

LIBRARIES
FOR THE
Future

**Community Consultation
Report back to the community**

Introduction

Goldfields Library Corporation staff, Board and supporting Councils would like to extend our sincere thanks to the 1000+ community members who gave us valuable time and feedback through our Libraries for the Future community consultation. We have carefully considered and incorporated your feedback into our planning and have already acted on a number of recommendations and common themes from our communities.

Community needs, hopes and expectations of public libraries are changing, and it is important to hear from our communities about the buildings and services which will be most meaningful and relevant to you as we design and deliver library services into the future. In preparation for the development of our new Library Plan 2021-25, Goldfields Libraries consulted widely in February – March 2021 with community members from across our region.

This report has two parts – a snapshot of insights; and a more detailed response around recommendations and actions arising directly from your feedback. We know the detail won't be for everyone, but we wanted to let you know that your feedback has been valued and acted upon in practical ways.



Benefits

We asked you what you feel are the most important benefits of libraries, and then asked you to respond with how well Goldfields Libraries deliver these benefits.

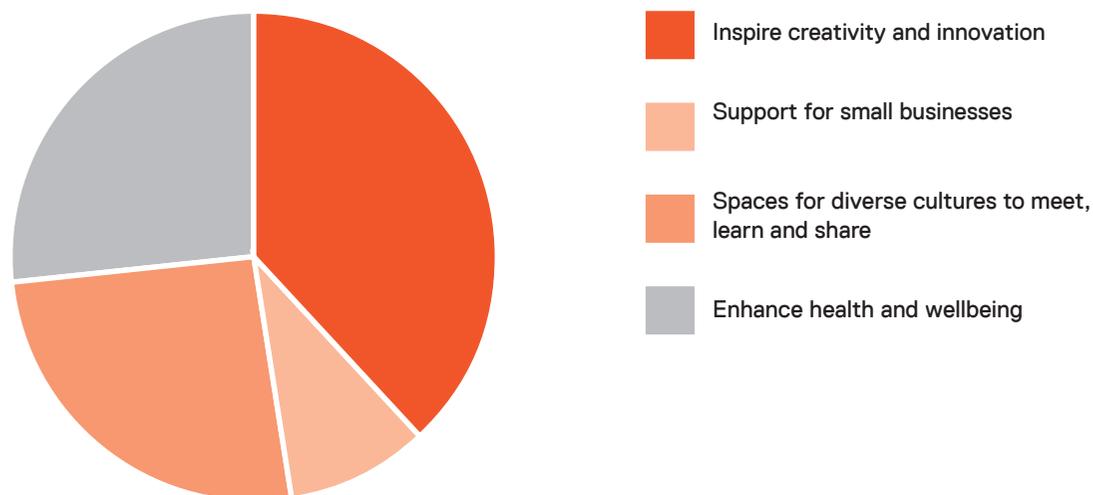
You told us that you most value the following benefits of libraries, with the highlighted areas the services most valued by our community. Our highest performing areas, according to our community, are the top three:

- **Enjoyment**
- **Lifelong learning**
- **Building literacy for all ages**
- **Improved education**
- **Relaxation**
- **Access to technology**
- Socialising with family and friends
- Improved wellbeing
- Feeling of connection with the community
- Improved confidence with technology
- Helps financially

Our community's expectations of library services

What you value most	What you have told us we do best
Providing a broad selection of books and resources	Staff who are competent and help people find books / resources
Being well organised	Being well organised
Being accessible for people with disabilities	Supporting patrons with the use of technology
Staff who are competent at helping people find books/resources	Staff who are well presented

What needs should libraries meet in the future?



Main activities undertaken at the library

What you had to say:

“Saves me buying books so better for the environment and my finances.”

“Libraries should rank alongside recreation in importance – feed the body, feed the brain.”

“Wonderful programs, browsing the books on display - I can't walk past without picking up something interesting, and lovely staff.”

“The library is a brilliant and truly necessary part of society. Essential community service.”

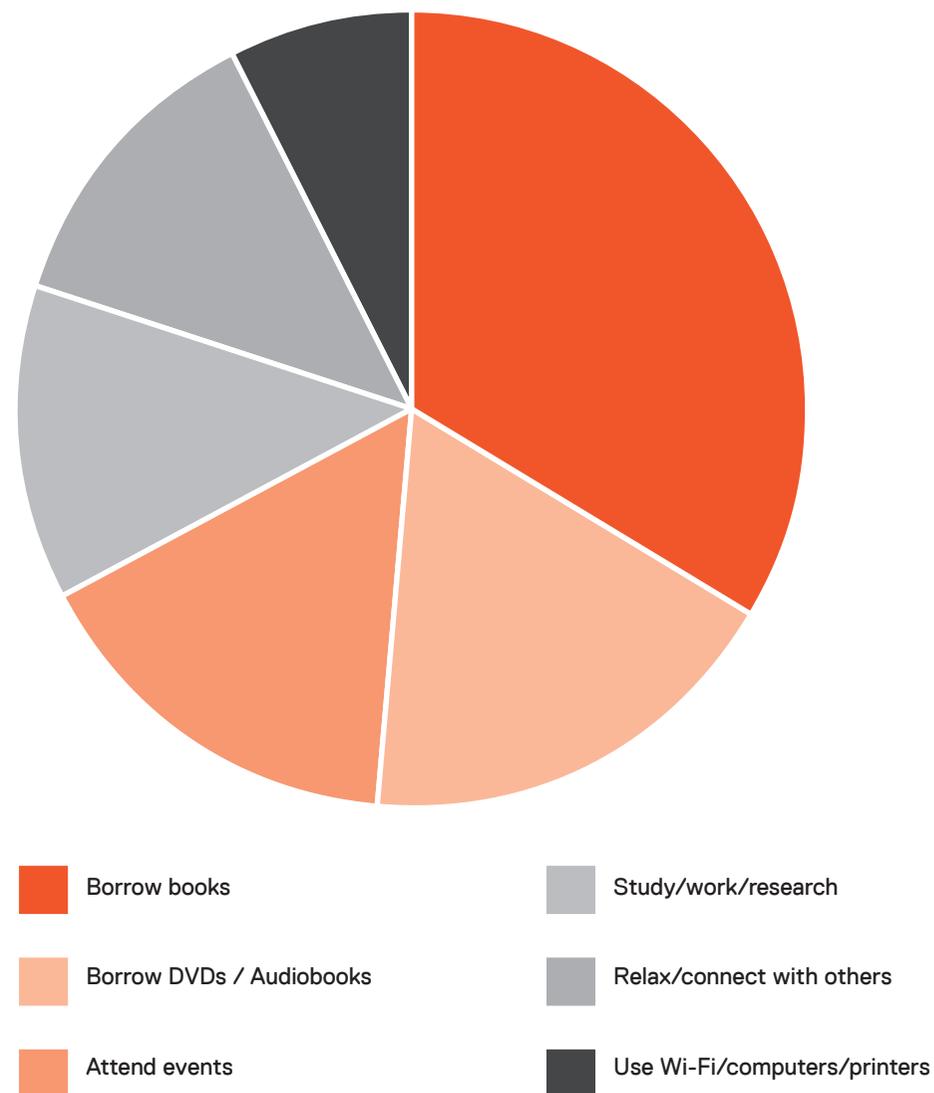
“As an older person I love to connect with the staff, they are always helpful and nice.”

“It provides many different ways to self-educate and reading material to encourage relaxation.”

“Audio books so I can still work on the farm or do boring jobs while listening to an audio book.”

“The home delivery service for elderly people who can't access a library.”

“It has lots of advantages of a modern space - cafe, areas for study, computers, social areas - its not 'just' a place of books and magazines.”



What do you like most about your local library?

Common themes:

- Efficient, friendly, helpful staff
- Location, space, atmosphere
- Range of books and resources

What you had to say:

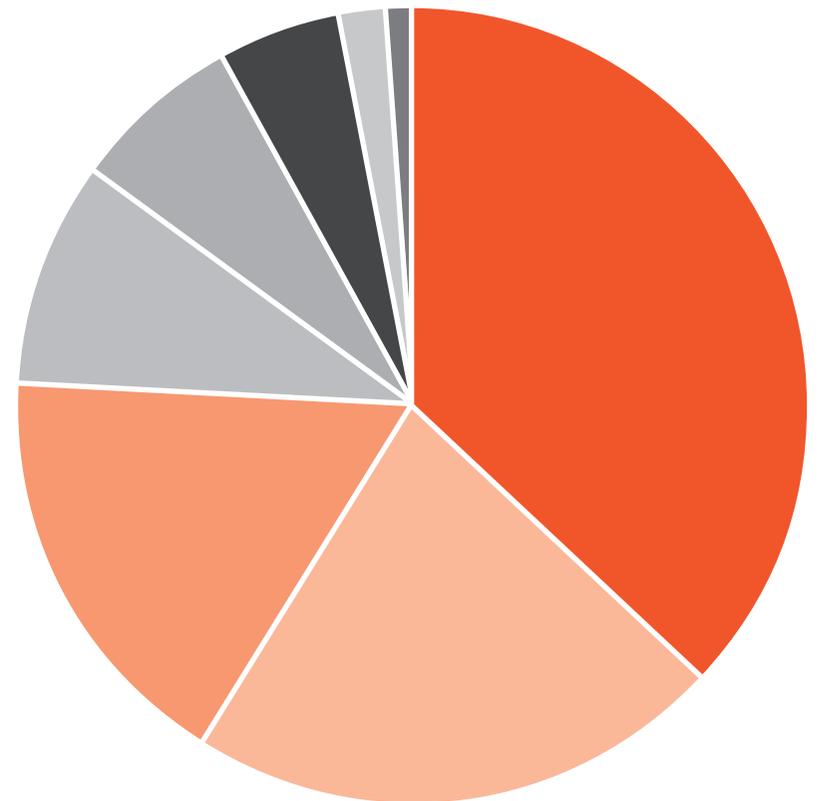
“Happy and smiling staff are always willing to help you in any way they can.”

“A safe, friendly space for all the family.”

“Books. It’s my favourite place in town.”

“It feels like it’s a place for me to explore my interests.”

“Everything is a brilliant community resource and so well executed from the beautiful facilities through to the lively staff.”



What do you like least about your local library?

Common themes:

- Lack of parking/free parking
- Space - noise - lack of quiet spaces, lighting, some libraries too small
- Opening hours - need longer evening and weekend hours
- Larger selection of books required
- Some patrons make others feel unsafe

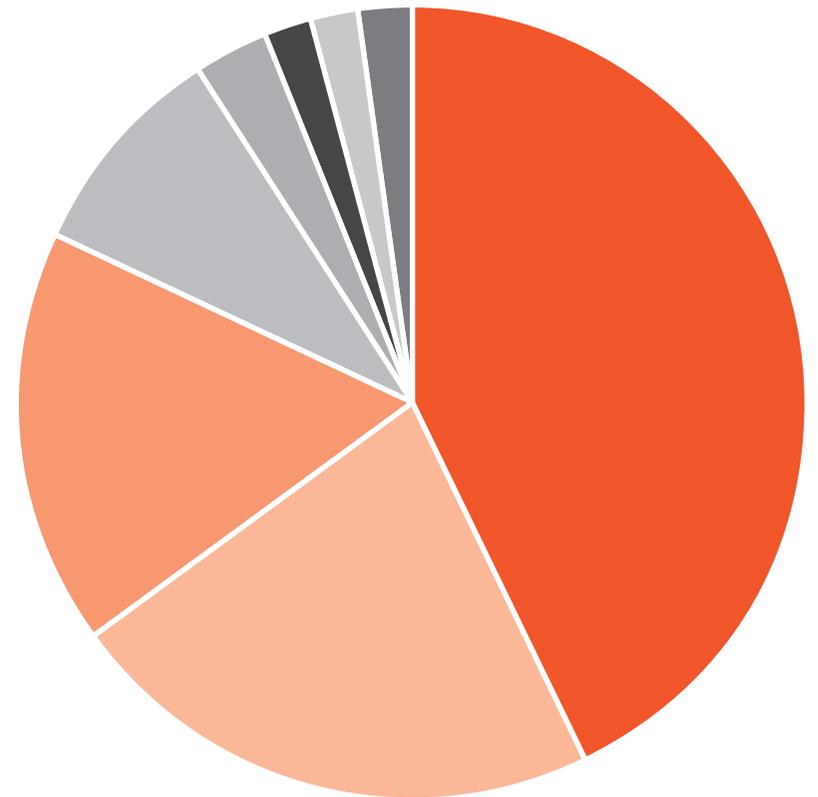
What you had to say:

“Too small, not enough space for silent places/study places/talking spaces.”

“It closes so early - why? The library is a wonderful asset that should be accessible when people’s work day ends.”

“Not enough books. Some series start but the library never has the final book.”

“The people who ‘hang out’ in the library are sometimes a worry to me and my children.”



What have we done with your feedback?

We have taken on board your feedback in the development of our new Library Plan. You can find this on our website www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au (News > About Us > Corporate Documents > Goldfields Libraries Strategy 2021-2025)

We have responded to recurring themes in the action steps listed below. Please rest assured that all feedback has been passed on to relevant managers for consideration and response within resource and space constraints, and has also been passed on to our funding Councils. Please note, with 1000+ contributions there was a vast amount of feedback that we could not address separately.

In order for you to better understand our internal processes as they relate to our response/action steps, we have explained these below:

Library Plan

Every four years, we develop a Library Plan which guides our strategic priorities and resource allocation. The new plan was developed in 2021 and has been heavily guided by the community feedback gathered from this consultation process. The Library Plan 2021-25 was also designed via extensive consultation with, and input from staff, managers, and the library Board (made up of representatives from our member Councils).

Functional Area Plans

Our Regional Team and Leadership Team oversee key areas of service delivery, guided by Functional Area Plans which are guided by the Library Plan, reviewed annually, and form the basis of management work plans. The functional areas are: Operations, Collections, IT, People & Development, Engagement, Programs & Events, and Communications.

Branch Plans

We run 17 libraries and library agencies on behalf of the four local government areas we service, as a collaborative service model which pools and optimises resources. Each year staff teams get together to develop their annual Branch Plan, informed by the Library Plan, Functional Area Plans and localised understanding of and feedback from the community and staff.

Out and about in our communities.

More information on how we gathered data can be found on page 13.



Community feedback	Recommendations	GLC response/action steps
<p>Hours – strong feedback that libraries do not stay open late enough or for long enough on weekends for students/full time workers, and children of full-time working families.</p>	<p>A review into opening hours, within budget.</p>	<p>Review to be undertaken early 2022, with recommendation to be made to 2022-23 budget.</p>
<p>Fines were noted as a barrier for many.</p>	<p>A review into the feasibility of eliminating fines.</p>	<p>Fines have been removed from all children’s and young adult collections.</p> <p>Fines have been removed throughout COVID.</p> <p>Removal of fines across all collections is under consideration for the 2022-23 budget and beyond.</p>
<p>Staff were cited as the number one thing our community liked most about their local library. Two percent of respondents gave some suggestions for improvement for staff.</p>	<p>Continue to celebrate, grow, and enable staff.</p> <p>Continue to work with staff around excellent customer service, and needs and expectations of diverse modern library users.</p>	<p>All staff will commit to continual improvement and undertake training in line with the priority areas outlined in the Library Plan.</p>
<p>Collections – while there was much love for and appreciation of our collections, there was a some feedback that our collections lack breadth.</p>	<p>Report back to patrons how our collections purchasing works.</p>	<p>Library collections are selected via highly trained suppliers and collections staff with a focus on, Australian/ First Nations content where possible. The collection is spread across four municipalities via a floating collection (collection moving throughout the service organically via reservations and returns). The collection is supplemented through the use of the Inter-Library Loans system, enabling access to library collections across Australia. Goldfields Library Corporation works with a wide variety of suppliers to ensure a well balanced collection that suits the borrowing habits of our local members within our budget. We are also trialing alternative options of collection selection to enhance title availability at necessary locations.</p>

Community feedback	Recommendations	GLC response/action steps
<p>eLibrary – non- library users have limited awareness of eLibrary resources.</p> <p>eBooks and audiobooks are much loved and used but also a source of some frustration re. limited range, availability and long times on wait lists.</p>	<p>Improve promotions of eLibrary to members and non-members.</p> <p>Report back to patrons.</p>	<p>Further promotion of the eLibrary has been included in Communications Functional Area Plan for 2022.</p> <p>Adjustments are continually being made to the eLibrary offerings, with particular attention made to costs vs benefits and library user feedback.</p> <p>Budget spent on eBook and eAudio collections has increased by 33% and is now spread between three platforms rather than four platforms from 2019/20 to 2020/21.</p>
<p>Requests – some feedback that requests have been denied/not followed up on.</p>	<p>Report back to community how requests are managed.</p> <p>Review communications to patrons who have made requests to ensure that, if a request is not able to be purchased, follow up and reason is given.</p>	<p>Goldfields Library Corporation has one of the highest percentages of budget allocated to library member suggested purchases, with on average 80-90% of suggestions being fulfilled, allowing library members to shape the collection of their local library service.</p> <p>Notes are left on patrons account regarding request outcomes if not purchased. This can sometimes be delayed due to publication cancellations and high volume of requests.</p> <p>Typical reasons for not purchasing requested items include: format availability (eBook only); cannot commit to cost due to length of series; niche subject more suited to personal collections / university/TAFE libraries; unavailable through numerous suppliers.</p>
<p>Reading recommendations were requested by a number of respondents.</p>	<p>Incorporate ‘staff picks’ and enhanced reader development into all Branch Plans and Functional Area Plans where relevant.</p> <p>Consider community/reader reviews.</p>	<p>Readers Advisory key priority as area for improvement through 2021/2022 with multiple plans in review for implementation.</p> <p>Work has begun around providing staff pick/recommendation/ review bookmarks / flyers.</p> <p>Book recommendations and reviews are now included on the GLC Instagram page and eNewsletter.</p> <p>Online book clubs are being investigated.</p>

Community feedback	Recommendations	GLC response/action steps
<p>Programs – there was much appreciation for our programs and events. Requests for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interactive programs where participants can meet others (20-30yo's and over 60's) • Story and music sessions for older kids/adults with cognitive disabilities. • Storytimes on weekends for working families. Staggered timing of Baby Rhyme Time/ Storytime timings across the week to enable parents to work around different sleep times. 	<p>Integrate more workshop style/interactive presentations into the program.</p> <p>Consider adult Storytime and other activities (such as Lego and craft) for young people and adults with cognitive disabilities.</p> <p>Consider variation in Storytime morning timeslots. Consider Saturday and evening (bedtime) Storytimes.</p>	<p>These recommendations have been incorporated into the 2022 Programs Functional Area Plan, and will roll over to 2023 and beyond.</p>
<p>Quiet spaces for working, studying and reading are highly valued, and the lack of them, particularly in our smaller libraries, is noted consistently in community feedback.</p> <p>Requests for facilitating increasing remote working/studying with, for example, Zoom meeting technology in meeting rooms.</p>	<p>Incorporate quiet/work/meeting spaces into all future library developments and, where possible, into existing floor plan configurations.</p> <p>Also consider equipping meeting spaces with Zoom meeting technology.</p>	<p>New meeting room spaces delivered at Castlmaine and Kangaroo Flat Libraries. Meeting rooms/quiet spaces are available also at Bendigo Library, Romsey Library and a number of our larger agencies. Meeting space in development at Kyneton Library.</p> <p>Requirement for mixed-use spaces a focus of future library design thinking with our Shire Councils, where relevant.</p> <p>Some of our larger libraries have Zoom enabled meeting facilities. Resource considerations are under discussion for other libraries with meeting room facilities.</p> <p>Recommendations and insights passed on to stakeholder Councils.</p>
<p>Website – there was consistent feedback that our website is not user friendly or accessible.</p>	<p>Review and redevelop library website.</p>	<p>Library website redevelopment funded and prioritised for 2022.</p>

Community feedback	Recommendations	GLC response/action steps
<p>Books stored on bottom shelves is an issue for some older borrowers.</p>	<p>Investigate feasibility of raising books or seek feedback about alternative solutions.</p>	<p>Most of the adult lending collections (adult fiction, non fiction, magazines and large print) at Bendigo Library have been re-organised so that the lowest shelves are used only for display, and browsable items are on shelves that are a minimum of 60 cm from the ground.</p> <p>Unfortunately we are not yet able to do this for the local history and stack collections on the first floor, but accessibility will be a factor as we review these collections over the next year.</p> <p>Downstairs, the only collections that are shelved on the lowest shelves are the children's, young adult, audiobook and DVD collections.</p>
<p>Mobile Library Service - some frustration remains about loss of mobile library service in smaller/more remote communities.</p>		<p>The library agency model was determined to be the better option for a higher proportion of community members. It has significantly increased access in terms of both open hours and programs, spaces and early years activities.</p> <p>In solving some problems and offering additional services, there was a trade off and we understand that frustration.</p>
<p>Management of COVID– there was some feedback that quick closures and hesitance around introducing Reserve + Collect was initially disappointing to many patrons. There was also criticism by people representing our older patrons that Home Library Service or postage service should have been implemented or enhanced during COVID closures to reach vulnerable patrons.</p>	<p>Report back to community.</p>	<p>All requests for Home Library Service were met throughout the COVID pandemic when restrictions allowed. This service continued even when the doors were closed. The service was often restricted within Aged Care Facilities due to facility protocols.</p> <p>We followed government recommendations at all times. Staff and patron health, safety and wellbeing, and consistency of services, have also informed our decision making.</p>

How we reach our communities?

- Online and paper based survey (designed, delivered and analysed by University of SA CERM-PI, based on a statewide library service review methodology)
- Short-form paper-based survey designed for accessible, quick feedback, and for non-library users.
- “Graffiti” feedback posters in all libraries, agencies, and at events
- Listening Posts at community events and targeted destinations, including:
 - House on the Hill, Bendigo
 - Huntly Family Fun Day, Huntly
 - Summer in the Parks, White Hills
 - Shine Bright Early Learning Centre, Maiden Gully
 - Supported Playgroups, Eaglehawk and Bendigo
- Focus groups for communities of interest including: First Nations, Multicultural, Disability, Youth, Early Years, Homelessness, Business and Seniors
- Invitation to make direct contact with feedback via email or phone

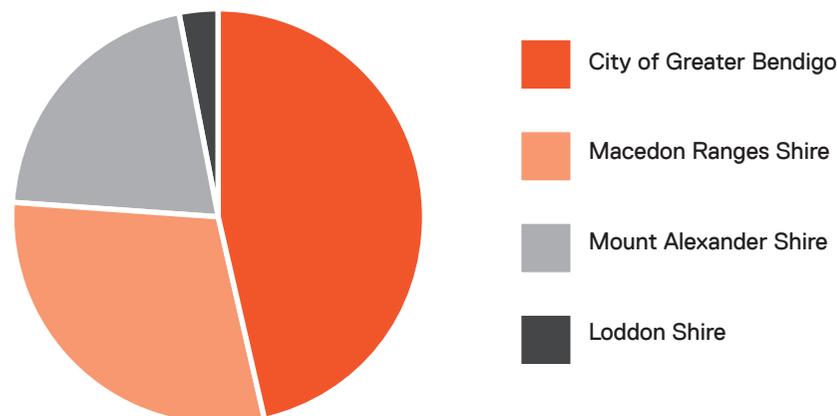
NB: The consultation was supported by the City of Greater Bendigo to assist in the development of their Libraries Strategy. As a result, the more labour-intensive efforts to reach beyond existing library members (Listening Posts and Focus Groups) were resourced in Greater Bendigo, while an extensive survey, short surveys and poster feedback were rolled out across the entire Goldfields Libraries region.

Engagement method	Reach
Online survey	614
Paper survey	113
Short form survey (paper only)	49
Focus Group participants	25
Poster responses	100 (approx.)
Listening posts	100 conversations (approx.)
Direct emails	3
TOTAL Engagement	1000+ community members

Percentage non-library users

Long form survey	9%
Short form survey	47%

Responses by Shire





North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation
(trading as Goldfields Library Corporation)

Administration Hub:
251-259 Hargreaves Street
Bendigo, Victoria, 3550

PO Box 887, Bendigo, 3552

Phone (03) 5449 2700

www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au