



Library Action Plan

2021 to 2026



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Library vision

Australia's best inner urban network of neighbourhood libraries, helping to make Port Phillip a creative, liveable, prosperous and socially connected city for everyone who lives and works here.

Culture... Creativity... Connection...

Why we need this plan

A beautiful, bold and creative city

The need for a *Library Action Plan* was expressed in *Council's Art and soul: creative and prosperous city strategy 2018 – 2022* under *Outcome 3: Arts, culture and creative expression are part of everyday life*.

As one of the oldest areas of European settlement in Melbourne and the traditional lands of the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung, Port Phillip is known and treasured for its rich heritage, urban village feel, arts and culture, and tourism appeal.

Port Phillip Libraries are a vital part of the City's cultural and social infrastructure

The City has an established and emerging creative industries sector which accounts for one-third of local economic activity.

Port Phillip Libraries support the creative eco-system through art, ideas and education

The City has a high proportion of people aged 25 to 39 years, with lower numbers of children, young people, older workers and retired people. While we know that most Port Phillip residents have high average levels of education, employment, income and literacy. Most households have access to the internet and digital services, some residents do not

Port Phillip Libraries are welcoming spaces to access books, technology and to learn

We are home to people who experience multiple forms of disadvantage; homelessness, unemployment, mental health issues, and alcohol and drug problems.

Port Phillip Libraries provide opportunities for social connection and are a place of refuge

Our libraries are free and equal; everyone is welcome. We need this plan to ensure that our libraries stay responsive to community needs and make Port Phillip a creative, liveable, prosperous and socially connected city for everyone who lives and works here. So we can:

- Harness our communities' creativity
- Improve literacy and lifelong learning
- Facilitate personal development and wellbeing
- Enable social and digital inclusion
- Connect and inform citizenship
- Make a stronger, more creative and culturally inclusive community
- Enhance placemaking
- Support economic and workforce development

21st century library trends

While Port Phillip libraries have high-levels of membership and customer satisfaction, we want to strive to be the best urban library service in Australia. To do this, we need to keep pace with contemporary library practices and trends.

Libraries around the world are becoming social anchors and keystone institutions in urban renewal and regeneration projects. They are meeting the increasing community demand for learning and social activities across life stages: in early years' and adult literacy, book clubs, technology and school holiday programs, young adult programs, digital literacy, craft and social activities, life-skills and information sessions.

Many libraries are getting their members more involved in the design of services, programs and collections. Libraries are using outreach to meet people where they live, work, learn, shop and play.

New partnerships with creative and cultural industries, businesses and entrepreneurs, schools, not for profits and local historical societies create opportunities for libraries to deliver greater economic and public value.

New library technologies are increasing the ways people can access libraries, allowing them to reserve and check-out items, access library branches 24/7, and benefit from artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) approaches to education.

The size and composition of library collections is changing as more information becomes available online and in electronic formats, such as eBooks and audio books. They are arranging their books by genre, and they are being displayed cover out like bookstores, making books easier to browse.

Libraries are adjusting their collection footprint to free up flexible space for a mix of quiet and noisy, individual and collaborative activities.

Along with these changes, the skill mix in the library workforce is expanding to include people with expertise in education, community engagement, social work and youth work, digital, program development, marketing, and program and partnership development.

National and international case studies help illustrate these trends:

- DOKK1, Aarhus, Denmark <https://dokk1.dk/english>
- Vancouver Public Library Inspiration Lab <https://www.vpl.ca/inspirationlab>
- Bunjil Place Library, Casey-Cardinia <https://www.cclc.vic.gov.au/branches/bunjil-place/>
- Marrickville Library, Sydney <https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/explore/libraries/new-marrickville-library>

Changing community expectations

The Port Phillip Community is diverse and changing. While there is no 'typical' resident or customer in our City, we do know that our customers expect high quality, efficient public services and meaningful opportunities to communicate and engage with Council, this includes our Library services.

There are also increasing expectations around access to information, efficiency in responding to customer requests and providing engaging, informative content on our websites and social media channels. Access to technology is a vital part of our service provision and our Libraries provide this access for many people in our community. Our community recognises Libraries as places to connect, learn, access information and books.

Listening to our community

To develop this plan we engaged with our community using a range of consultation methods including interviews, surveys and focus groups, we asked the Port Phillip community for their ideas about what they expect from our libraries and how our libraries could do more to help them. The many and varied responses crystallised into five key areas for action; the creation of spaces that are beautiful and help people to build connections, responsive programming, a great library collection and future oriented technology.

Beautiful spaces

You told us that you love your local library and you're concerned that not enough money has been invested in the facilities over recent years. You said that beautiful libraries attract more visitors, increase community pride and contribute to stronger communities. You asked for improvements to infrastructure, amenities, fittings and furniture. You would like brighter, lighter, more contemporary libraries with separate areas for children and students and quiet reading and working spaces as well as more meeting spaces for community groups, for classes and activities and for collaborative work. You would also benefit from longer opening hours, including evenings & weekends.

Engagement and connection

Through consultation with you we learned that many residents come to the libraries to connect with others – parents connect through children's activities, young people connect through book groups, isolated people can talk to staff, and like-minded people can meet. You asked for more opportunities to connect, especially for those from diverse communities as well as young people and older people. You would like us to liaise with local interest groups and ask you for your ideas and be more open to feedback. You want to hear from your libraries more often about the range of services and programs on offer.

Responsive programming

You asked for a variety of literary and creative programs in libraries. You would appreciate opportunities for creativity, innovation, community learning and social cohesion and to be involved in planning such programs to ensure they reflect local interests. There is also a strong desire for more children's programs such as story time and rhyme time. For young people, more creativity sessions, school holiday programs, reading groups and homework clubs. For adults, you suggested technology classes and more literary and literacy programs.

A contemporary collection

For many people, the library is still a place to borrow and read books, newspapers and magazines as well as a variety of other formats. You told us that the library is a valued place to support your family's love of reading. You also told us that you were noticing fewer new items on the shelves and we should increase the scope and breadth of our collection. While you value our digital collections, it is apparent that many of you are unaware of the full range available. Many of you would like these collections expanded to be comparable to the more traditional hardcopy collections. You told us that you would like to see the library collection more fully meet the needs and interests of the different communities across Port Phillip, including older people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Future-oriented technology

While most Port Phillip residents are connected at home, the consultation showed that residents are still seeking technology services in libraries. Young people and those on low incomes may not be able to afford equipment or needed software, and older people may need training and assistance. New technology can support innovation and creativity. You asked for better Wi-Fi, highly skilled, technology-savvy staff, more computers, new and leading-edge technology and digital literacy classes to make the most of these technologies.



Challenges and opportunities

Port Phillip's five library branches, online services and outreach programs reach more than 55,000 people, one of the highest library membership rates in Victoria. With a collection of 210,000 physical items and 25,000 eBooks, in 2018-19 the libraries had:

- 647,000 branch visits and 130,000 unique website users
- 937,000 loans of books, magazines, DVDs, etc. and 138,000 loans of eBooks
- 31,000 attendances in hundreds of onsite and offsite library programs and activities
- 84,000 bookings of public-access computers

Port Phillip libraries have a high level of customer satisfaction (9.9 out of 10) based on its large and diverse collections, literacy and learning programs for people of all ages, information and reference services, free access to computers and wifi, convenient public spaces and customer-focused staff.

Port Phillip has the highest benefit to cost ratio of all Victorian public libraries (\$6.50) – well above the Victorian average of \$4.30 and ahead of all neighbouring libraries.

Albert Park Library	Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre	Middle Park Library	Port Melbourne Library	St Kilda Library
				
<p>319 Montague Street Albert Park 3206</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established – 1985 • Description – Our second largest Library set in the heart of Albert Park shopping precinct and serving the community with a rotating modern collection, IT access and a thriving children's collection with popular story time sessions • Floor Area – 740sqm • Weekly Hours – 56 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M, T & W 10am–8pm - Th & F 10am – 6pm - Sat 10am – 5pm - Sun 2 – 5pm • Annual Visits (2019-20) – 88,586 • Annual Loans (2019-20) – 83,136 • Last refurbished – 2020 (public toilet refurbishment) 	<p>195 Bank Street South Melbourne 3205</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established – 1915 • Description – This Branch library includes a focus on local History and Heritage Services, with a large children's collection and active support for young people such as through our homework club. It also has a community space for programs and small events. • Floor Area – 861sqm • Weekly Hours - 40 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M & F 10am – 6pm - T 12- 8pm - W & Th 12–6pm - Sat 10am – 2pm - Sun – closed • Annual Visits (2019-20) – 39,293 • Annual Loans (2019-20) – 28,008 • Last refurbished – 2014 (Library expansion, self-checkout & new Heritage Centre) 	<p>254-256 Richardson Street Middle Park 3206</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established – 1920's • Description – Our smallest Branch Library is part of a part of the local Middle Park community centre with a Kindergarten, Maternal and Child Health Service, Toy Library and a meeting space used by community groups. Its collection is rotated regularly, and includes a focus on children's resources • Floor Area – 65sqm • Weekly Hours – 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M,T,W,Th & F 2pm–6pm - Sat 10am-2pm - Sun closed • Annual Visits (2019-20) – 5,516 • Annual Loans (2019-20) – 10,087 • Last refurbished - 2020 (2021 window repairs) 	<p>333 Bay Street Port Melbourne 3207</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established – 2002 • Description – This Branch library is part of the thriving Port Melbourne community and acts as a connection point for information, IT services and children's story time sessions. • Floor Area - 740 sqm • Weekly Hours - 48 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M, W&F 10am – 6pm - T & Th 10am-8pm - Sat 10am-2pm - Sun closed • Annual Visits (2019-20) – 81,376 • Annual Loans (2019-20) – 63,540 • Last refurbished – 2002 (2014 self-checkout installed) 	<p>150 Carlisle Street St Kilda 3182</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established – 1973 • Description – Our largest and busiest Library and administrative hub. A distribution and support centre for all branches with collection maintenance and home library service. It acts as a safe and welcoming community facility and connection point for information, IT services and busy children's story times. • Floor Area – 2,314sqm • Weekly Hours - 62 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M,T,W & Th 10am–8pm - F 10am–6pm - Sat & Sun 10am-5pm • Annual Visits (2019-20) – 258,604 • Annual Loans (2019-20) – 303,245 • Last refurbished – 1992 (2014 self-checkout installed)

We already have a great Library service but we know it can be better.

In planning for the future, Council has identified the long-term challenges that will impact on liveability and the health and wellbeing of the community in our Community Plan. Five of these challenges – changing economic conditions, rapid evolution of technology, climate change, urbanisation & diversity, and population growth – are all areas where libraries can make a difference through services, access to information and community engagement.

Changing economic conditions

A great challenge over the next decade will be continuing to help our community not only recover but rebuild from the impact of Covid-19. Support for revitalisation of start-ups, the gig economy and a small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises in the City, will need support and the knowledge economy will be central to support growth. In addition, the spectrum of people considered vulnerable is widening due to increased costs of living, rental and property costs, social exclusion and health inequity.

Our Libraries will focus more services and programs on supporting the most vulnerable members of our community, for example the homeless, the economically disadvantaged, older people and children at risk.

Our Libraries can be places what help alleviate some of the pressures on small businesses and creative practitioners by factoring in affordable work and creative spaces into library refurbishments. In this way Port Phillip libraries can play a key role in the attraction and retention of artists and creative industries.

Rapid evolution of technology

Changes to technology and the digital environment are accelerating, sometimes with unanticipated consequences. The world is becoming more connected. People, businesses and governments are increasingly moving online to connect, deliver and access services and obtain information. Around one in every 18 employed persons works from home. We can expect increasing demand for Council services to be delivered online.

Port Phillip residents are seizing the opportunities of the digital economy, particularly as it relates to the creative industries, with the highest percentage of employment in that sector in Victoria. We also support a growing cluster of gaming, high tech and digital industries in South Melbourne.

Port Phillip Libraries will become centres for supporting creative industries, gaming, innovation, connectivity and access to information. We will develop spaces to support creative production (eg recording and rehearsal spaces), co-working and access to new technologies. We will invest in online service delivery (ebooks and audiobooks, website) and deploy technology to increase access. For those residents who are not confident with technology, we will run education sessions to build their digital literacy.

Climate change

Much of the City is only one to three metres above sea level and coastal areas are exposed to the impacts of climate change. We can expect flooding, erosion, storm damage, decreased water quality and threats to water supply, reduced summer outdoor activities, hotter urban spaces and smoke pollution from bushfires. These changing environmental conditions will challenge some members of our community to stay healthy and safe. For example, those experiencing health or housing crises will be more vulnerable to periods of extreme heat or cold. Port Phillip libraries will provide education and public forums on topics of climate change

and will plan crisis responses to support and relieve our residents during extreme heat days, smoke pollution and flooding events.

As we redevelop and build new libraries, we will ensure that we adapt our buildings to changing climate conditions and that any new or redeveloped libraries are aligned with environmental sustainability principles and practices.

Urbanisation and diversity

Port Phillip is one of the smallest and the most densely populated municipalities in Victoria, with population density (5,500 per sq km) more than twice the metropolitan average. As the population grows, density will also increase. As dwelling sizes reduce, residents will look for somewhere outside of home and work to spend their recreational and social time. They will also be searching for ways to make social connections and overcome loneliness. For these people, the library can be a point of connection, safety, stability and support, a place where they can come together and be part of Port Phillip life. With urbanisation comes the risk of increasing disadvantage for the have-nots. The libraries will prioritise services and programs for disadvantaged individuals and groups and create safe, welcoming spaces where people can read, relax, study, work and take part in social activities.

Port Phillip libraries will contribute to placemaking in the City by creating vibrant, inclusive community spaces, and by co-locating with other creative enterprises and complementary services. Our libraries are in walking distance to most of our residents and we will use outreach and partnerships to include those residents who can't reach us.

Population growth

The Port Phillip population is expected to grow by 68,000 people to be more than 176,816 by 2041. This growth will be concentrated in the Fisherman's Bend renewal area on the northern edge of the City, and in established neighbourhoods such as St Kilda Road and South Melbourne. The 2041 population will continue to be highly mobile and dominated by 25 to 39-year-olds, but with an increasing number of older people. The Port Phillip community will likely become more culturally diverse as the number of people born overseas grows. More than two-thirds of households will be single person or couples without children. As this population growth occurs, libraries will need to respond. Plans to redevelop existing library's and/or build new libraries will need to be considered, along with reviewing services, programs and opening hours to meet demand.

Projected growth patterns in library demand and usage

A range of growth and demand factors will influence how effectively library service delivery, resourcing and facilities match potential future usage needs. While many of these factors may extend beyond the life of this plan, they are key considerations in ongoing service and resource planning. A detailed outline of these issues is provided in Appendix 1.

Areas for Action

The City of Port Phillip has a unique character – dynamic, creative and culturally diverse. Port Phillip’s integrated network of public libraries also have their own unique character – local and accessible places that respond to the reading, information and social needs of their communities – while upholding the principles of a contemporary library – universal access, freedom of expression and civic engagement.

The libraries are already well-loved and well-used community spaces. This Action Plan sets the course for the development of Port Phillip libraries over the next five years to progress our vision as ‘Australia’s best inner urban network of neighbourhood libraries, helping to make Port Phillip a creative, liveable, prosperous and socially connected city for everyone who lives and works here’. We will further enhance Port Phillip Libraries as a connected network of neighbourhood libraries that connect, grow and enrich our community.

This Action Plan contributes directly to the outcomes of the *Council Plan 2021-2031*, the integrated *Health and Wellbeing Implementation Strategy*, *Art & Soul Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2018-2022*, the *Placemaking Action Plan*, *Live Music Action Plan*, *Game Action Plan* and other relevant Council plans.

Foundations to our actions

Our areas for action will focus on five themes: belong, connect, grow, create and sustain. These themes that are intrinsic to achieving our vision:

Belong	Help people to participate in Port Phillip life, with a focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged
Connect	Connect people with; each other, services and resources, and the world around them
Grow	Support people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances to read, learn and enrich their lives
Create	Inspire people to be creative, turn their ideas into reality, and participate in a prosperous creative ecosystem
Sustain	Respond to the needs and aspirations of our diverse and growing community

Action plan

The Library Action Plan 2021-2026 identifies actions that will be implemented over the next five years to give effect to the libraries' vision for the future.

Belong	Help people to participate in Port Phillip life, with a focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a 10-year asset renewal and redevelopment program to meet the growing and changing needs of Port Phillip residents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbish St Kilda Library to increase flexibility of spaces, and to integrate a creative production focus • Refresh other library branches to enhance their local character and service delivery, to accommodate where possible more programming, technology, gaming and spaces for creativity • Explore options to extend community access to Library spaces utilising technology and infrastructure differently. • Identify any new library builds required in developing communities • Develop engaging and interactive children's areas at all branches that provide opportunities for programming, collaboration and parents/carers coming together 2. Increase literacy, digital literacy, literature and creative programs across the library network that bring people with common interests or social needs together 3. Support Council role in strengthening cultural heritage, protecting local identity and enabling storytelling through continued investment in Local History services and resources 4. Build partnerships and explore co-location opportunities with organisations such as public and non-profit agencies, community groups, schools and businesses to increase outreach activities that take the library into the community, with a focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals 	
Connect	Connect people with each other, services and resources, and the world around them
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a high-quality and contemporary hardcopy and digital library collection that responds to diverse and emerging community needs 2. Review and update the library's collection and circulation policies and practices to increase community awareness and support access and utilisation 3. Participate in State-wide library sector resource-sharing initiatives to increase cost efficiency and improve outcomes for our community 4. Utilise a new, more interactive library website to enhance access to digital services. Build better communications strategy to enhance access to our collection, events and Library news. <p>Deliver technology support and digital literacy programs for people who lack skills and confidence in using technology devices, tools and platforms.</p>	

Grow	Support people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances to read, learn and enrich their lives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in community infrastructure planning for Fisherman’s Bend and South Melbourne to ensure library and learning services considerations are included 2. Increase early years and youth resources, space and services and programs across library branches, online and in the community. 3. Implement a communications strategy to better inform existing and new audiences about what services, programs and collections the libraries offer and grow membership 4. Increase amenity and make library spaces lighter, brighter, more accessible and welcoming and removing barriers between customers and staff 5. Implement a volunteer program to extend library services, particularly to vulnerable groups such as the homeless, children at risk and the elderly 6. Build partnerships to support development and delivery of literary programs and increase cross promotional opportunities
Create	Inspire people to be creative, turn their ideas into reality, and participate in a prosperous creative ecosystem
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate a community-driven creative production and education program for all age groups 2. Create, capture and make available original material such as podcasts, events and oral histories that reflect local voices and experiences 3. Establish an artist/writer/storyteller in residence program in libraries 4. Support delivery of Council’s Live Music Action Plan by creating space for performance, rehearsal, exhibition and creative development 5. Develop partnerships with local businesses, schools and creative industries to establish Port Phillip libraries as centres of exchange for ideas and excellence in digital technology resources and education 6. Support initiatives identified in Council’s Game Action Plan, by creating spaces and providing resources for people to play, learn, experiment and create
Sustain	Respond to the needs and aspirations of our diverse and growing community.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish libraries as climate emergency relief centres and host public education, discussions and forums on climate change and sustainability 2. Implement a 5-year library technology plan to respond to changing community needs and expectations 3. Develop a comprehensive children’s education program 4. Develop a library consultation and feedback program that involves local residents, community organisations and partners in reviewing, evaluating and designing library services, spaces and programs 5. Implement a library workforce recruitment and development plan to ensure staff resourcing, skills, capacity and commitment meet or exceed emerging community needs and service demands 6. Improve staff rostering and resource allocation to increase operational efficiency across the network 7. Establish a staff team to lead and develop programming, community development, public engagement and feedback

Measuring success

In 2025 Port Phillip Libraries will still be well-loved and well-used places in the heart of the City.

This Library Action Plan will deliver:

- more library users (library visits and members per capita)
- a more responsive and contemporary collection (loans per item, customer satisfaction)
- greater value to individuals and the community (program attendance per capita, qualitative program evaluation)
- more diverse Council, community, cultural and creative partnerships (number of programs delivered in partnership)
- greater return on investment in an industry-leading library service (funding per capita)
- consistently high levels of customer satisfaction (measured through surveys and interviews)
- a library service that has a positive impact on people's lives (told through case studies and stories)

References

City of Port Phillip Council Plan 2021-2031

Art and Soul, Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2018-2022

Libraries Change Lives, State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria, 2019