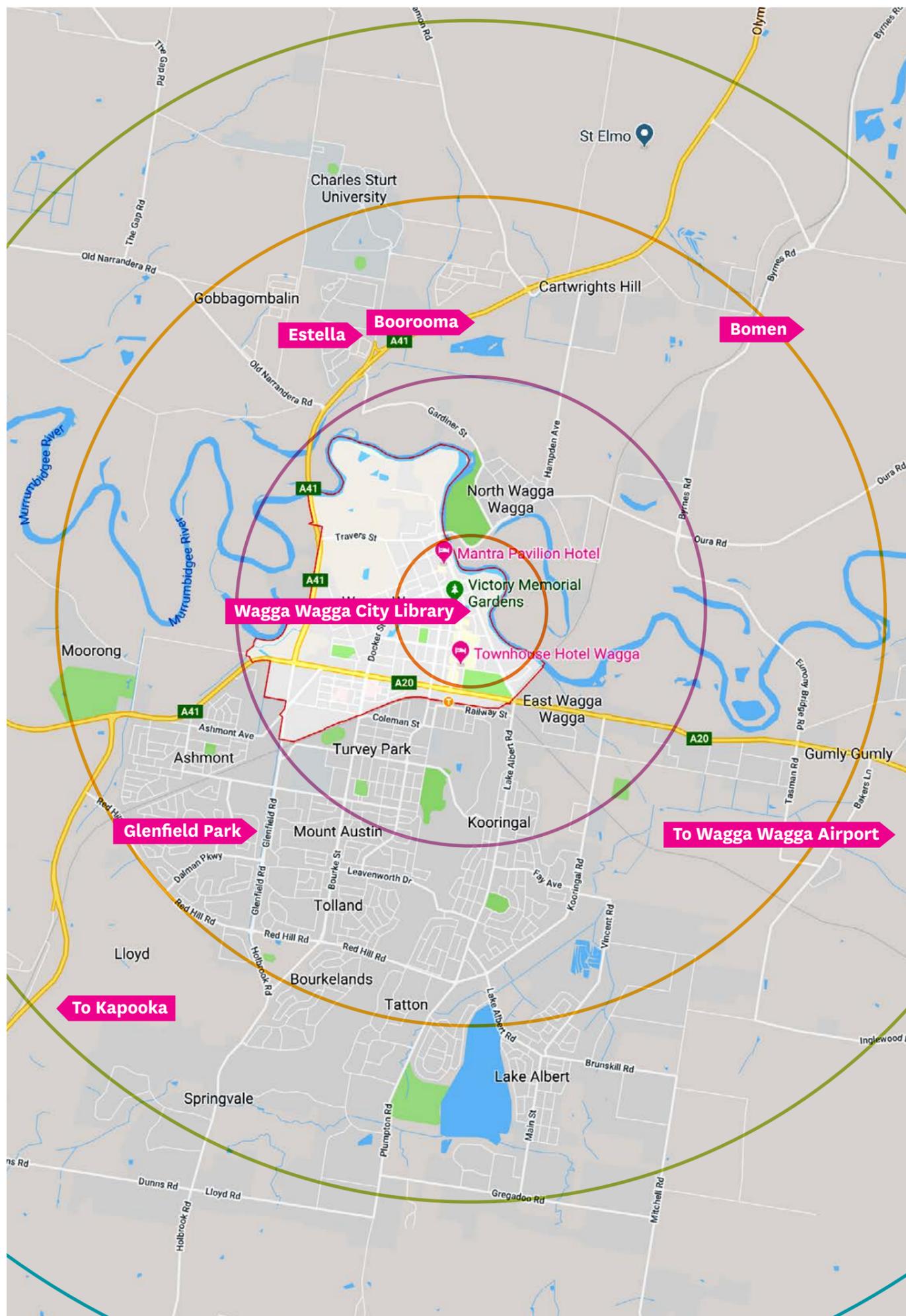
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Overview	5
Executive Summary	6
2020: A Day in the Life at Wagga Wagga City Library	8
Section 1: Research	11
Community research	12
After the lockdown	16
Case study 1: Place for the imagination	18
Section 2: Reference points	20
Benchmarks	22
Future Library Service Models	24
Leading libraries	26
Section 3: Themes	28
Growth	29
Case study 2: A bit of magic	33
People and place	34
Case study 3: Knitting Circle	37
What people say	38
Summary	39
Section 4: Future	41
Future	42
Summary of recommendations	44
Recommendations	46
2038: Hotbed of Ideas	48
2038: A Day in the Life at Wagga Wagga City Library	50
Appendices	52
Bibliography	52
Glossary of terms	54



OVERVIEW

YIRADHU MARANG (GOOD DAY)

Opening in 1999, the Wagga Wagga City Library has served the community well in its current location for twenty years. To mark its 20th anniversary, a review of library spaces, services and capabilities was launched in 2019. The Wagga Wagga City Library Review aimed to position the library service for a future that will be radically different from the world in which it was originally conceived.

Scope of review

The City Library Review has drawn on extensive community research, library benchmarking, relevant case studies, and a comprehensive examination of public library trends, national and international.

It has involved:

- conversations, workshops, meetings and surveys with 710 people throughout the City of Wagga Wagga
- extensive research into a range of regional library services across NSW and Victoria
- in-depth exploration of international library trends, research and futures thinking.

In a nutshell

Wagga Wagga City Library is well used and loved by those who value its physical and online resources, spaces, learning programs and capable staff.

More can be done to extend its reach into every corner of the Wagga Wagga community.

The Library Review has clear findings:

- the City Library is too small for a regional city of Wagga Wagga's size and ambition
- too many people are missing out on the important and often life saving opportunities the library provides
- library staff exhibit an inventiveness that if further resourced will help the City find a new creative edge: to rebuild communities; tackle disadvantage; actively engage with and learn from Wiradjuri elders, cultural knowledge and language; craft new 21st century stories of identity, inclusion and hope.

Riverina Regional Library

Wagga Wagga City Library is a member of the Riverina Regional Library (RRL), conceived in 1978. Wagga Wagga City Council (WWCC) continues to support the Riverina Regional Library Model in its role as Executive Council. The current Deed of Agreement expires in 2022. WWCC and RRL have initiated a consultative process to explore future membership service options. A report will be tabled to WWCC by June 2021. Future options for the City's membership of RRL will be made after this date.

Uncertainty and opportunity

The repercussions of the Covid-19 global pandemic are predicted to be far-reaching.

The crisis also presents opportunities to think and act differently.

Trusted places like public libraries, in which communal identity is amplified by practical resources, have never been more vital and necessary. Libraries, more than any other cultural institution, welcome, encourage, entertain and support the greatest number of people and uses in any given community.

Libraries, including Wagga Wagga City Library, have already displayed innovation in response to recent crises and creative recovery efforts.

When it comes to supporting Wagga Wagga's economic, social and cultural aspirations, the library service can't do everything, but it can do a lot.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CITY

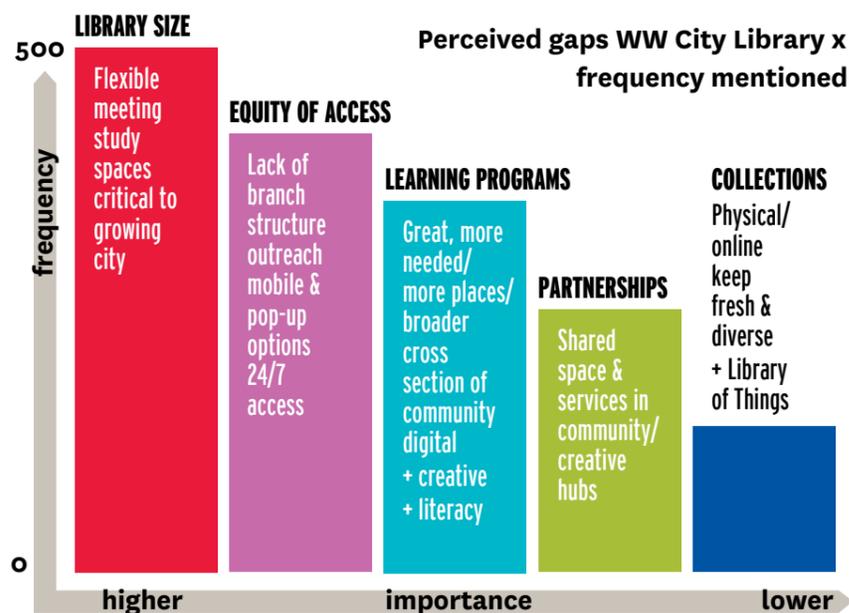
65,258 (2019) people
 100,000 people by 2038
 > % growth in migration to Wagga Wagga
 > % growth in younger age demographic
 5.6% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 Hybrid economy: agriculture, health, knowledge, aged care & creative industries

CITY LIBRARY

20-year-old building in Civic Centre
 1600 sq metres/2 levels
 No branch library network
 Small staff cohort = 18.7 FTE (since Sunday opening was approved in July 2020)
 Member of Riverina Regional Library since 1978
 Library is highly valued
 Excellent programs/responsive staff

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

710 participants:
 578 surveys,
 132 interviews
 & workshops
 meetings
 Lots of ideas for expansion & new services
 Consistent views on current gaps



REFERENCE POINTS



How does WWCL compare with other regional cities?

- One of the smallest city library services of any regional city in NSW and Victoria
- Smaller staff cohort
- Smaller spatial footprint in comparison to other regional city libraries of similar populations

Performing well: programs
 + collection diversity
 + staff responsiveness

THEMES

- 1. Growth**
 Lots of economic, social & cultural opportunities/potential for unequal distribution of services to support disadvantaged communities
- 2. People & Place**
 Growth + liveability, accessibility, equality of opportunity
 = need for cultural infrastructure
 = libraries.

FUTURE: RECOMMENDATIONS 2020 - 2038

NOW 2020 - 2022	INTERMEDIATE 2022 - 2025	LONGER TERM 2025 - 2038
<p>Reconfigure floorplan: Maximise use of current and potential floorspace to increase seating and study areas, digital access and programming.</p> <p>Level 1: More learning/meeting spaces; western end - install casual seating and a smaller concierge desk to replace the large front desk; install mobile technology with bookable laptops/tablets and café style benches; install smart return shelves to accommodate recent returns; self-serve coffee bar. Enclose the book chute returns area.</p> <p>Level 0: Expand Children's Area for events and regular Storytime sessions; install smart return shelving.</p>	<p>Implement Agile Library: nimble van that can be driven by staff to suburbs and villages.</p> <p>Trial activation of a library presence in neighbourhood locations e.g. Glenfield Community Centre & Ngurra Youth Hub in Ashmont.</p> <p>Explore possibility of 24/7 kiosk.</p> <p>Add capabilities: outreach, digital engagement, diverse futures, learning and literacies.</p>	<p>Expand Agile Library Services in response to population growth.</p> <p>Redesign footprint of the Civic Centre including the Civic Arcade; integrate Customer Service/Library experiences; stretch outwards towards Wollundry Lagoon including a Café.</p> <p>Explore need for a branch library in a growth area.</p>

Around the clock...

2020: A DAY IN THE LIFE AT WAGGA WAGGA CITY LIBRARY

Storytime

Around 125 people across two sessions (kids and parents)

Book launch and reading

Around 65 people

Local studies requests

"A woman came in asking for help. She was born in Wagga Wagga but moved away as an adult. All her family came from Wagga, and when she was a little girl her grandmother died, but it wasn't talked about. With no explanation, visits to her grandma stopped abruptly. I was able to find information in Trove about where and how her Grandma died, and identify where her Grandma's house had been, using the council mapping portal and NSW lands department. With the information I was able to give her, the woman was able to trace her Grandma's route to where she ended her life, as she drowned herself in one of the sections of the lagoon. The woman was so thankful she was able to get closure on a sad event in her childhood, and honour her Grandma and pay her respects."

Sarah

Computer access

Tourists, grey nomads, international backpackers, job seekers, students: use the library facilities to access the internet, print and scan documents, read a newspaper, or relax in an air-conditioned environment.

Mentoring sessions

Knitting Circle

Around 25-30 people

"Summer 2019-2020: our community is at a loss to know how to deal with the growing sense of hopelessness in the face of bushfire emergency. The library holds a Knit for Joey's event to support our local chapter of WIRES. We provide cake and tea, always a great social lubricant. Around 20 women gather to knit, other members of the community donate wool and needles, there is a sense of purpose for these women, they share skills, knitting patterns, and stories of fire survival they make sense of the world through the simple act of being together with common cause. Across the day the group decides they would like to continue to knit together each Tuesday. The library has facilitated this request. This group has now decided to knit beanies for Wagga's homeless, the library will connect with local welfare agencies to organise distribution."

Chrissie

Disability support

"Kerry is a regular Library customer with a vision impairment. Typically, she comes to the Library to type letters. When she enters, she will come to the main desk to ask for help to log on to a computer, find the word processing feature, and for the font to be changed to size 48. After typing each letter, Kerry will return to the desk and ask one of us to proofread the letter and help her to print it off (Kerry usually types several letters in a session). She is always grateful for our help and knows many of us by name."

Simon

Tech-savvy seniors

"People who don't have access to the internet or understand technology make up a huge part of our customer service. Often the problems aren't easy to solve, but by directing them to other services or organisations we can often help. We also have regular Tech Savvy Senior Classes, which are friendly and oversubscribed."

Jen

Cultural support

"Hardly a day goes by when a group, author or artist doesn't contact the library wanting our help to reach the wider community to share information and skills: legal; health; art & craft; performance..."

When the local Shakespeare Club had its centenary, I was able to borrow the State Library of NSW's copy of the First Folio published in 1623, and the only copy in the southern hemisphere, to be on display for one month in the library. John Bell from Bell Shakespeare also agreed to attend our major event for free. The ladies in the local club were delighted as it was beyond their wildest dreams to celebrate their centenary in this way."

Claire

Practical support

"I helped a truck driver apply for a job with Visy. Their process was entirely online, and he was unfamiliar with most of what was needed. He had a typed copy of his CV, and hard copies of his qualifications with him. Visy wanted a written cover letter and all the rest, but uploaded via a portal."

So, he had to learn to use Word for the cover letter and learn how to use the scanner for everything else, all of which I helped him with. That's a really indicative example: people encounter barriers between themselves and what they're trying to achieve (I mean, he was already a truck driver), and librarians try to help them learn how to remove those barriers, without judgement, and for free.

On any given day in the library, we would do the equivalent of what I just described, three or four times over."

Peter

Baby Bounce

"The children's area of Wagga Wagga City Library has become a pram car park as parents arrive for Baby Bounce. Some of the participants have come together, others make their way to the open floor space spreading out baby rugs. I greet all bubs and carers. They sing songs and rhymes, blow bubbles and read books. Participants smile at each other, connecting as group of new mums and dads. At the end of the session strangers are talking together about the parenting experience and finding social connection."

Jeannie

Information requests

"I've settled many bets! People come into the library and ask questions such as "My mate reckons he kicked a goal in the 1970 Carroll Cup final. Can I see the Daily Advertiser report of the game?". They sure can, using our comprehensive local newspaper collection available on microfilm."

Michael

Home delivery Volunteers

Language Café

Around 25 -30 people

Started in 2017. Conversational English. 50-70 volunteers, many bi-lingual. Learning and social experience.

"Some participants felt lonely when they were new arrivals, but after participating in LC they made friends and keep meeting each other outside the library."

Mahsa



SECTION 1:

RESEARCH

In this section:

710 people participated in the *Wagga Wagga City Library Review*. Research modes included: surveys, workshops, interviews, small group sessions, and visits to community hubs and mobile library stops.

Wagga Wagga residents love the library – space, collections, programs and service ethic.

Consistent views:

- City Library is too small for a regional city;
- More flexible study, workshop and meeting spaces needed;
- Many community members live in suburbs which are currently underserved by the library;
- Need to consider new options for library service delivery.



COMMUNITY RESEARCH

MAYINY-GU GARRAYWANGIDYAL (PEOPLE'S FINDINGS)

Community research has affirmed the importance of the library to the City's goal to be a culturally rich, learning centred and socially inclusive regional city. It has revealed consistent views about the library's current limitations and service possibilities. Equally important are the views of people who are not current or regular users, but could be if library offerings met more of their needs, in the right locations, at the right times, and in the right way.

Consultation

Between July and December 2019, a range of different stakeholders participated in community research activities. In addition, one online survey, available between August and October 2019, attracted 368 responses via the Wagga View portal.

An additional online survey was available between June and July 2020 to explore usage of and reflections on the City Library's offerings during the NSW Covid-19 pandemic closures. The survey attracted 210 responses.

The total number of survey and community research participants was 710.

"The library is starved for space. Where will the expansion come from? 100,000 people will need bigger spaces."

Councillor

Consultation has included interviews, meetings, and/or workshops with:

- Wiradjuri Elders along with members of Marwang Garway and other community leaders and service providers
- eight Councillors, recorded and transcribed
- library staff workshops (x3)
- directors and managers from community, cultural and planning services, and council staff from across the organisation
- Executive Director of Riverina Regional Library
- Friends of the Library
- community groups in the library – knitters, Storytime participants, high school and university students, range of library users
- Youth Forum participants
- community centre co-ordinators and clients at Tolland, Ashmont and Koorinal
- State Library of NSW
- Charles Sturt University
- Wagga Wagga TAFE
- Eastern Riverina Arts
- Riverina Community College
- Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga
- 13 library managers/CEOs of NSW and Victorian regional and peri-urban library services.

16,000
People attend library programs & events

350
Programs per year, on average

181,801
People used library in 2018/9

368
Survey respondents

Survey respondents

There are a number of things to note:

- respondents were generally younger in comparison to many community surveys of this kind. While the highest response rate was from people aged between 55 and 64, the second highest response rate was from people aged between 25 and 34, and the third highest was from respondents aged between 35 and 44;
- while the library attracts visitation from across the greater Wagga Wagga region, the highest usage is from people living in central, east and north Wagga. When cross correlated with how people get to the library, it is evident that having a car helps. In fact, the lack of public transport options was frequently mentioned, as was the issue of parking availability;
- most respondents were born in Australia and speak English at home. In descending order, the proportion of respondents born outside Australia were from: Iraq, Iran, Sudan, United Kingdom, China, India, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, Germany, France, Japan, Uruguay, Finland, Switzerland, USA, Bangladesh, Malta, Madagascar;
- 11 respondents identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

"It's the one space where you are not obligated to spend anything."

Community member

Usage

The people of Wagga Wagga use their library service in a multitude of ways. The 30-40 per cent of Wagga Wagga's population who use the library regularly do so on a weekly or fortnightly basis. The most frequent uses relate to borrowing (books, picture books, DVDs, e-books); online resources; places to study and read; attending programs, talks, events; using wifi and computers.

While respondents had high levels of satisfaction with most of the above, they signalled greater dissatisfaction with the availability of suitable meeting and recreational spaces, and bookable rooms.

Dissatisfaction was also registered around opening times (should be longer); availability of quiet, study spaces; mobile and branch options outside the CBD; and targeted services for people with a disability, unemployed, Indigenous and multicultural communities.

There was a high level of agreement about the need for a café in the library; and a high level of disagreement with the sentiment that libraries are just places for books.

When asked to think expansively about the library – current form, services and future possibilities – people were generally upbeat and optimistic. Other libraries were often cited as places to emulate or learn from. Double Bay, Randwick, Ryde, Rockdale, Geelong, Library at the Dock, Shellharbour, Yarra Libraries, Moreton Bay are some of the specific examples given.

While the current library was perceived as light, sunny, welcoming and well-resourced, it was also described as formal, dull, lacking colour, cramped, and too serious.

150 participants
In workshops, focus groups & interviews

High satisfaction
For books, DVDs, e-resources, Storytime

Low satisfaction
For library size, meeting spaces & accessibility

Big town or regional city?

The City of Wagga Wagga is at a crossroads, a cusp, a transition point. At least this is how it was framed by numerous interviewees. The City's 'conservative', 'risk averse', 'country town' identity is challenged by growth, greater diversity, and a more 'progressive' mindset.

Potbound plant

The library is 'potbound'. It has outgrown its home, and its programming success continues to highlight its current deficiencies. Increasing the City Library's footprint and availability of flexible learning spaces was a recurrent theme across all research modes.

What's not said

The consistency in views about and aspirations for the library was, paradoxically, reaffirmed by what people didn't say. Not one person, in workshops, interviews and survey, said that libraries were a thing of past, irrelevant in the age of Google, a relic from a previous era, or any number of ill-informed perceptions that often feature in contemporary library research projects. This is a positive and possibly unique finding.

Ignition point for change

The City needs more meeting, co-working, study and event spaces. This was the most frequently expressed need across all research groups. Creative and cultural practitioners, refugee support groups, knitters, students, Wiradjuri and First Nations Elders, teachers, community workers, legal and health information services, Councillors, planners, parents, kids - all articulated this need. The library was perceived as welcoming, multifaceted, resource-rich and kind. It was described as a vibrant community and creative hub.

"Everything needs to scale up."

Councillor

Associations

There are few social or cultural institutions that can attract the depth of feeling and positive associations people have for their libraries. The citizens of Wagga Wagga are no exception. In workshops, meetings and the online survey, people described the library and its meaning to them in highly expressive ways, ranging from the pragmatic to the poetic.

There were four dominant metaphors used. People viewed the library as a place of **discovery**, adventure, treasure and wonder. It was a **refuge**, haven, retreat, heaven.

It acted as a **village green**, meeting place and community hub; it was perceived as safe, welcoming egalitarian, inclusive and accepting. It embodied **abundance**, excess, comfort and fun; it was free, environmentally sustainable, available to everyone, resourceful, an asset.

While the library was perceived 'sunny', 'fabulous', 'marvellous', 'lovely', a 'blessing'; it was also perceived as 'underfunded', 'too small' and 'under-appreciated'.

Possibility

Now is the moment to reimagine the library service, people said. The library should be at the centre of Council's thinking and planning.

With growth comes new possibilities - for revenue, grants, developer contributions, the latest technologies, new social and cultural infrastructure. Participants supported this expansive mindset. The City also has a responsibility to the vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged. A majority of participants believed the library service reaches into these communities in unique and practical ways, and needs to be adequately resourced to continue and deepen this work.

"Community outreach is definitely our biggest black hole."

Friends of the Library

Library of the future

The invitation to speculate on a possible future library produced an extraordinary range of imaginative ideas and suggestions. Some suggestions involved designing new library buildings and places; expanded and new programs; and radically different library collections.

A small sample of comments:

camping equipment; 3D printers; DIY tools; cameras and tripods; stage lighting; recording studio; small theatre; power tools; board games; science kits; lego technics; musical instruments; Adobe creative suite; glue guns; gym equipment; toys; sewing machines; easel and loom; headphones; whipper snipper; telescopes; puzzles; cake tins; robots; community languages; Wiradjuri signage; postal service; pop-up libraries in suburbs; hammock; more Storytime and Baby Bounce, more of everything currently on offer and a Library Dog!

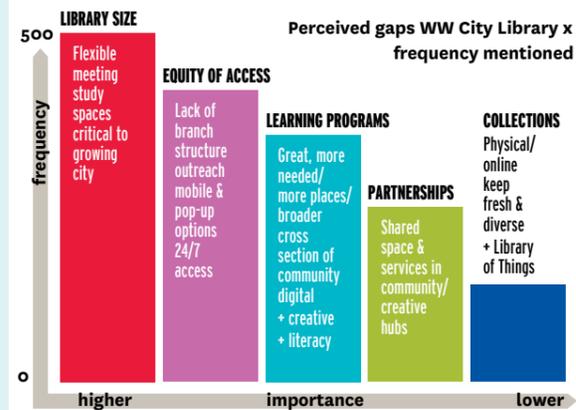
"It's a common place where you can meet friends, or make new ones, share ideas and improve connections."

"I would like to see a vibrant library, full of colour, beautiful and comfortable, it should be an experience to be here not just a place to pick up materials."

"I can't tell you how important Baby Bounce has been for me as a young mother. I've met some great people. It should be on every day. Will be going to Storytime next."

"One Book, One Wagga - fabulous."

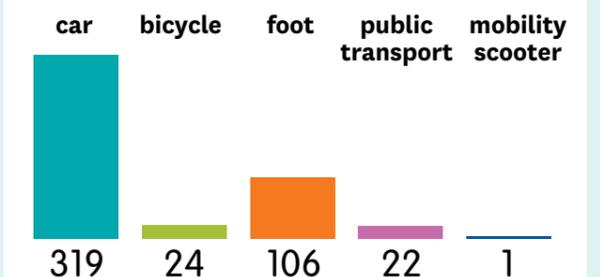
Community research



How do you travel to and from the library?

The CBD location, combined with limited public transport options, privileges car and foot transport modes.

368 responses, 0 skipped



AFTER THE LOCKDOWN

An additional online survey was conducted during the Wagga Wagga City Library shutdown, as a result of NSW Health Covid-19 advice, between March and June, 2020.

Some people extended their use of e-resources, others discovered them for the first time. Online Storytime and Baby Bounce sessions were appreciated. People missed the physical library: atmosphere, books, staff and social connections.

The questions were simple:

- What library services did people use?
- How did they find out about what was happening?
- What did they miss about their library?
- Did anything surprise them?
- What can the library keep doing?

What did people miss during the shutdown?

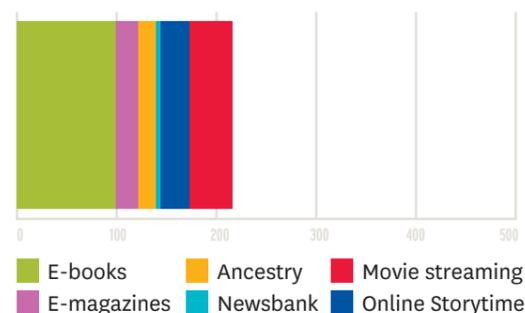
- social interaction
- connection to community
- quiet space to work, study, wait, read, use wifi
- space to meet with students, mentoring, coaching etc.
- physical books, newspapers, DVDs
- browsing
- Storytime, Baby Bounce, Book Club, knitting group
- library staff
- ideas, inspiration
- computers, printers

- Just being able to go there and browse quietly, favourite place in town!!!
- Seeing the staff, having somewhere to go with kids, Storytime, getting new books each week.
- It was a joyous day when I heard you were reopening and in all honesty, the only place I really missed due to shutdown.
- Missed that it is always there, always available.

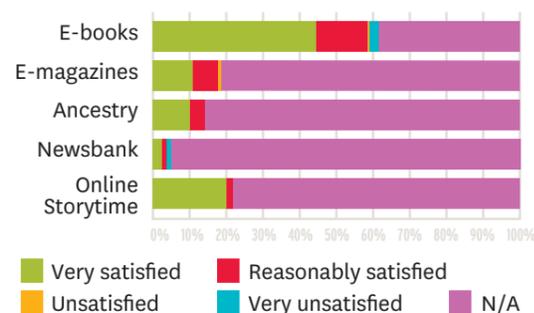
What surprised you?

- Wide range of online titles, resources.
- Slim catalogue on Borrowbox and the inadequate number of titles available for loan
- Loved Facebook posts and Storytime.
- The fact that you have a social media presence.
- How much the library means to us.
- How much I rely on the library.
- I was surprised how much I used the library and didn't realise it. It was one of the things I missed most during the lock down.
- I'd never thought about using ancestry.com, so I was surprised, firstly that I used it, and secondly, that I found something there of interest.
- I didn't realise how much we rely on access to a wide range of children's books. We've got a small house & a small budget, and so we can't buy or store enough books to sate the kids' appetite for reading.
- I thought it was awesome how quickly the library adapted, eg doing Storytime online - great idea, kids loved it!

Services used during lockdown?



How satisfied were you with services used?



210
Survey
respondents

Improve and/or continue?

- I was really impressed with the story time sessions still being done. I thought that was a great initiative by the library staff.
- We need more mobile library services.
- Online Facebook Storytime, Baby Bounce.. expand to adults, author talks live streaming.
- Increase range of physical and online books.
- Keep up promotion via email and FB.
- Stay open.
- Longer opening hours.
- Click and collect service.
- Continue as is. Great service. The building is welcoming and safe. Staff helpful. Good resources.
- Love the library - helpful staff - diverse resources - fact & fiction.
- More sitting places - I know that has to be in line with restrictions at the moment. I liked it when there was free tea and coffee as an incentive to do a survey.
- I like visiting the library as a comfortable, safe public space. I don't feel comfortable in the shopping malls or street cafés.
- Local library is so important to our family. We really appreciate having access to so much literature, reference and educational resources.

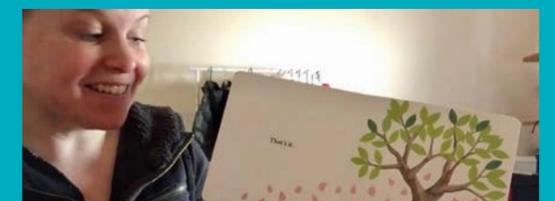
"I love Wagga Wagga library. It has a welcoming vibe."

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

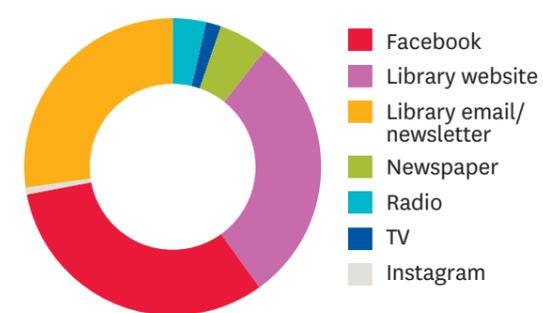
Wagga Wagga City Library produced and distributed digital Storytime sessions in the wake of Covid-19 library closures. The first digital Storytime reached 16,292 people; was liked 99 times; shared 84 times; received 33 positive comments. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) included Wagga in its honour roll of early adopters.

Two pre-recorded sessions were produced each week.

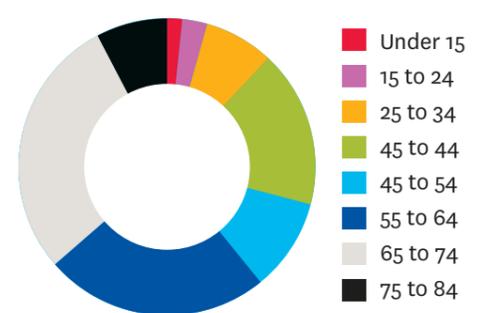
Authors and publishers temporarily lifted copyright restrictions on people reading stories on broadcasting platforms.



How did you find out what was happening?



What is your age?



Case study 1:

PLACE FOR THE IMAGINATION

As the community research demonstrates, people have complex views, needs and perceptions in relation to the library. It is constrained *and* expansive; taken for granted *and* a civic jewel.

It's perfect

A group of Wiradjuri and First Nations Elders and community leaders meets often at the library. It's perfect, many say, one of their favourite places to just BE.

When it's hot, cold, when the kids need books or come to workshops, when you're waiting for someone, need wifi or a computer, to hold a book launch or meeting – there is no where better in town.

It is central and safe

"For the time we are here, it's a place where we feel equal," a respected Elder says.

"Any place that encourages learning and creativity, especially for our kids, should be supported," another comments.

While Elders and leaders are positive about the library, they are bursting with ideas about how it could better serve the Wagga Wagga community, and Wiradjuri culture and language in particular.

Space

"For a start, there's not enough of it, no where near the number of meeting spaces needed, and it should be more colourful," an Elder volunteers. Everyone laughs.

"Yes," says another person, "it feels like a fishbowl in this room. And the computers out there take up a lot of space."

"It's bland, too formal; bring in lots more colour, bright and bold, make it like Geelong Library."

More laughter. The group is buzzing now.

"I'm mystified," a noted community leader explains. "The space downstairs is really beautiful. Why doesn't it open up to the lagoon? A more outside-inside connection. It would be great for kids to run around, and for culture stuff as well."

"The river," another says, "how about a library facing the river? That would be fantastic."

Culture

People noted that it was great to see Aboriginal, including Wiradjuri, literature and language prominently displayed on the book shelves. More could be done to welcome people to country and acknowledge the cultural specificity of place.

"If the airport can welcome people in Wiradjuri, and display our art, why not the library?"

"That's right," another says, "there are huge glass windows out there, crying out to be inscribed with Wiradjuri."

Craft, design, artworks, drawings, photos of Wiradjuri Elders and colour, were all mentioned as necessary elements in a redesigned library.

"It's great that the City now has a Wiradjuri walking track and artworks in more places, why not the library? Bring it inside as well."

"Imagination. Science and maths are important, but places like this, places for the imagination are needed for our community, and, for that matter, everyone, especially our kids."

Community

"Knowledge is not just about numbers," an Elder says. Everyone goes quiet when she says this, all ears tuned to her next comments.

"We need to take what we know, all of the information available, listen carefully to people, and work with them to decide what's important. What are our priorities as a city and community?"

"Well, if the library isn't at the forefront of this, we will struggle as a community. The library is our information storehouse. Even with everything online, we still need places to come to, even the kids love coming here to learn," someone notes.

"We've got to make it easier for people," another comments. "You need a car to get here"

"Wouldn't it be great if Wiradjuri was taught here in the library? Not just for our mob, but everyone."

The ideas keep flowing until someone says they had better get on with the meeting they were here for in the first place.

Respected Aunty has the last word.

"It's a community learning space here, a space for everyone and everything, including the lagoon. Culture, country and modern technology. All combined. Tranquil like the river; vibrant like the sun."

SECTION 2:

REFERENCE POINTS

In this section:

- Wagga Wagga City Council has one of the smallest city library services in NSW.
- The Library is struggling to meet State Library of NSW standards in relation to spatial footprint, opening hours and staffing ratios.
- Examples of effective outreach services are presented.
- Four NSW and Victorian library case studies are presented as exemplars of the social, economic and cultural benefits libraries can generate if adequately supported by communities and governments.



REFERENCE POINTS

As the community research demonstrates, the people who use, visit, borrow from and enjoy the Wagga Wagga Library Service exhibit a high level of attachment and care. They are not indifferent to its future success, even when they are critical about its current constraints.

Summary of findings

Wagga Wagga has a smaller library service compared to most major regional cities in NSW and Victoria.

The total library staff cohort is small compared to benchmarked libraries, especially considering its status as a regional city library.

A new Agile Outreach Library, combined with a modest expansion of specialist staff positions, will enable WWCL to better meet the community's expressed needs and hopes for the future.

Glossary

WWCL: Wagga Wagga City Library

WWCC: Wagga Wagga City Council

SLNSW: State Library of NSW

LGA: Local Government Area

BENCHMARKS: NOW

NSW Regional City Library Services

Location	Population	Staff in FTE per city service	Floorspace in sqm per city service
Albury 2 branches	53,767	21.78 FTE (combined Library/ Museum)	2,600 (Albury) 450 (Lavington) 3,050 sqm
Coffs Harbour 3 branches	76,551	15.75 FTE	986 sqm (Coffs Harbour) 460 sqm (Toormina) 450 sqm (Woolgoolga) 1,896 sqm
Dubbo 1 Branch (Member of Macquarie Regional Library Service - 10 branches)	53,240	14 FTE	1,976 sqm
Griffith 1 branch (Member of Western Riverina Library Service - 7 branches)	26,882	7.6 FTE	1,548 sqm
Orange 1 branch (Member of Central West Libraries - 7 branches)	42,056	10 FTE	1,306 sqm
Port Macquarie 3 branches (Member of Mid North Coast Library Service - 6 libraries)	83,131	18 FTE	2,100 (Port Macquarie) 471 (Laurieton) 580 (Wauchope) 3,151 sqm
Tamworth 2 Branches (Member of Central Northern Regional Library - 6 branches)	62,156	16 FTE	1,584 (Tamworth) 220 (South Tamworth) 1,804 sqm
Wagga Wagga 1 branch + mobile service (Member of Riverina Regional Library - 19 libraries + mobile service)	64,820	18.7* FTE (*assumes 11.7FTE WWCL + equivalent of 7 FTE offsite from Riverina Regional Library)	1,600sqm

Source: SLNSW Bibliostat Statistics year ending 2018/2019

STANDARDS

State Library of NSW Standards

Library Spaces vs SLNSW recommended minimum standard		
2020 Current Wagga Wagga City Library: 1600 square metres	2020 Benchmark SLNSW: 68,000 population 3230 square metres	2040 Target SLNSW: 100,000 population 4065 square metres
Library opening hours vs SLNSW recommended minimum standard		
Wagga Wagga City Library: 53* hours per week * Sunday opening hours were approved in the 2020/21 financial year	SLNSW: 68,000 population 53 hours per week	SLNSW: 100,000 population 62 hours per week
Staffing ratios vs SLNSW recommended minimum standard		
Wagga Wagga City Library: 18.7* FTE * Assumes 11.7FTE WWCL + equivalent of 7 FTE offsite from Riverina Regional Library	SLNSW: 68,000 population 22.6 FTE	SLNSW: 100,000 population 62 FTE
Collections vs SLNSW recommended minimum standard		
Wagga Wagga City Library 1.21* items per capita = 78,030 items total * Library size restricts collections kept on site	SLNSW Cohort Comparison 1.74 items per capita (cohort median)	

Source: People Places: a guide for planning public buildings 2020 SLNSW

FUTURE LIBRARY SERVICE MODELS

New generation outreach services

Library services have changed dramatically over the last 20 years, with mobile library delivery having evolved significantly in the last ten years. The current emphasis is on agility and flexibility; smaller vehicles, on demand delivery of library resources, digitally enabled, capable of delivering multiple programs, place activators, and even moving billboards for library advertising and promotion. Emerging technologies, combined with generational change, will likely see library users select materials using virtual reality interfaces, check out materials online and have them immediately delivered, easily access more streaming platforms, and a range of options not yet envisaged.

Smaller vehicles also mean a specialist license is not required, enabling library staff to deliver the service.



Agile Library Van

Wollondilly Shire's mobile library service includes two retrofitted Mercedes Sprinter vans, which visit 16 villages and towns on a weekly basis. They spend a minimum of 1.5 to a maximum of 3 hours at each location.

It costs Wollondilly approximately \$100,000 pa to fund the mobile library service. This includes salaries, vehicle maintenance, replacement fund and operational expenses.

Vehicle size and flexibility enable the service to visit schools, festivals, events and parks.



New generation mobile library

Blacktown City Council has a population of 372,000; by 2036 it will be 505,000. It is a richly layered multicultural Western Sydney conurbation spanning an area of 246.9 km². There are five branch libraries; 150 schools; complex needs.

A library service review had identified gaps in service delivery, particularly outreach. A small van already provides library home visits. A new generation mobile library was needed.

Blacktown sourced \$120,000 in local priority grants from State Library of NSW, and \$60,000 from Clubs NSW.

A Mercedes Sprinter van was purchased and retrofitted: \$60,000 for vehicle; \$60,000 for retrofit. The Sprinter requires a C Class licence to drive.

It has pull down shelving and display units on either side of the vehicle, which open and close, and contain different items depending on the audience. Sophisticated sensors can detect movement and height; retractable awnings provide shade and shelter. It offers library resources, high speed wifi, computers, printers, story time events.

This is not a van that people enter; its primary objective is to increase visibility, engage new users in new ways, and create a more permeable boundary between the physical library and community needs.

Launched in late 2019, it is already a fixture at ten busy railway stations; 12 community centres; shopping complexes; playgrounds and childcare facilities.

24/7 kiosk/pods

A number of regional library services also provide 24/7 access to curated collections, online membership and e-resources, WIFI and comfortable seating.

The Kiralee Library Pod is a good example.

What is a library kiosk?

The Kiralee Library Pod was launched by Ipswich Libraries to meet the needs of a growing community. It was an Australian first when it opened outside the Kiralee Shopping Centre in October 2019.

The Library Pod offers:

- 24/7 access
- curated collection, restocked daily
- self service vending machine access via mobile phone or library card
- large touch screen for joining library, downloading e-books, magazines, audio
- comfortable benches for sitting, if needed



24/7 Library

Part of West Gippsland Libraries, the Foster Library was the first to offer 24/7 library access in Victoria in 2019.

A small regional town of 1,200 people, Foster attracts high numbers of seasonal tourists. Around 25 per cent of the population is without internet access. People working longer hours and juggling multiple responsibilities appealed to the library to extend opening hours.

A \$92,000 upgrade enabled the library to reconfigure spaces and install secure swipe card access to library collections.

Interested library members were invited to register for the service and undertake a short occupational health and safety course.

There is an opportunity for 24/7 kiosk access across the city to be considered in appropriate locations.



LEADING LIBRARIES

Libraries do more than any other cultural institution to promote community interaction and democratic cultural exchange; they support employment outcomes, provide spaces for creatives to create, support literacy and the literary arts, and collect and interpret unique local histories. The following four case studies show how regional city library services can support economic growth and cultural vitality.



Albury City Library, Museum and Gallery

Opened in 2007, the Albury Library Museum is a community hub bringing together state-of-the-art technology, reading and research facilities, a diverse exhibition schedule, a dynamic program of events, and a focus on the region's heritage. Open seven days, it averages 4,000 visitors each week. Albury City has a branch library located at Lavington, which also contains exhibition, meeting, research, and co-located citizen services spaces.

The museum collection contains over 20,000 objects and includes pieces of national and international significance. The converged library and museum model has been an outstanding success. In addition, Albury Library Museum staff have become research leaders and advocates for the benefits of converged cultural services.

Albury City population is 52,723.



City of Greater Bendigo

Bendigo Library, part of the Goldfields Library Corporation, is situated in a 4000 square metre purpose-built facility in the heart of town. It contains a large collection of over 133,000 items, the latest multi media and audio visual equipment, a cafe, research centre, regional archives, and volunteer resource centre. Membership is over 40,000. There are around 1,144,000 visits per year. The library offers around 2,000 programs a year, with 33 per cent of the community attending. It opened in 2014 and cost \$9.12 million. Recent economic analysis estimates the library alone returns \$27.4 million annually in benefits to the Greater Bendigo community and economy.

Importantly, the library is part of a dynamic cultural ecology and economy. Bendigo Art Gallery is one of the most successful regional galleries in Australia. Joint programming and collaboration occur across all of Bendigo's cultural institutions.

City of Greater Bendigo has a population of 110,000.



Camden Council

South Western Sydney is one of Australia's fastest growing regions. Spanning the local government areas of Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly, new suburbs are being created in what was once semi-rural agricultural land. One such suburb, Oran Park, is named after the car racing track upon which it is placed. Older Aboriginal tracks underpin its physical form, which will soon host over 30,000 homes.

The \$14 million Oran Park Library and Community Centre opened in July 2018. It is the product of a voluntary planning agreement with the suburb's principal developer. Council contributed \$2 million; the developer \$12 million. Intended as a community anchor, it has attracted over 145,000 people since it opened. The library boasts up-to-date technology, media labs, study spaces, learning areas for children, audio-visual technologies, meeting rooms, café, and a large community hall for hire. Contemporary visual art and sculpture, with an emphasis on 'tracks' both racing and Indigenous, are strategically placed throughout the multi-level, 2,500 square metre site.

Camden's population is currently 96,000; it is predicted to grow to 233,000 by 2036. It has three library branches – Camden, Narellan, Oran Park – and another planned for Leppington. The library service has 20 fte staff, and a range of casual positions.



Geelong Library and Heritage Centre

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre is part of the Geelong Regional Library Corporation. Opened in 2015, and costing over \$45.5 million, visitation and usage have increased by a massive 320 per cent.

In 2016/17, Geelong Regional Libraries attracted nearly two million visits to library branches and mobile libraries. A lifelong learning and cultural programming calendar offered 6,255 separate programs and attracted over 150,000 participants. The library generates income through its in-demand venues.

Geelong is a city in transition. The erosion of its traditional industrial and manufacturing base is being replaced by a coordinated focus on learning, knowledge, urban revitalisation and culture. There are significant pockets of disadvantage. Around 40 per cent of library members are on incomes of less than \$30,000 per annum.

While the City of Greater Geelong's population is around 250,000, it is included here because so many research participants cited the Geelong Library as an exemplar. The award-winning Geelong Library and Heritage Centre occupies six floors, and 6000 square metres. Its outstanding success has been followed by a new branch library at Leopold in 2018, and three more libraries coming on line before 2022.

SECTION 3:

THEMES

In this section:

Community research identified two interconnected themes:

Growth – as the City of Wagga Wagga’s population and economy grows, there are tensions between what is gained and what is lost; what is perceived as an opportunity or challenge.

People and Place – research participants were optimistic about the kind of place Wagga Wagga is becoming. In particular, its capacity to be a ‘liveable’ city; a welcoming and tolerant place.

The Wagga Wagga City Library is perceived as a positive force in supporting the City’s economic growth and social cohesion.



GROWTH

WAMARRA (BUILD) + GURRAY (CHANGE)

Wagga Wagga’s growth forecasts are well publicised and discussed. As a designated regional growth hub, Wagga Wagga’s population is predicted to grow to 100,000 by 2038. The current population growth rate of 1.00 per cent will need to reach 2.1 per cent in order to achieve this target. Organic population growth will be augmented with various forms of migration – city to region, skilled migration, refugee intake.

Substantial growth

The city is planning for substantial growth around Estella, Boorooma and Bomen in the north, and around the airport to the east. Wagga Wagga City Council has masterplans in place for its industrial, knowledge and health precincts.

Improving access to the river through the Riverside Project stages will create new event and recreation opportunities. Infill development in Wagga’s CBD is forecast to grow.

In 2018, there were around 38,000 jobs in Wagga Wagga.

The Riverina Region, of which the City of Wagga Wagga is an integral player, will need to generate 14,000 additional jobs by 2038*.

Wagga Wagga is fortunate to have a hybrid knowledge, health and aged care economy. While agriculture is important, the long term future will likely see the knowledge and creative industries flourish.

* Figures supplied by WWCC planners



100,000

City by 2038



\$167m

Wagga Base Hospital upgrade



\$3m

Wagga sale yards upgrade



\$400m

Wagga sale yards turnover



A liveable city

To accommodate the projected population growth of the City, it is estimated that around 25,000 new homes will be needed. The City's current housing stock growth of 350-400 dwellings per year will need to increase to 750 dwellings per year.

The style of housing will also need to change. The current preference for four bedroom detached or semi-detached housing, which comprises 90 per cent of new dwellings, will need to make way for the different housing needs of the fastest growing demographic, namely single dwellers and couples. A combination of infill development and land rezoning will need to balance housing demand with urban planning, infrastructure, environmental and cultural considerations.

Recent studies confirm that population and housing stock growth needs to be accompanied by adequate social and transport infrastructure. Access to essential community and cultural services is often lagging in regional areas compared to Australia's eight capital cities. This gap contributes to people's perceptions of a city's 'liveability' and vitality, and inevitably its attractiveness and economic performance. Some regional centres perform well in this regard and even outperform smaller capital cities.

Shadow side

The optimism that infuses the growth narrative is powerful, but it also has a shadow side. Not everyone is or will be a beneficiary of economic expansion and change.

There are already pockets of significant disadvantage in Wagga Wagga's suburbs and rural villages. Around 21 per cent of current households are classified as low income. The same percentage of households report little or no broadband internet telecommunications. There is a high correlation between suburbs classified as disadvantaged according to the SEIFA index – Ashmont, Tolland, Koorngal and Mount Austin – and residency of Wagga's 5.6 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Wagga Wagga is also an increasingly multicultural city, and a designated refugee resettlement centre. Around 10 per cent of the population was born overseas; 112 different languages are spoken. Highly qualified people with culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, reported that they are often unable to gain employment in their chosen profession.

A cluster of factors compound economic and social disadvantage: unemployment or underemployment; a rise in private rental options vs public housing; limited public transport options; arrested literacy, learning and English language skills; low percentage of students completing the HSC; diminished health, education and civic participation outcomes.

Growth is an engine of possibility, but it can be unevenly distributed.

The upbeat language with which many described Wagga Wagga's future growth prospects will be tempered by the scale of post pandemic recovery needed.

\$10m

Eunony Bridge upgrade



5.6%

Are Wiradjuri/ First Nations



9%

Are born overseas



24.3%

Aged under 18; median age is 35

Investing in libraries

Ambitious regional cities in NSW and Victoria have invested in their libraries as an adjunct to growth. Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, Albury-Wodonga, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Shellharbour, Wollongong, Newcastle – have either expanded their library networks or plan to.

Australian public libraries return a minimum of \$4.30 for every dollar spent. Economists say the real return is likely to be higher as many benefits are difficult to quantify.

In 2018/9, more than 110 million people visited an Australian library, making libraries the most visited cultural institution across the country. In NSW, there were 34 million physical visits to public libraries in 2018/19, and 12.1 million virtual visits.

More people go to libraries than the combined number of people attending sporting events across all codes.

Regional city library services generate economic, social and cultural benefits. Libraries support multiple uses and users; while helping to support knowledge-based economic growth, they work hard to minimise the potential for unequal access to opportunities that rapid economic growth inevitably produces.

See bibliography references:
7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, 31

Growing city

For a large regional city, Wagga Wagga has one of the smallest library services in NSW and Victoria. The capacity to offer programs, resources and support across the community is constrained by the absence of a branch network and limited mobile library options.

Wagga Wagga City Library hosts around 350 learning and cultural programs each year. In 2018/19, 16,000 people attended these programs. This is in addition to the 181,801 people using the library service to study, read, use computers, and borrow library materials in physical and digital formats.

The library supports the needs of a growing city through its:

- Language Café program
- Storytime and Baby Bounce sessions
- Book clubs
- Tech-savvy digital classes
- computers, tablets, e-resources and online platforms
- information navigation support and workshops - legal, consumer rights, women's health, driver safety.
- study and group meeting spaces
- science and sustainability festivals, programs and events
- literacy and literature related programs and events
- welcoming spaces for homeless people (all seasons)
- technology assistance for unemployed people - job applications, resumes and cover letters
- assistance to users with low technology skills to navigate Government websites – passport applications, MyGov website, Centrelink, police checks.

These programs, capabilities and resources are a lifeline for many.

20.7%

Aged 60 or over



Ranked #14

In NSW for incidents of domestic violence

\$4.30

Return on investment in public libraries

A complex and growing city will need more.

The future library will include:

- access to and training in digital platforms, technologies, digital arts
- support for arts and creative industries
- employment support
- cross-generational learning programs, events and classes
- 24/7 access to library resources and spaces
- pop-up digital access, programs and information delivered via Agile Library vehicles to all suburbs and villages.

The City Library is a trusted source of information, research tools and learning platforms.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY...

“Population growth will increase the diversity in views and cultures. We will need safe spaces to accommodate differences. Libraries are welcoming and inclusive and help set the scene for the kind of community we are and need to be.”

Education stakeholder

“I like the idea of the hub and spoke model, the role of a city library is important, but the infrastructure also needs to be out where people are.”

Councillor

“The library is one of the most important community assets.”

City planner

“People not really aware of the growth and change in our community, the multicultural diversity that’s here. We are an interesting community right now. Awareness is growing, but people still live in conservative bubbles. Therefore, we don’t celebrate our diversity as much as we could.”

Education stakeholder

“I’ve got more chance of bumping into a nurse than a farmer here, but Wagga still views itself as ‘country’, as an agricultural town, and while we are surrounded by that, we are more of a health and education city.”

Councillor

Case study 2:

A BIT OF MAGIC

The Ngurra Youth Hub

Sophia* lives in Ashmont. She is a proud Wiradjuri woman who visits the Ngurra Youth Hub everyday. It is a lifeline. When she lost her job and had to relinquish her car, she spent a lot of time at home. Too much time. “There is just so much cooking, cleaning and sleeping you can do,” says Sophia. “I like to be with people.”

Sophia attends all of the classes and activities available. She enjoys the women’s art group, the community garden, yarning and cups of tea out on the verandah overlooking the Park.

When Sophia had a car she took her kids to the Central Library often. She and the kids loved it. Education is paramount to her children’s future. She says she would do anything to support access to learning. Without a car, getting to the library is hard, if not impossible. Sophia welcomes the idea of a regular mobile library in Ashmont. Books, DVDs, picture books, magazines, tablets and wifi. Most of all, she thinks the library’s learning programs would be fantastic. Digital skills, Storytime, author talks, science and maths activities – all of these are needed and would work.

Wiradjuri Storytime

“I would love to see a Wiradjuri Storytime,” she says. “I don’t speak Wiradjuri well, and I would love the kids to learn.”

Looking out at the Park from the Ngurra Youth Hub verandah, Sophia and her friends wonder aloud if a pop-up library might one day appear.

It wouldn’t take much, they say, to build something special. A story pod, a culture nest; sustainable materials, colour; something that would work for all ages and all kinds of stories, dreamtime and otherwise. A bit of magic.

**Name changed*

“I would love to see a Wiradjuri Storytime, I don’t speak Wiradjuri well, and I would love the kids to learn.”



PEOPLE AND PLACE

MAYINY-BU NGURANGBU (PEOPLE AND PLACE)

If you are new to town; if you need a place to meet; a place to study or read; use a computer or free wifi; hold a workshop or mentor a colleague; find refuge from fires, floods and disruption of every kind; the library is always there.

Psychology of place

There are many lenses through which notions of 'place' can be framed and experienced. Maps, zones, plans, wards, transport routes and demographics are everyday lenses for local governments.

However, people live and work in a place that means something to them. This psychology of place uses a different vocabulary – memories, feelings, relationships, associations and metaphors. For Wiradjuri, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples generally, place is inextricably bound up in belonging – to country, totem, songlines and dreaming stories.

Wagga Wagga residents have described their city library using similar metaphors and associations. They see the library as a place of discovery and refuge; a village green; a resource that keeps on giving. They want it to keep doing what it does well:

- supporting people in transition – into retirement, into contemporary work, from one job or industry to another

- providing access to technology, wifi, study and learning spaces
- offering lifelong learning classes and resources, skills, digital inclusion
- building partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, multicultural communities, arts and cultural organisations
- complementing educational institutions by providing authoritative information, knowledge and research skills; reading and literacy programs; history and heritage resources
- supporting lively civic spaces, active citizenship, cultural stimulation
- supporting artists, writers and the creative industries; enhancing cultural and arts tourism initiatives
- improving the liveability of the Wagga Wagga region by nurturing cultural diversity, community engagement, and equitable access to cultural experiences.



2.5m 
Australians without internet access

5m people
By 2030 will be affected by disruption

Start-ups
The largest contributor to job creation

70%
Start-ups are founded by 25-44 year-olds

Inclusive places

Libraries welcome more users and uses than any other cultural institution. Physical spaces and material collections are complemented by e-resources and online streaming platforms. Mobile library services, interlibrary lending networks, local history and online collections extend services beyond the walls of the physical library. In some places, shopping centre pop-up and kiosk libraries enable 24 hour access to curated collections and online platforms.

Scholars say that inclusive and resilient communities need public places like libraries. Public libraries contribute to building social capital, social harmony and cohesion; they help develop civic skills and consciousness through the shared stewardship of public space.

See bibliography references:
1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30

High and low

The public library represents one of the few remaining 'low intensity' spaces available.

'High intensity' meeting places enable us to live out or pursue our primary interests with like-minded people or alone. Whether physical or virtual these 'spaces' are important, but vibrant democracies rely on us cultivating arenas where we meet and are exposed to people with different interests and values.

Low intensity spaces enable us to become visible to each other across social and cultural demarcations – ethnic, generational, class, ability and beliefs.

These spaces are critical to the kind of tolerance that democratic societies need in order to build workable levels of shared experience, values and trust.

High and low intensity places converge in public libraries.

Storytime is a good example. Parents and grandparents bring kids to Storytime to expose them to reading, literature and shared storytelling. In this sense, they are using the library as a high intensity place to realise a need for pre-school education and entertainment.

While in the library, they experience its low intensity potential.

Storytime attracts a diverse mix of parents, carers and kids. It is held in a civic space that welcomes everybody and allows for incidental encounters across sociodemographic boundaries.

"I would like to see Council take a leadership role in bringing people together to learn and move forward as one community. These actions would need to be resourced adequately to ensure their ongoing viability and to ensure commitment is more than tokenistic."

Aunty Kath Withers, Wiradjuri Elder, RAP (2019)

Gen Z

Born 1995-2010 will have 17 different jobs

AUS students

Worst international test results recorded in 2019

NSW

Biggest drop in reading, science & maths in 2019

80%

Older Australians feel younger than they are

Guiding principles

The City's guiding principles underscore a community that is thriving, innovative, connected and inclusive.

Libraries can and do offer shared spaces in which social, economic, generational and geographic boundaries are diffused.

Wagga Wagga City Library's role as a 'welcome mat for the community' can be further enhanced by:

- Extending the footprint of the City Library
- Developing a hub and spoke model to meet present and future needs
- Resourcing a multi-disciplined library team to deliver an expanded library service will support city growth, cultural vitality and liveability.

City of Wagga Wagga Community Strategic Plan 2040

Four Guiding Principles:

Thriving, Innovative, Connected, Inclusive

Strategic Directions

- Community Leadership and Collaboration
- Safety and Health
- Growing Economy
- Our Identity and Sense of Place
- Our Environment

The City Library supports all of the above, especially Place and Identity.



Case study 3:

KNITTING CIRCLE

Too little space

The knitting circle generally meets bi-monthly at the City Library. Around 15 people in all; sometimes more, sometimes less. In January 2020, in the wake of the bushfires, the knitters met weekly.

When news got out about knitting Pouches for Joeys, a lot more people came along.

Each week around 30 knitters turned up instead of the 20 or so every second month.

Morning tea, chair set-up, and gentle reminders about new books and e-resources are provided by library staff.

It's busy and noisy, there is too little space, but the knitters love it.

Why do they knit?

"I can't remember doing anything else," one knitter explains. "It is worthwhile, useful, we donate our work to people who need it," says another. "Everything we do is wrapped in love," someone else chimes in.

While they knit they also chat. On the surface this might seem like everyday pleasantries, but it is a lot more than that. They share knowledge; tips, patterns, skills, sources of fibre. And they look out for each other. If someone hasn't come this time: is she okay? should we go and visit? does she need anything?

It is mostly older women, but not always. Younger women are really interested, and even some men.

Like many community minded people, the knitters have their fingers in a lot of pies.

They are pretty certain they can speak for a lot of people in the community.

When it comes to expanding the library and the services it provides, they are unanimous.

Spaces

The library should be a destination place for everyone, including visitors. "Where do we take people who visit Wagga Wagga?" one knitter explains. "It is not like Dubbo or Bendigo, where there are more attractions."

The library is free, welcoming, safe, friendly and provides important citizen services. It needs more meeting spaces. In fact, the whole city needs more small group community spaces.

People

It's clear that the library staff like having us here, say the knitters. But they sometimes feel guilty.

"We are here every week, we see what's going on. Staff numbers are lean, they are always rushed off their feet," says one woman. "Sometimes we feel that we are tying up valuable staff time with our questions and morning teas," says another.

Programs

The knitters are all tech-savvy. They download books and magazines, stream movies, attend digital classes, and are comfortable using smart phones and tablets.

In spite of how much they value the library, they do have complaints.

Their top five suggestions for improvement:

- More flexible meeting and gathering spaces
- Cafe
- More tech savvy classes for seniors, including refresher courses
- More variety in DVDs; better stock rotation; eliminate fines and \$1 reservation fee
- Better parking options.

"It is easy to feel invisible when you get older. Being here makes us visible. People can see us, and we can see them."

Wagga Wagga Knitter

WHAT PEOPLE SAY...

“I want to see a lot more activity and focus on communities and people working together, experiencing the benefits of coming together in places like our libraries. Not just books, we’ll see all kinds of resources being shared through libraries.”

Councillor

“This should be the welcome mat for the city, at the forefront, because it is such a positive and happy place.”

City planner

“There is a critical need for community meeting spaces. High demand now and will get higher in the future.”

Councillor

“The principles are important to me. Inclusiveness, for example, how are library services and spaces inclusive for all ages, abilities and our most vulnerable communities who don’t have the resources to literature, learning and programming. We have great buy-in from the general community and I think the challenge is how we extend the library service to our most vulnerable communities. Being a free public service that we are committed to, means that we have to provide access to all.”

Council stakeholder

“What makes a great place? Don’t need a car. Can walk places, read a book, go to the library and study, go to city pier and watch something. Look at great cities in the world -open space and a city square. Libraries, art and culture are central to this, the foundations, and we are really lucky here. We’ve got the bones of a really good regional city.”

City planner

“Libraries are such a great indicator of the value people place on community, one of the true social institutions. Free, anyone can use it, no barriers to participation. Finding ways to continue this is important. Trick is how everyone in community can access it. How can everyone become aware and understands of the value and benefits of the library, so that it is highly valued, well attended library.”

Creative practitioner

“The next generation of mobile libraries will be more open, fair, technology enabled; fold out walls and pop out decks, a very different experience, mobile food vendor, why not? Every village will have a mobile library and food truck visit, both of which they don’t have now.”

Councillor

“You can borrow a lawnmower, other things too, break down the perception barrier about what a library is. If people haven’t been to the library recently they don’t know how much things have changed. It’s a great facility, but could be more welcoming, less formal and bureaucratic. Make it softer, might engage more people.”

Education stakeholder

“The City Library is the number one priority for city life, it’s that important.”

City planner

I’m not putting reducing homelessness, drug use and crime on the libraries shoulders, by any stretch, but what could we achieve if we really expanded our library services?

Councillor

SUMMARY

Wagga Wagga City Library is held in high regard by the communities it serves. It supports complex needs across different demographics.

There is a common view that it can play an even greater role in supporting regional city growth and social cohesion by:

- extending the spatial footprint of the City Library
- offering a mix of flexible meeting and study spaces
- continuing to provide excellent programs and learning opportunities
- supporting local histories, stories and cultural knowledge
- developing a hub and spoke service model that can better serve residents outside the CBD and enhance cultural life in growing suburbs and villages.

This can be achieved by:

Hub and spoke

City Library: the concurrent Spatial Audit and Design work completed as part of this review, presents opportunities to expand the City Library footprint, improve wayfinding, and introduce flexibility in how people use and enjoy library spaces.

Branch library/kiosk: as suburbs grow and develop, the City can work with developers to build necessary social and cultural infrastructure. These co-design opportunities are often supported by Voluntary Planning Agreements. A 24/7 library kiosk could be realised in this way.

Agile library: an Agile Library service will support the City Library to reach more people, in more places, more often. The Agile Library will provide: click and collect delivery; programs; curated collections; emerging technologies; library pop-up services at community centres, village halls, festivals, events, schools and aged care facilities.

Capabilities

As the City Library grows in scale and service offerings it will also need adequate staff numbers and capabilities.

Capabilities needed:

- extend learning programs
- local history and digitisation
- outreach and partnerships
- digital skills and platforms.

The following *Section 4: Future* presents a phased approach to change over a ten year horizon.

Summary: Dynamic regional cities need libraries, art and culture



8m

International tourists visited Aust in 2017



94%

Arts related services affected by Covid-19 restrictions vs **53%** industry average



110m+

Visits to public libraries in 2018/9



\$4.30

Return for every dollar spent on Public libraries



3.5m

International tourists engaged with the arts



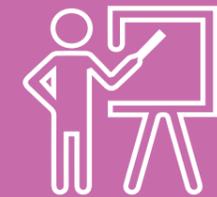
72% Aussies

Aged over 15 engaged in arts events in 2017



51m

Visits to public library websites in 2018/9
9 million registered members, representing **36%** of the total Australian population



273,000+

Library programs attracted over **7.4 million** people



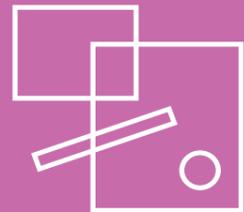
12.6m

international & domestic tourists in NSW 2016



34m

Physical visits and to NSW public libraries in 2018/19



\$1.32 b

Invested in public libraries in 2018-19



12.3m

Domestic tourists attended a local art gallery, concert or cultural festival. Only **5.5 m** attended an organised sporting event, **5.6 m** visited a local monument or **400k** a casino in 2018



12.1m

Virtual visits to NSW public libraries in 2018/19

158m+

Public library collections available for public use



87%

People in NSW believe culture is important to the local area



\$13b

Spent on cultural & heritage visits to NSW in 2017



Arts=jobs

More people employed than mining or IT



Priority

For First Nations arts & culture

See bibliography references: 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 16, 25, 32

SECTION 4:

FUTURE

In this section:

The Library Review is positioned as a companion piece to the City's Cultural Plan 2020 - 2030. If culture is the 'glue' that can support communities through change; cultural infrastructure will be imperative.

A number of recommendations are presented in relation to:

- library spaces
- capabilities
- services

Based on projected population growth over 2020- 2038 a phased approach is encouraged.

The report ends with an optimistic vision of Wagga Wagga City Library in 2038.

FUTURE

GIYIRA (FUTURE)

Libraries support economic growth, learning, social inclusion and cultural complexity. They are essential cultural infrastructure.

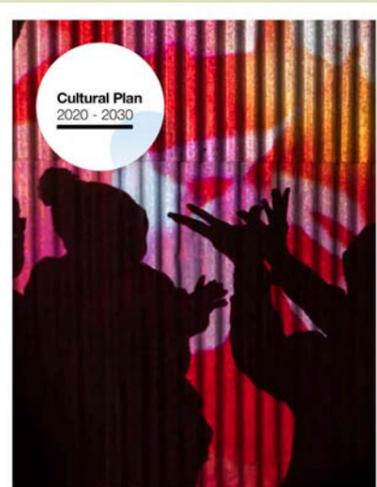
Cultural vision

The Wagga Wagga City Council Cultural Plan 2020-2030 presents an articulate case for the role of cultural facilities and creative industries to the City's growth prospects, vibrancy, liveability, and capacity to nurture creative solutions. A striking 95 per cent of people consulted for the plan believe that the creative industries, and the work they do to foster innovation, communication and new technologies, will be vital to the City's future.

The City Library features prominently in the Cultural Plan. A major objective is to update the 20-year-old City Library building, find new ways to extend services into the community, and ensure adequate staff capabilities can match current and future demand.

If these three things were addressed in a consistent and imaginative way – building space flexibility, community outreach and staff capabilities – the library can build on its strengths and offer essential cultural services to more people in more places.

City of Wagga Wagga Cultural Plan 2020 - 2030



The City Library features prominently in Wagga Wagga's inspiring Cultural Plan. It has an important part to play in many of the Plan's objectives:

- Improving cultural infrastructure
- Incorporating Wiradjuri art, language and culture into significant new infrastructure projects
- Facilitating easier access and more affordable use of Council facilities and event spaces
- Supporting a vibrant city centre.
- Delivering cultural programming and outreach services across the Local Government Area
- Neighbourhood activation and events
- Supporting creative residences and exchanges
- Supporting the development and presentation of original local creative work
- Improving public access to Council and cultural facilities in the Civic Precinct
- Supporting the Disability Action Plan with arts and cultural activities
- Increasing early childhood creative learning programs.
- Extending opening hours of the library and other cultural facilities
- Publishing cultural collections online
- Strengthening formal partnerships between cultural facilities and education providers
- Supporting opportunities for the creative industries.

Creative recovery

The library service is one of Council's most trusted community interfaces. It reaches more people than any other cultural service. It provides life saving programs, resources, support and spaces.

The City Library is ready to play a leading role in creative recovery, growth, learning and community well-being.

The transitions already happening in Wagga Wagga, heightened by post pandemic recovery needs, present a fertile field for experimentation.

Current trends may accelerate. Like the need for communal working spaces to balance working from home; collective learning opportunities to balance distance/online learning; thinking sustainably about resources by having shared library spaces and resources; becoming self sufficient, making and sharing things.

The City Library can reinforce its role as an engine of creativity; supporting creative practitioners, the creative industries generally, and the cultural life of the city.

Disadvantaged communities will continue to benefit from the literacy, employment skills and technology support the City Library provides.

Contingency = creativity

The following recommendations are grouped into three stages:

- now 2020-2022
- intermediate 2022-2025
- longer term 2025-2038

Without immediate investment in spaces, people and outreach services the longer term prospects of fulfilling the multifaceted and dynamic role other regional cities have crafted for their library services becomes problematic, if not impossible.

These recommended actions will establish the preconditions for success.

Moreover, they are interdependent. Expanding staff numbers and capabilities is paramount. In this instance, contingency equals creativity. It will be skilled people who can activate new spaces; expand the library's suite of valued learning and cultural programs; and extend library services into the community in new ways. Spatial flexibility in the CBD campus, combined with new kiosks, hubs and Agile Library vehicles will increase usage and membership, support enterprise and the creative industries, and encourage active citizenship at a time of transitional change.

These recommendations are modest. They are built on a scaled approach over the 2020- 2038 period. They will support the City to catch up with equivalent regional city library services elsewhere, and experiment with new, low-cost initiatives that could lead the way for others to follow.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1: Capabilities 2020-2038

The City Library will need to expand capabilities in a number of areas. Failure to do so will compromise the Library's ability to support important City plans: *Cultural Plan 2020 - 2030; Community Strategic Plan 2040; Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 - 2021; Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 - 2021.*

2020 - 2022	2022 - 2025	2025 - 2038
Diverse cultures, community languages, Language Café	Local studies, history and digitisation	Creative communities broker - business, creative industries, social enterprises
Partnerships, outreach, community well being	21st century literacies: information, reading, digital, visual & civic	Further workforce planning based on population growth
Digital engagement, training and online delivery	Librarian generalist positions x 2	

2: Introduce Agile Outreach Library

For example: Wollondilly's mobile library service is a popular lifeline to towns and villages across the Shire.



3: Expand library services. Consider a library kiosk/pod

What is a library kiosk?

The Kiralee Library Pod was launched by Ipswich Libraries to meet the needs of a growing community. It was an Australian first when it opened outside the Kiralee Shopping Centre in October 2019.

The Library Pod offers:

- 24/7 access
- curated collection, restocked daily
- self service vending machine access via mobile phone or library card
- large touch screen for joining library, downloading e-books, magazines, audio
- comfortable benches for sitting, if needed



4: Riverina Regional Library and Wagga Wagga City Council Review

Complete review with Riverina Regional Library

5: Implement recommendations from Spatial Audit and Design Plan, subject to funding

RECOMMENDATIONS

Now 2020-2022	Spaces	Service
City Library Stretch Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement spatial planning audit recommendations to create more learning and meeting spaces across both levels of the library. • Proactively seek funding and partnership opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing partnership to expand virtual programs and events; expand digital training; increase community usage of new accessible spaces • Introduce Sunday opening hours. • Review of RRL Deed of Agreement • Investigate Agile Library concept and resourcing requirements to deliver outreach services across the LGA. Including curated collections, digital training and lifelong learning programs.
Intermediate 2022-2025	Spaces	Service
City Library Stretch Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement spatial planning recommendations to Council owned spaces e.g. Glenfield Community Centre; Ngurra Youth Hub • Investigate 24/7 library kiosk /pod • Proactively seek funding and partnership opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Agile Library outreach service to suburbs and villages across the Wagga Wagga LGA
Longer term 2025-2038	Spaces	Service
City Library Stretch Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the City's need for library services in line with population growth. Consider extending outreach services. Undertake strategic needs analysis for any future branch library. • Investigate and implement spatial planning recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a Library of Things based on community consultation and identification of suitable funding, locations and partners across the city. • Expand lifelong learning programs including onsite, outreach and virtual delivery options.



2038: HOTBED OF IDEAS

WINHANGANGIDYAL-GUWAL-GALANG (LOTS OF DIFFERENT KNOWLEDGES)

In the future, no matter what you need by way of learning, spaces, tools and cultural stimulation you will be able to find it in the library.

The City Library offers the latest in digital technologies and platforms for experimental, fabrication, training and production purposes. The latest 3D printers, robotics, virtual and augmented reality, gaming rooms, interactive screens, interactive whiteboards and hologram technologies.

Facilities on hand

The library will offer a suite of creative and artistic production facilities – audio and video recording studios, multimedia soft/hardware, laser cutters, embroidery machines, rapid printing presses, craft and art making studios, musical instruments, drafting tables.

It will have quiet study nooks, large and small meeting rooms, collaborative and co-working spaces, kitchens, magical children's zone and community garden. A place to learn Wiradjuri and community languages, and practical lifelong learning skills.

Accessible and welcoming

The library will be the most accessible place across the city. Intelligent design will improve mobility access and social inclusion. The differently abled, the neuro-diverse, people with dementia, the mobility challenged can find a supportive place in which to rest, learn and socialise.

They will be as welcome as the droves of students, parents, kids, writers, historians, craftspeople, visual artists, musicians, filmmakers, performers and small businesses using the library every day to connect, learn and share.

Every suburb and village will be supported by the Agile Library service. It will offer a versatile and diverse range of lifelong learning opportunities. Storytime, Baby Bounce, digital training, language classes, information sessions, mini film festivals, and author talks – delivered at Community Centres, village halls and public education sites across the City.

24/7 access

There will be 24/7 access to a library kiosk with a curated collection, wifi, pre-ordered items ready for pickup, and scheduled programs and events. For those who can't make it to a kiosk or Agile Library stop, a library drone, motorbike or bicycle will deliver book packages to residential homes, aged care facilities and farms.

The digitisation of newspapers, records and artefacts combined with the active collection of oral histories and local stories will open up the City's diverse history to new audiences and promote a strong sense of place.

Opportunities to partner with Wiradjuri and First Nations Elders, multicultural communities, the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and other community and cultural institutions will result in shared digital resources and exhibitions that celebrate the rich cultural history of the City and region.

Trusted places

The library will be a destination for locals and visitors alike.

Information, new skills, local stories and opportunities to participate in decision-making about the future: people will say that Wagga Wagga City Library is an ideal place to explore ideas in a safe place with a trusted mediator.



2038: A DAY IN THE LIFE AT WAGGA WAGGA CITY LIBRARY

Agile Library fleet schedule today:

Storytime at Ngurra Hub, Ashmont;
Digi-tale production classes at Tolland, Forest Hill, Estella;
Pre-ordered book/equipment delivery Ladysmith and Humula.

Drone and bike deliveries:

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital;
Aged care centres;
Uranquinty library vending machine;
Selection of suburban homes.

Roving librarian focus today:

NDIS support;
Job seeking;
Online resources for social enterprises.

Ask a Librarian:

Face-to-face at City Library & Riverside pop-up library, pre-booked sessions 12-5.00 pm;
Online inquiries now averaging 30 minutes per inquiry.

Evening Radical Ideas Talk:

Sustainable Wagga? Can Aboriginal knowledge save the world?
Panel discussion.

Library run community sessions today:

Virtual Reality for teens;
All Things Digital;
New Civics;
Navigating the Information Maze;
Literature and Mindfulness.

Language Café:

Conversational English at City Library and Glenfield;
Wiradjuri at Tolland Community Hub.

Promotion launch for 100,000 new digital items on BorrowBox:

Celebrate target of 5000 new digitised local history artefacts, records and oral histories.

Community groups using library network today:

Wiradjuri contemporary art ensemble;
Knitting Circle;
Local History Lives: augmented reality design collective;
Family History Association;
Riverina Writers' Group.

Behind the Scenes:

Finalise Science & Digital Art Festival program and social media promotional campaign;
Finalise implementation plan for shared discovery platforms across all cultural services;
Purchase new multi-object vending machines;
Plan 2031 collection enhancement focal areas.

Creative classes today:

Digital photography;
Music and video production;
Multi-media software;
Advanced 3D printing skills.

Stuff for kids:

Storytime/Baby Bounce: City Library x 2;
Produce two virtual sessions for download.

Evening book launch:

Fairy Tales for Curious Minds, local author & illustrator

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Glossary of terms

AR	Augmented Reality
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Collection development	Library collection development is the process of meeting the information needs of the people (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organisations.
Creative industries	The creative industries are innovation led, knowledge intensive and potentially exportable businesses that cover a range of creative practices across all art forms.
Digital literacy	The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.
Digitisation	The conversion of text, pictures, or sound into a digital form that can be accessed by an electronic device, computer, tablet etc.
DIAP	Disability Inclusion Action Plans
FTE	Full-time equivalent
LIS	Library Information System; sometimes called Library Management System (LMS)
Lifelong learning	Providing formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the knowledge and skills needed for work, pleasure and community participation.
LoT	Library of Things: non traditional library collections
Masterplan	A detailed vision and plan that helps guide decision- making, design, and subordinate plans.
Partner	An individual, group, organisation or business with whom Wagga Wagga City Council can work to deliver a learning/cultural event or program that brings benefit to both parties.
Pop-up library outreach	New generation mobile or ephemeral libraries, which can include refurbished shipping containers, modified caravans, architect-designed pods, motorcycles and bicycles, or the temporary occupation of vacant shopfronts.
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
RRL	Riverina Regional Library
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indices For Areas: developed by the ABS to rank suburbs according to levels of advantage or disadvantage
SLNSW	State Library New South Wales
SLV	State Library Victoria
STEAM	Science Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
VPA	Voluntary Planning Agreement is an agreement entered into by a planning authority and a developer. Under a VPA a developer agrees to provide or fund: public amenities and public services; affordable housing; and transport or other infrastructure.
VR	Virtual reality
Wiradjuri	The largest Aboriginal group in New South Wales. The dominant Aboriginal language in central western NSW, including the Riverina region. Wiradjuri terms used in this document can be found here: http://www.wiradjuri.dalang.com.au/plugin_wiki/wordlist
WWCC	Wagga Wagga City Council
WWCL	Wagga Wagga City Library



CONTACT US

General enquiries? Requests? Feedback?

There are many ways you can get further information or provide feedback on this report:

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