



Libraries Strategy

May 2022



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Introduction

“The future of public libraries lies in the value they create from the nexus of people, place, knowledge and technology to create a platform for learning, participation, creativity, innovation and well-being.”

Tomorrow’s Libraries: Future directions of the South Australian public library network 2019, Public Library Services p.14

Adelaide Hills Council Libraries are strongly valued by our community and this is demonstrated by the relatively high level of borrows and visits per capita. We provide highly used physical and digital collections for borrowing, well-attended activities and programs for adults and young people, opportunities for social connection, access to information technology and welcoming spaces in which to meet, study and work.

We have branches in three locations – Stirling, Woodside and Gumeracha – together with a mobile library that travels across the Council area. An outreach home delivery service is provided for residents unable to visit one of our libraries due to illness, disability, frailty, lack of transport or carer responsibilities.

Our libraries are well supported by the community, through Friends of the Library groups at Stirling, Woodside and Gumeracha and a large number of volunteers who provide their time and support for various library functions.

The Adelaide Hills Council provides the significant proportion of the funds for its libraries. This is supplemented by funding from the State Government through the Libraries Board of South Australia.

We are a member of the ‘One Card’ network which provides access to over 3 million items from public libraries across South Australia.



Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges that we undertake our business on the traditional lands and waters of the Peramangk and Kurna people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging as the Custodians of this ancient and beautiful land.

What our libraries offer

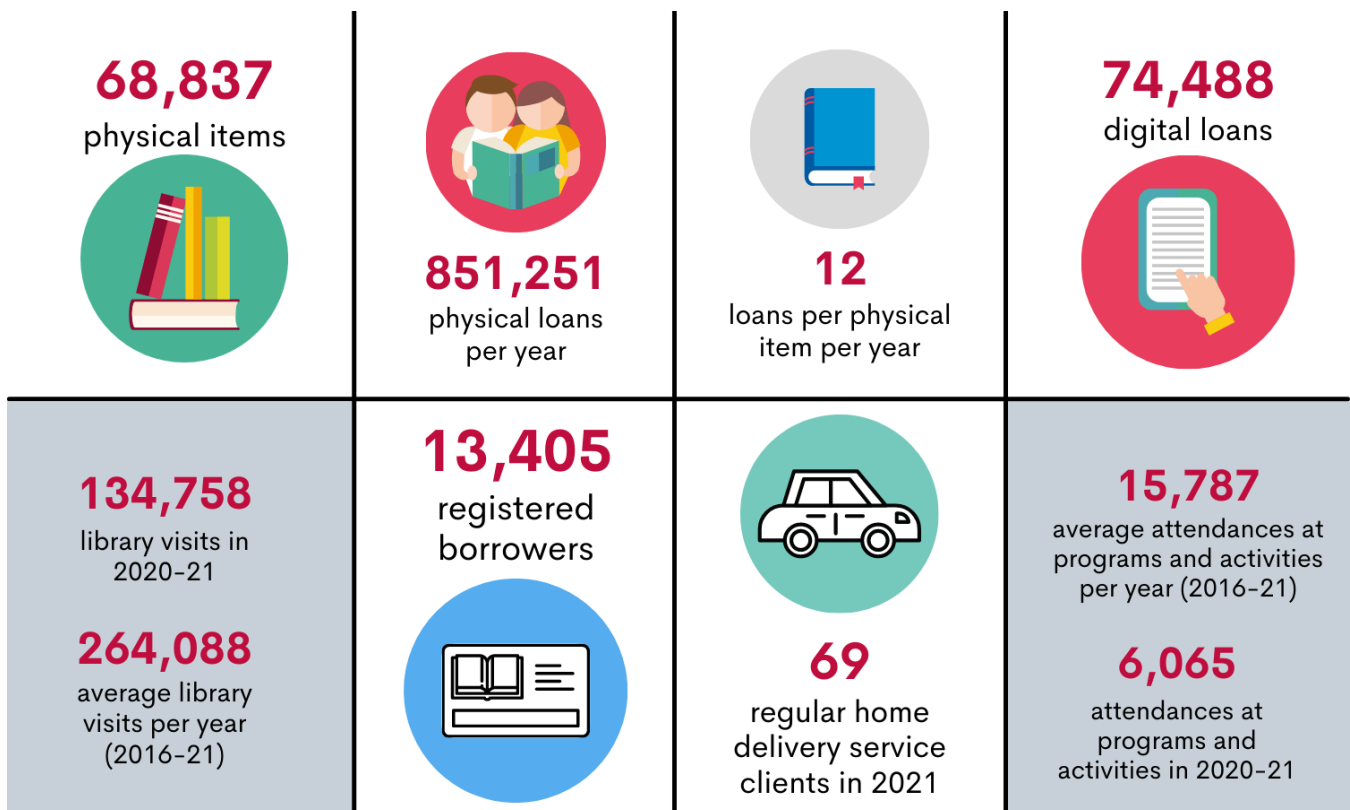
Adelaide Hills Council Libraries service a large area and support a diverse community. They provide access to a range of services and ensure community needs are met through the delivery of resilient and adaptive service provision. They provide a range of learning, literacy support, technology and social connection opportunities for our community.

This includes:

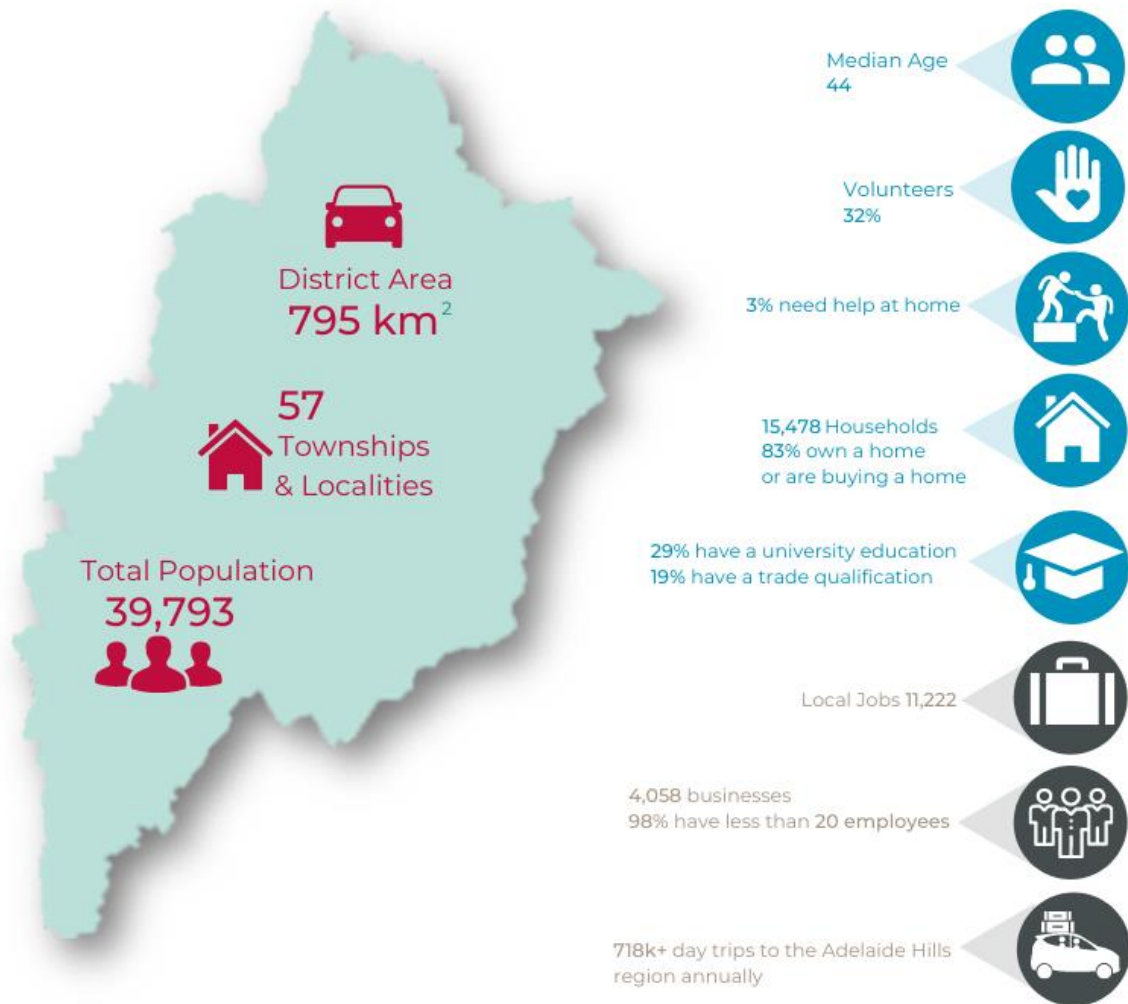
- Print, audio-visual and digital materials that meet the needs and interests of the community and provides equitable distribution across branches
- Programs and activities providing language, literacy, learning and digital literacy support across all ages
- Access to and support with existing and emerging digital technologies
- Spaces designed to accommodate a range of requirements, from community hubs, quiet study areas, integrated zones to enable social connectivity and options for people working remotely
- Provision of council services, including payments, customer requests and general enquiries
- Access to local history through co-located community run history groups
- Events and exhibitions, including those that highlight local authors and artists
- Complementary services such as Justices of the Peace

Libraries snapshot

Data based on 2020-21 unless otherwise indicated



Community snapshot



The Libraries Strategy

In 2019, Council undertook a service review which identified the need for a strategy to set the direction for library services.

The review highlighted that the role, purpose and value of modern public libraries has been reimagined as a result of the emergence of information technology and the reconfiguration of libraries as flexible community spaces.

Libraries also increasingly play a role in supporting digital literacy in the community and this has been reinforced with recent stipulations placed on the use of State Government funding to support communities in this way.

Like all sectors, public libraries have seen many changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been periods of library closure, fewer in-person visits and capacity limits on programs and activities. In contrast, there has been an increase in demand for digital content and resources and for home delivery services.

Library spaces and technology have remained popular for working and studying. Despite capacity limits, programs and activities for children have continued to be well-attended and remain important opportunities for social connection and literacy development.

Our libraries need to be responsive to these trends while providing services that are relevant, add value and match community expectations.

The Libraries Strategy has been developed with these considerations in mind and is aligned with the Council's *Strategic Plan 2021 – A Brighter Future*, particularly the goal and priorities around community wellbeing.

This Strategy has been developed with the input of the Council's dedicated libraries team following consultation with key stakeholders. It incorporates valuable feedback from previous community surveys which were undertaken as part of the library services review.



Trends and considerations

Collection development

Physical and digital collections are a fundamental part of the public library environment. Collection development, involves careful curation and analysis of collections, matching user needs, technical know-how and cataloguing knowledge to meet community expectations.

The aim is to procure, develop and promote both physical and digital resources to engage users and support the well-being of the community. Importantly, this includes children's and adult materials that support the literacy of readers at all developmental stages including users with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. These non-mainstream items are not always easy for the public to find and our service provides an opportunity for the community to share these resources.

The provision of both fiction, non-fiction and audio-visual materials stimulate users to explore and seek items to either extend knowledge or meet recreational and wellbeing needs. Our library collections have one of the highest turnover rates across the South Australian Public Library Network. This is attributable to the popularity of the service and reflects a collection that complements demographic needs.

Whilst the library's physical collection has become smaller over the last 5 years, the state-wide One Card Network has opened up access to more resources for our community through the ability to borrow items from any public library in the state. Physical books and items remain very popular and borrowing these items is the main reason that people visit our libraries.

The popularity of digital content is increasing, notably as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated closures of libraries and reduction of in-person visits. In 2020-21, digital loans including eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines increased by 21% across the South Australian Public Library Network. While this trend presents opportunities to streamline technical processes, it presents other challenges – navigating digital licence types and terms and maintenance of the collection when access to titles expires.

In the coming years, we expect to further develop digital offerings and shape the physical collection to meet the needs of the Adelaide Hills community in line with usage patterns and trends.

Digital literacy

Libraries have long supported and promoted access to existing and emerging technologies and are therefore ideally placed to support digital literacy in their communities.

In recent years, libraries have expanded their programs to include digital literacy initiatives that develop the skills needed to participate in today's digital world. Public Library Services developed a state-wide program in 2021-22 – 'Being Digital' – focused on the digital basics, with topics including social media, video calling, protecting your identity online, and digital COVID-19 vaccination certificates.

Recent State Government funding for public libraries has been partly tied to the delivery of digital literacy support services and this is expected to continue. These programs have implications for staff development and resourcing and it will be important for us to target our digital literacy support offering to those areas which are not covered by mainstream education providers, such as primary and secondary schools for young people, and which do not duplicate services provided by nearby community based providers.

Programs and events

Reading and traditional literacy remain at the heart of the public library offering. Libraries continue to work inter-generationally to support the literacy of children and families, improving the educational, health and employment outcomes that literacy in the early years has consistently been found to support¹. Opportunities to engage in learning and to be part of a connected and vibrant community are also key drivers of programs and events.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen an increasing demand for alternatives in program delivery approaches, including online programs. Our library has responded to this with online story times and online school holiday activities, as well as moving some programs outdoors where possible.

As we move out of the pandemic, our programs need to support the needs of our community to strengthen community connections in safe and positive ways.

We have a diverse community and our programs will continue to focus on being accessible and inclusive for all, including people in our community with disability. Online programming may increase opportunities in this space.



Outreach services

The aim of “outreach” in libraries is to provide equitable delivery of services to the community and we achieve this through the Home Delivery Service and the Mobile Library. In recent years there has been an increase in demand for home delivery services, partly due to the ageing population and particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mobile Library will be replaced in 2022 with a smaller, more versatile vehicle, which will facilitate broader access and better alignment to community demand and need. In addition to public stops and visits to schools, the service will be able to visit early learning centres, aged care facilities and retirement villages. There are opportunities to use this resource at events and activities to promote library programs and collections.

There is potential for high demand for the more versatile mobile library service and it will be important to target visits to those facilities of greatest need and locations where access to built library branches is limited by distance.

¹ Raising Literacy Australia (2012). *Building Foundations for Early Learning*. The Big Book Club.

The Home Delivery Service relies on a dedicated team of volunteer delivery drivers. It is important to continue to build the skills of volunteers to respond to the needs of the recipients of this service.

Flexible community places

Contemporary libraries offer their communities dynamic and flexible spaces and furnishings that people want to be in. They are sometimes seen as a ‘third place’ away from home and work.

Beyond accommodating physical collections, libraries provide space for a diverse range of activities and functions, including access for laptops and devices, charging stations, technology-enabled meeting rooms and maker-spaces that support and encourage creative, digitally inclusive, learning communities.

With more people working from home or in non-traditional workplaces, there is an increasing demand for co-working and informal meeting spaces and we have observed our library spaces increasingly being used in this way. Libraries are also used as social meet-up points, particularly during the day by parents with pre-school aged children and after school by students. After hours, community groups often seek a venue to hold meetings, run educational workshops or present interest talks.

With these increasingly important economic and social roles libraries play in communities, it is important to move toward multipurpose community and library facilities, including event spaces. Future library design and refurbishment needs to factor in a high degree of adaptability that can accommodate new and varied purposes and collection reorganisation.



Strategic context

Adelaide Hills Council libraries are supported by a number of state and federal bodies.

Public Libraries Services & the Libraries Board of South Australia

Public Library Services (PLS) is a business unit of the Libraries Board of South Australia. PLS is the central support agency for all South Australian public libraries and steers the continued delivery of a co-ordinated public library network in South Australia under the One Card libraries banner.

The Libraries Board of South Australia is a statutory body responsible for library policy and administration of the State Library of South Australia and the Public Library Network. The Board also oversees the allocation of State Government funding to public libraries.

We have a high level of engagement with PLS and have achieved mutual benefit through the facilitation of staff secondments and participation on public library working groups.

ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association)

The national professional organisation for the Australian library services sector. ALIA is an information and advocacy body and provides direction and advice through the provision of various policies, standards and guidelines.

We provide statistical data to ALIA annually and achieve excellent results in benchmark comparisons with other library services against ALIA benchmarks. We are regularly represented at ALIA conferences and often present on our experiences on a national stage.

Public Libraries Association of SA (PLSA)

The association representing the interests of all public libraries in South Australia.

We have and will continue to collaborate with PLSA and its member councils in advocating for ongoing government funding for public library services.

This Strategy has been developed in consideration of the following Council and State Government documents.

Strategic Plan 2020-24 – A brighter future

The Adelaide Hills Council Strategic Plan sets out the Council's key area of focus over the four year period. The Libraries Strategy has been designed to provide particular reference to the Community Wellbeing goal and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Reading and Literacy Framework

A collaboration between Raising Literacy Australia and the South Australian Public Library Network, this framework states goals and long-term outcomes for libraries to improve and embed the literacy skills of all South Australians

Tomorrow's Libraries: Future directions of the South Australian public library network, 2019 edition

This strategy presents the long-term vision for the future directions of South Australia's public libraries based on research into trends in libraries, technology, our economy and social, demographic and civic changes that are expected to occur over the next fifteen years.

Objectives and priorities

Overview

A community for everyone – that is inclusive, welcoming and accessible

- Our service delivery model meets the needs of the community
- We recognise and respond to the diversity of our community

A connected, engaged and supported community

- Our community has access to resources that support an informed and engaged community
- Community members are actively supported through the provision of spaces and resources

A community that grows together

- Programs meet current and emerging community needs and preferences
- Opportunities are available to volunteer in meaningful activities
- Collaboration and partnership with internal and external bodies

An active, healthy, thriving and resilient community

- Libraries have the capacity to maintain and adapt services during crises and upheaval
- Activities and resources support the health and wellbeing of our community

Respect for Aboriginal Culture and values

- Aboriginal culture and heritage are celebrated and incorporated in our programs and collections

Celebrate our community's unique culture through arts, heritage and events

- The importance of local history is recognised and supported
- Local authors and artists are encouraged and promoted

Objectives, priorities and actions

Objectives	Priorities	Actions	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Strategic Plan Link
L1 – A community for everyone – that is inclusive, welcoming and accessible	1.1. Our service delivery model meets the needs of the community	1.1.1. Review current hours of access in alignment with community preferences and usage patterns and provide a report to Council	●			<i>C1.1 Provide welcoming spaces and places for the community through our libraries, community centres and Council and community facilities.</i>
		1.1.2. Review staff structure and resources required to deliver services to the community	●			
		1.1.3. Continue to provide opportunities for staff to learn and develop skills that support the delivery of library services	●	●	●	
		1.1.4. Undertake an audit to identify and address any physical or service barriers to participation in alignment with the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan	●			
		1.1.5. Undertake an internal audit to identify and address any barriers to wayfinding in our libraries	●	●	●	
		1.1.6. Explore opportunities such as “pop up library” to reach community members who do not access existing services		●	●	
		1.1.7. Identify further opportunities to integrate the Gumeracha Library and the Torrens Valley Community Centre	●			
		1.1.8. Identify the community’s spatial needs within the Gumeracha Library	●			
		1.1.9. Implement reconfiguration of Gumeracha Library to provide a welcoming space with easily accessible collections and resources	●			
		1.1.10. Assess existing spaces within the Coventry Library to identify reconfiguration opportunities for community needs including study and program areas	●	●	●	

	1.2. We recognise and respond to the diversity of our community	1.2.1. Develop Collection Development Guidelines that ensures collections are inclusive and representative of the needs and interests of all sectors of the community, including minority groups.	●			<i>C1.2 Support and promote opportunities for social inclusion and celebration of a cultural diversity</i> <i>C1.3 Make the district more accessible and welcoming for all with a focus on youth participation, positive ageing, disability inclusion and multiculturalism</i>
		1.2.2. Support and promote events and activities that celebrate cultural diversity	●	●	●	
		1.2.3. Promote and support intergenerational programs	●	●	●	
<i>L2 – A connected, engaged and supported community</i>	2.1. Our community has access to resources that support an informed and engaged community	2.1.1. Renew the mobile library and ensure appropriate outreach services are available to our broad community	●	●		<i>C2.1 Work with community to provide a range of programs and opportunities to connect and engage around shared interests</i> <i>C2.2 Support our ageing community to access services and continue to participate and contribute to community life</i> <i>C2.3 Facilitate opportunities for our youth to develop skills, build resilience and be actively involved in and connected to their community</i>
		2.1.2. Develop a process to identify and evaluate current and emerging technologies to ensure our equipment and training programs support the communities digital literacy needs.		●		
		2.1.3. Continue to assess and maintain both physical and digital collections in response to changing usage patterns and emerging trends, ensuring we meet the needs and interests of the community.	●	●	●	
		2.1.4. Develop a communication and marketing strategy that encompasses print and social media.	●			

	2.2. Community members are actively supported through the provision of spaces and resources	2.2.1. Investigate the provision of spaces for co-working, networking and co-learning	●	●	●	<i>C2.4 Increase participation from the broadest range of our community and engage with them to shape policies, places and decisions that affect them</i>
		2.2.2. Continue to provide space and support for community information	●	●	●	
L3 – A community that grows together	3.1. Programs meet current and emerging community needs and preferences	3.1.1. Provide and maintain library facilities and equipment to support individuals and small business who use our service.	●	●	●	<i>C3.1 Provide and support programs and services that encourage and enhance personal growth, lifelong learning and professional development</i> <i>C3.4 Build partnerships with community and other stakeholders to enhance our capacity to provide and support opportunities for them to thrive</i>
		3.1.2. Continue to investigate the Digital Literacy needs of the community both current and emerging for the development of future programs for all ages	●	●	●	
		3.1.3. Investigate mechanisms to obtain community input into shaping appropriate programs and services	●			
	3.2. Opportunities are available to volunteer in meaningful activities that promote connections and purposeful engagement	3.2.1. Continue to review and identify volunteer and work experience opportunities	●	●	●	<i>C3.2 Support volunteering both organisationally and in the community as an essential element in delivering community outcomes and building wellbeing</i>

	3.3. Collaboration and partnership with internal and external bodies supports the delivery of library services	3.3.1. Continue to collaborate with Friends groups in their support of library programs and services	●	●	●	<i>C3.3 Empower our community groups and leaders to shape and determine change in their community through the provision of training opportunities, grants that meet strategic priorities, building relationships and supporting communities to be cohesive in progressing local projects</i>
3.3.2. Support bodies including PLSA and the LGA in negotiating an agreement between the LGA and State Government for library funding		●	●	●		
3.3.3. Ensure continued participation in sector working parties and projects		●	●	●		
3.3.4. Continue to support local history groups at Stirling and Gumeracha through the provision of space and facilities		●	●	●		
L4 – An active, healthy, thriving and resilient community	4.1. Libraries have the capacity to maintain and adapt services during crises and upheaval	4.1.1. Identify and mitigate risks to the continuity of library services during crises and work with Public Library Services to ensure services are maintained during disasters and emergencies	●	●	●	<i>C4.1 Support community wellbeing through our contribution to public health planning, disaster recovery activities and the implementation of strategies that aim to measure and enhance wellbeing</i>
		4.1.2. Ensure library service considerations are incorporated in the overarching council Business Continuity Plan	●	●	●	
	4.2. Activities and resources support the health and wellbeing of our community	4.2.1. Continue to identify opportunities for outdoor play based learning opportunities for children and implement as possible.	●	●	●	<i>C4.2 Support the provision of formal and informal sport, recreation and play spaces for the community to enjoy</i>
		4.2.2. Continue to respond to the health and wellbeing concerns affecting the community by providing public information sessions and resources as needed	●	●	●	

L5 – Respect for Aboriginal Culture and values	5.1. Aboriginal culture and heritage are celebrated and incorporated in our programs and collections	5.1.1. Continue to include Acknowledgment of/Welcome to Country into all library programs and events in line with Council Policy	●	●	●	<i>C5.2 Celebrate and recognise Aboriginal culture and heritage through participation in and the delivery of programs and activities that engage our community in cultural experience and learning</i>
		5.1.2. Develop and support programs that celebrate and recognise Aboriginal culture and heritage.	●	●	●	
		5.1.3. Develop the cultural competency of staff	●	●	●	
		5.1.4. Continue to ensure that Aboriginal cultures and authors are represented in our collections, both physical and digital	●	●	●	
L6 – Celebrate our community's unique culture through arts, heritage and events	6.1. The importance of local history is recognised and supported	6.1.1. Continue to support and promote activities delivered by local history groups	●	●	●	<i>C6.2 Develop, support or bring events to our district that have social, cultural, environmental or economic benefits</i>
		6.1.2. Ensure that local history is represented in all collections	●	●	●	
	6.2. Local authors and artists are encouraged and promoted	6.2.1. Support local authors and artists through the provision of library spaces	●	●	●	<i>C6.3 Recognise, encourage and support artists, emerging artists, writers and performers through promotion of the Arts and supporting opportunities to exhibit and perform</i>
		6.2.2. Establish guidelines for events and exhibitions within library spaces	●			
		6.2.3. Continue to ensure local artists, authors and musicians are represented in all collections	●	●	●	

Implementation and monitoring

Delivery of priorities

While some of the priorities listed in this strategy are discrete pieces of work, many are ongoing approaches which already feature heavily in the way we go about providing services.

We have a proud and professional team of staff and volunteers delivering services across our district. Our libraries and customer service functions are structurally integrated, with a number of staff working across both areas. We will continue to develop their capabilities to deliver new and emerging services while evolving traditional services to respond to changing community preferences.

Funding

Resourcing for the delivery of library services and the initiatives contained in this plan is provided for in the Council's Long Term Financial Plan, which is reviewed annually. We will pursue grant opportunities for particular initiatives where our priorities align with those of the funding body.

Ongoing State Government funding of public libraries has been included in government budget forward estimates, however at the time being, the state-wide allocation is frozen and not subject to indexation. As a consequence, further pressure will be placed on Council's budget as costs associated with service delivery continue to grow.

We will actively seek opportunities for efficiencies in service delivery to maximise value to our community.

Monitoring and reporting

We will continue to actively participate in state and national sector wide performance measurement and use these result to gauge our comparative performance in the delivery of library services against national standards. Key metrics form part of the Council's suite of performance indicators.

We will report on achievements against the priorities outlined in this plan through the Council's Annual Report and through periodic reporting in line with the Council's Strategic Planning Framework.

Reviewing the strategy

This strategy is adopted at a time of change in the use of public libraries, with the COVID-19 pandemic being a main catalyst. In the coming years, usage patterns are expected to stabilise, community preferences will become clearer and new needs will emerge. We will closely monitor these developments and expect to review this strategy in the next 2 – 3 years.

