

YARRA PLENTY
REGIONAL LIBRARY

AGENDA PAPER

and
accompanying documents
for the

Ordinary Meeting of the Board
of the
Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service

Thursday 18 April 2024
at
6.00pm

Thomastown Library,
52 Main Street, Thomastown 3074

TO BOARD MEMBER

Yarra Plenty Regional Library Board Meeting will be held on:

DATE AND TIME:

Thursday 18 April 2024 at 6.00pm

LOCATION:

Thomastown Library, 52 Main Street, Thomastown, 3074

APOLOGIES:

If you cannot attend the meeting, please email dlamb@ypri.vic.gov.au
by **Monday 15 April 2024**

Chief Executive Officer

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A. Welcome and Apologies

B. Acknowledgement to Traditional Custodians

“YPRL acknowledges the Wurundjeri, Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of this Land, paying respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging who have resided in the area. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.”

C. Disclosures of Interest, declaration of Pecuniary and Conflict of Interest

D. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting 29 February 2024

SECTION D

Confirmation of the Minutes

Meeting of Thursday 29 February 2024

E. Continuation of matters lapsed from previous meetings

Nil.

F. Presentation of General Reports

SECTION F

Presentation of General Reports

Agenda Item 1: Thomastown Library Refurbishment Plan Presentation (NOTING)

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Author: Jane Cowell, Chief Executive Officer

REPORT

SUMMARY

A presentation will be delivered by Jane Cowell on the planned refurbishment of the Thomastown Library.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board resolves to RECEIVE and NOTE the presentation.

M: _____
S: _____

Agenda Item 2: CEO Report (NOTING)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Jane Cowell, Chief Executive Officer
Attachment:	2a – External Meetings Attended by CEO February – April 2024 2b – Dashboard – Q3 2023-2024 2c – Copy of Advocacy Letter to State Government Ministers and MPs

REPORT

Governance

Advocacy: Letter has been sent to all local State MPs and the Minister for Local Government advocating for an increase in State Government funding for libraries, including reinstating the funding for the Living Library Infrastructure Program (see attachment 2c).

Knowledge and Learning

Library Lovers Day: Library Lovers Day is a day to honour libraries, librarians and library lovers and the valuable role libraries play in the community. YPRL's celebration featured diverse activities across the region. This included promotion of our LOTE collections with Lalor library's Chinese tea and book tasting event, and Eltham Library's *An Evening in France*, featuring French dance classes, crepe cooking demonstrations by a local French business, and a French literature documentary from Kanopy. Ivanhoe library presented a writing workshop with author Will Kostakis, where members from the community wrote creative pieces related to love and literature. Whittlesea Library presented an evening Family Storytime and created bookmarks using recycled materials. Themed and curated displays such as *Blind Date with a Book* and Diamond Valley's *In Love with the Thriller* and Watsonia's display for the most lovable character in books and movies enhanced customer engagement with our collections.



Writing Workshop: In partnership with Nillumbik Shire's Literary Artist in Residence program we engaged writer Ale Prunotto to conduct a 4-day workshop at Diamond Valley Library on using interview techniques for writing creative nonfiction. This program catered to people wanting to enhance their skills and focus on telling others' stories ethically and creatively. The technique demonstrated by Ale Prunotto focused on building empathy and curiosity by suspending judgement and fostering social connection within a safe space. A closing event with the participants and their friends was hosted by Eltham Library on featured final feedback from Ale and the distribution of printed pieces. In collaboration with the Nillumbik Arts and Cultural Development Team, we've secured a painting from a local artist to use as a cover for this booklet. This booklet will be available at YPRL branches.

City of Whittlesea Community Festival: YPRL participated in the City of Whittlesea's Community Festival at the Plenty Ranges Arts & Convention Centre on Sunday 17 March for a fun-filled family day. We showcased a curated selection of our collection alongside activities and stickers. We delivered multiple Storytimes on the day which were well-attended by many families. Over 8000 people attended the festival.



Connection

Holi Festival: YPRL has a valued partnership with the Northern Region Indian Seniors Association. Working together, we have hosted an annual Indian Festival of Holi for the last fourteen years at Ivanhoe Library. Engagement and attendance have continued to grow each year. This Holi, we saw live dance and musical performances in both traditional and modern styles. 110 people attended and it offered a great chance for the community to connect and celebrate together.



Homeland: The *Homeland: Preserving stories of treasured objects from afar* project was launched in February. Fourteen expressions of interest were received to participate, representing twelve countries evenly distributed across the Region. Ten migrant Australians will be chosen to share their story around a treasured object which they chose to bring to their new homeland. Interviews will be filmed at selected library locations in April. Yarra Plenty Regional Library gratefully acknowledges the Local History Grants Program and Public Records Office Victoria, supported by the Victorian Government through the Community Support Fund.

International Women’s Day: YPRL hosted a series of events celebrating and acknowledging the contribution of local women to its communities, reflecting the theme *Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress*. Events included an art workshop by Art Therapist Jacqui Lewis at Mill Park Library, and guest speaker Aisha Khurram at Whittlesea Library, sharing her story as the Hardship Help Food Coordinator at Whittlesea Food Collective, delivered in partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections. Eltham Library hosted a full day event of panel discussions, workshops and lively chats on the art of writing and telling stories, featuring women writers and bestselling authors including Christine Bell, Robyn Cadwallader, Wendy J Dunn, Alison Goodman, Keren Heenan, Leah Kaminsky, and Marion Taffe. *Women Write History* was delivered in partnership with Wendy J Dunn and Swinburne University and hosted 50 participants.

Media Mentions:

Publication	Number of Mentions
ABC News	1
Arts Guide	2
Banyule Banner	1
Council Magazine	1
City of Whittlesea (eNews & media releases)	3
Mirage	1

Publication		Number of Mentions
National Tribune		1
Star Weekly		2
VIC Health eNews		2
Social Media		
Engagement	Reach	Followers
9100	118396	79457

Wellbeing

Cultural Diversity Week: was the opportunity to embrace and explore the incredible multicultural community that has developed across the 3 LGAs with this year’s theme of ‘Our Stories – Celebrating Together.’ YPRL created a sensory experience across its branches showcasing the local community’s diversity through dancing, food tastings, recipe sharing, movies and information sessions. Events included Islamic Tessellation workshop at Whittlesea Library, Indian cooking at Mill Park Library, Tai Chi workshop, traditional dance and dumpling making demonstration at Diamond Valley Library, Feng Shui workshop at Eltham Library, and a Chinese Cooking workshop at Watsonia Library as part of the *Your Recipe, Your Story* program where community members could share a recipe that reflected their cultural identities. In addition, throughout the week Lalor Library hosted an International Film Festival showcasing a different movie each day. Feedback was extremely positive, showing the need for diverse, engaging events reflecting community identity, languages and collections.



Wellbeing for Seniors: In March YPRL partnered with Nillumbik Positive Ageing to host a series of monthly events for senior community members. The first event was mini plant pot decorating, and 17 participants enjoyed a morning of creativity and social connection, while also enjoying a lovely morning tea. Seniors designed and painted their own terracotta plant pots, then planted them with flowering seeds or succulents. The results were both colourful and inspiring and ended in a wonderful group photo of the finished pots. One participant stated that the event left them with a feeling of inclusivity and pride.



Organisational Strength

Career Networking Expo: Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network (HWLLEN) hosted a Career Networking Expo for young people at the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre, South Morang on 21 March 2024. YPRL saw this as an excellent opportunity to partner with Charles Sturt University (CSU) to talk to high school students and school-leavers about career pathways into Library and Information Services. Young people learned about the varied and dynamic roles that library staff perform, particularly in YPRL branches where a typical day might include customer service, running an art program for kids, working on a digital marketing campaign, or creating a vibrant display for the latest fiction collection. Students were enthusiastic and asked many questions about the life of librarians and library staff, and how their career goals in other sectors could intersect with a career in libraries. Almost 1,000 attendees participated in the event, and many students were drawn to the interactive stall where YPRL and CSU staff helped them make around 50 friendship bracelets in exchange for conversations about studying, careers, books, and library programs. It was wonderful to hear that most students were already YPRL members and have visited several YPRL branches.

Migration Project: YPRL has reached the milestone of retiring our physical IT infrastructure from our data centre housed at City of Whittlesea and from each Branch Library. This represents a significant milestone as we have transitioned all files and applications into the Cloud environment. This has been a 3-year project delivered within our ICT Strategy.

Cloud**Grants:**

Young and Connected – Telstra Foundation’s EOI for 2024 grants: EOIs by invitation only. Based on previous co-design work YPRL conducted with young people, our application focused on prototyping solutions related to engagement challenges by organisations such as councils, libraries, and other services. - *EOI unsuccessful*

Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2023 – Minor Works – The Thomastown Library Refurbishment Project matched the Minor Works grant requirements and after discussion with the State Government Grant representative, YPRL has submitted a grant application for \$181,026 towards the total cost of \$301,710. All Living Libraries Infrastructure funds must be distributed by 30 June 2024 so our project may be delayed by a week as we cannot start the project before the grants have been announced.

Australian Research Council: YPRL is partnering with Deakin University, Prof Helen Partridge, Pro Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning in a grant application to the Australian Research Council “*Public libraries and social capital: an exploratory study*”. Our contribution is to the research component and YPRL is not required to contribute any funds. The submission has been successful in the first round of selection, with Deakin University invited to submit a full application. The results of this second round are expected to be known in November 2024. YPRL will gain access to the key findings of this research which will be run over 3 years and staff will have the opportunity to work with the researchers and feature in the case studies developed from the research.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and NOTE the CEO Report.

M: _____
S: _____

CEO External Meetings February 2024 to April 2024

Date	Meeting Participants	Meeting/Event/Topic
26 February Online	Craig Lloyd, City of Whittlesea Allison Beckwith, Banyule City Council Carl Cowie, Nillumbik Shire Council	Member Council CEO discussions regarding 24/25 YPRL Budgets and Council funding and planning for upcoming regional programs.
28 February Online	ALIA Board members	ALIA Board meeting.
29 February Online	Joe Kelly, Karen Mainwaring, Karen Taylor, Nicole Maslin, Banyule City Council Luke Claringbold & Matthew Trawn, k2ld Architects Emma Creed & Fionnuala Sharkey Lauren Morehouse, YPRL	Project group for Rosanna Library refurbishment to discuss revised concept designs.
1 March & 5 April Online	Corrienne Nichols, Nillumbik Shire Council	Regular partner meeting.
6 March In person	Andrew Clegg, Department of Government Services Trinh Luu & Jack Chan, YPRL	Visit to Thomastown Library to discuss proposed Living Libraries Infrastructure grant proposals.
6 March Online (after hours)	Dr Papatheodorou and Thalia Gonda, Ionian University, Greece	Interview to discuss library consortia for an international PHD research project.
7 March Online	Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) Collections Special Interest Group (SIG) members	Public Libraries Victoria Collections Special Interest Group regular meeting as Convenor. This meeting featured a presentation from YPRL Collections team on the development and implementation of a Deadly Collection.
7 March In person (AH)	Nillumbik Shire Council Councillors, staff and members of the public	International Women's Day Event.
8 March Online	Rosie Stevenson, Wenona Council	Public libraries discussion

Date	Meeting Participants	Meeting/Event/Topic
8 March Online	Trish Hepworth, Deputy CEO ALIA	Finalise the draft workshop agenda for the ALIA conference on Book Challenges and LBTQIA+ library events jointly presented by YPRL CEO and Deputy CEO ALIA. This workshop has been fully booked.
8 March In person Eltham Community Gallery (AH)	Nillumbik Shire Council staff members and members of the public	Creative Minds opening celebration of exhibition. Exhibition showcases artworks by Nillumbik VCE Art and Design students from local schools and colleges.
12 March & 15 April Online	Steve McQuade, State Library of Western Australia	Planning for the full day workshop Jane Cowell will deliver as a fee charged event for the State Library of Western Australia.
13 March In person Ivanhoe Library	Johannes Christmann, Michelle Ryan and Kelly Gibbs, Civica Lu Salerni, YPRL	Discuss the Spydus application provided by Civica to YPRL and possible future developments such as AI integration and Voice activation search options.
14 March In person 9 April Online	Kath Bracket, Banyule City Council Jo Wilson, Banyule City Council	Regular partner meeting.
15 March Online (AH)	Liz White, Director of Library Partnerships British Library London.	Discuss Public Libraries action plan for IFLA
17 March In person Ivanhoe Library (AH)	Northern Region Indian Seniors Association members	Holi Festival and perform welcome and introduction to the event.
18 March In person – Thomastown Library	Members of the public and Wurundjeri representative.	City of Whittlesea Harmony event with Welcome to Country.
18 March Online	ALIA Vocational Educational Training Committee members	Regular committee meeting as ALIA President

Date	Meeting Participants	Meeting/Event/Topic
19 March Online	Public Libraries Victoria Library (PLV) Leaders & Managers	Regular quarterly meeting
20 March In person State Library Vic	Pierre Gorman Award Ceremony participants – State Library Victoria	Award ceremony
20 March In person	Monika Szunejko, Director of Collections, State Library Victoria	ussions held on issues such as Palestine / Israel protests, collections innovation, and ALIA Information Online conference development 2025.
21 March In person (AH)	City of Whittlesea employees and members of the public	Harmony Event at Mill Park Library
22 March Online	Cathie Warburton, ALIA CEO	Regular catch-up meeting
25 March In person	Anthony Bournakas, Christopher Valentine, Jarrod McQueen - Platinumfm Morgan Einam & Daniel DeSimone, City of Whittlesea Trinh Luu, Scott Mundell & Timothy Gillis- Jones, YPRL Georgia Byers Simbuilt Project Manager	Walkthrough with City of Whittlesea representatives, contractors and YPRL Lalor Refurbishment project team regarding the planned maintenance works that will happen concurrently with the refurbishment works.
25 March In person	Margaret Devlin, Consultant - Centre for Organisation Development Kate Karrasch & Robyn Ellard, YPRL	Discuss YPRL Branch Operations structure review.
26 March & 8 April Online	Anthony Traill, City of Whittlesea	Regular partner catch up meeting
27 March In person	Inclusive Banyule Advisory Committee members	Regular key partner meeting.
27 March In person	Michael Geary, CEO Banyule Community Health Robyn Ellard, YPRL	Discuss possible library activation at the Banyule Community Health site in West Heidelberg.
3 April Online	Katie Norton, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries	Elibrary Consortium discussions for the Overdrive (Libby) collection which encompasses eAudio, eBooks, eMagazines, and eComics.

Date	Meeting Participants	Meeting/Event/Topic
4 April Online	Wurundjeri Elders: Aunty Julieanne Axford and Aunty Gail Smith. Charley Woolmore, Wurundjeri Special Projects Manager Kate Karrasch, Coralie Kouvelas & Nic Rummery, YPRL	Consultation with Wurundjeri council.
4 April Online	Administrator Lydia Wilson, City of Whittlesea	Finalise Board Meeting agenda.
5 April Online	Tina Bourekas, Boroondara Libraries (Mentee)	Regular mentee meeting (fee charged session to Boroondara Council for coaching from YPRL CEO – 12 months contract).
5 April Online	Ciaran Borthwick, State Library Victoria	/ research project on the role of the Public Library to promote social connection.

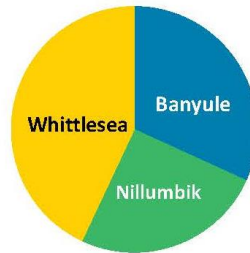
MEMBERSHIP 1.

Total Members:

Banyule: 55,295
 Nillumbik: 43,748
 Whittlesea: 74,746



Total Members



Active Members (Q3): 46,291

New Members: 6,966

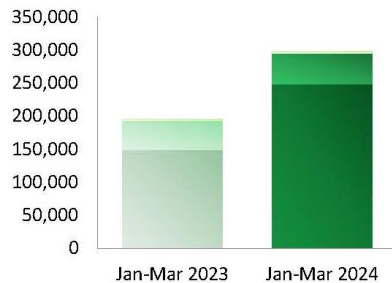
USAGE

App Hits: 115,208
 Catalogue Hits: 138,473
 Website Hits: 297,489

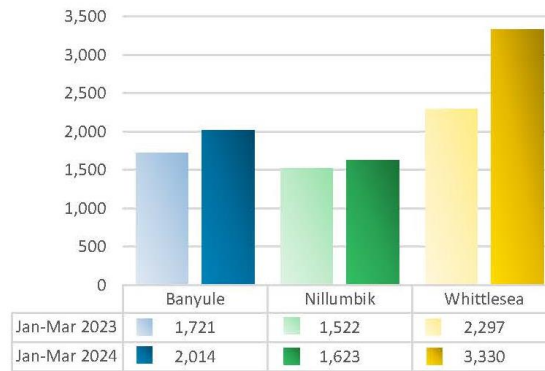
Wi-Fi Total Sessions: 32,631
 Banyule: 14,299
 Nillumbik: 7,244
 Whittlesea: 11,088

Website Hits

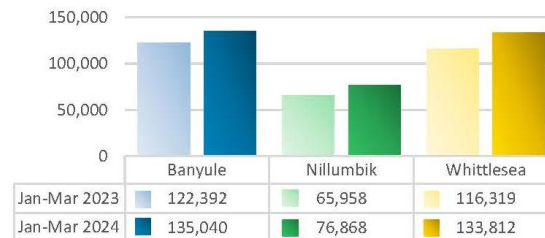
Desktop Mobile Tablet



New Members Totals



2. Branch Visitation



OUR BUSINESS

2023/2024 Q3: 1 Jan–31 Mar

EVENTS

Events: 0.9% decrease
 Attendees: 2.55% increase

Community Engagement



1,010 events with
 23,234 attendees



6,966 NEW MEMBERS

64,071 eNewsletter Users subscribed
 61,841 Emails opened
 4,841 Links clicked

942 children attended 37 Big Summer Read events.



221 people attended
 13 Homegrown Summer events.

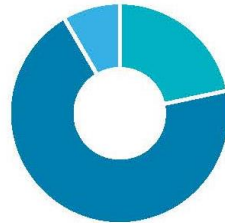


2,954 new app users

STAFF



Staff Total 166
 Full Time 36
 Part Time 116
 Casual 14
Volunteer Total 89



■ Full Time ■ Part Time ■ Casual

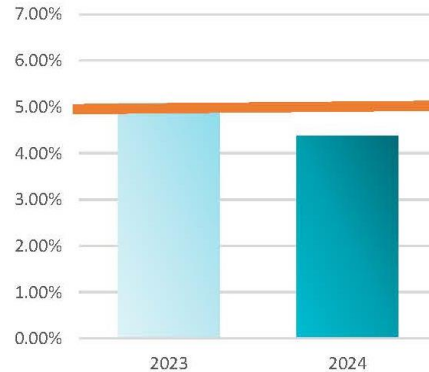
EFT Budget: 105.03 EFT Actual: 102.82

Staff EFT is under budget.

Staff Turnover: 2.96% (previously 2.45%)
Absenteeism: 4.37% (previously 5.08%)
KPI: Under 5%

	2023	2024
Training Hours Delivered	278.25	402.75
Average per Employee	1.75	2.43

Absenteeism



Cash Balance

\$7.64 million



In line with YTD result and capital expenditure

OUR PEOPLE & FINANCE

2023/2024 Q3: 1 Jan–31 Mar

FINANCES

Quarterly Financial Report

Working Capital Ratio

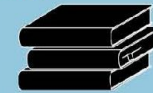
2.49

Minimum level 1.3



YTD Capital Expenditure

Under budget
\$804k



Forecast Operating Result

Year End 2023/24

Favourable to budget \$3k



YTD Operating Result

Favourable to budget
\$176k



Accounts Receivable
Decreased \$20k



\$\$\$

Accounts Payable
Increased \$210k

PROJECTS

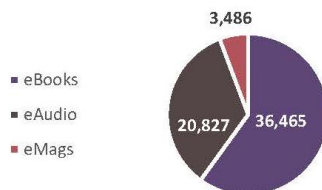
●	On Time, On Budget
●	Delayed
●	Under Evaluation

●	Lalor Library refurbishment
●	Outreach Vehicle fit out
●	Public WiFi Authentication project
●	Records Management

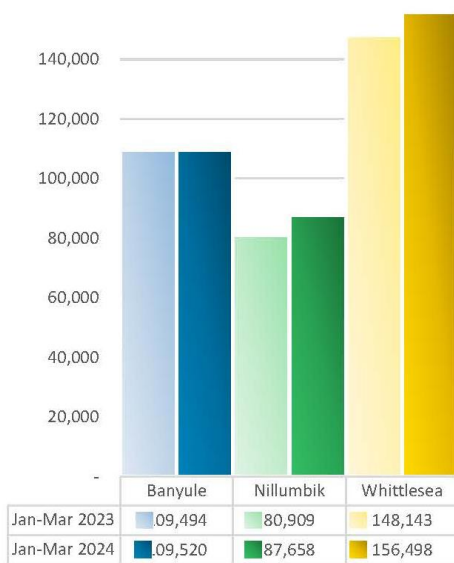
COLLECTION 3.

Total Physical and Digital Collection: 414,454
Total Physical Items: 353,676
Total Digital Items: 60,778
Total Digital Platforms: 23
Recently Purchased Stock: 26,005

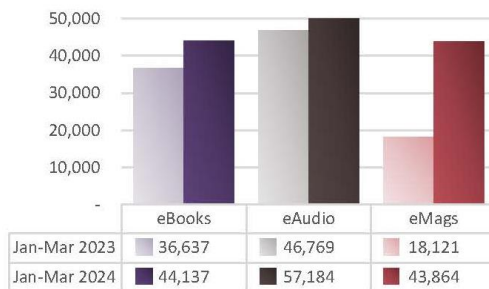
Digital Collection



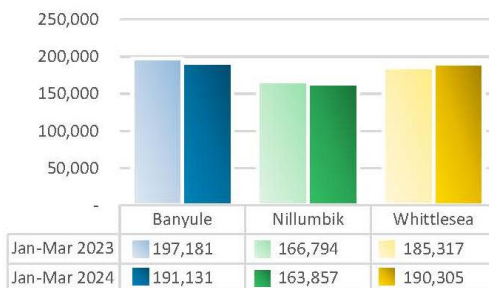
Total Physical Items



Digital Loans



Physical Loans



FOOTNOTES

1. Significant increase in new members is primarily driven by the opening of the new Mernda Library. A total of 17,006 new members were signed up across the region representing a 7.8% increase.
2. We have had 1,056,320 visitors to our branches, an increase of 13% at the end of Q3 compared to the same period in 2023.
3. At the end of Q3 23/24 we've lent 2,076,787 items this FY, an increase of 6.5% on 22/23 lending through to Q3.

OUR ASSETS

2023/2024 Q3: 1 Jan–31 Mar

LOANS

Total Digital Loans: 145,185 (43% increase)
Total Physical Loans: 545,293 (0.7% decrease)
Total Loans: 690,478 (6.09% increase)

Collections Report

22% ↑
 Increase in eAudio loans

20% Increase in eBook loans



11,748

Book Express loans, a new record for any quarter.



15,363 Items lent from Mernda Library



19 First Nation families participating in the Deadly Boorai Early Years Project





20 March 2024

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP
 Minister for Local Government
 101 Douglas Parade
 WILLIAMSTOWN, VIC 3016

Dear Minister

Re: State Government Funding for Public Libraries in Victoria

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) plays a crucial role in providing library services to a population of some 427,000 people across the municipalities of Whittlesea, Nillumbik and Banyule.

Our libraries provide access to knowledge, resources and education, fostering lifelong learning and literacy. They serve as community hubs, offering a safe and inclusive environment supporting social interaction and community connection.

These communities are facing increasing challenges including financial strain, work-study-family balance and escalating energy costs and increasingly they are turning to libraries, not just for borrowing books or using the free wi-fi but as a place of refuge in adverse weather conditions.

At YPRL, we are experiencing significant growth in visitation numbers*, and a growing demand for extended operating hours, expanded online services, increased literacy initiatives, and broader access to resources.

Unfortunately, the recent reduction in Victorian Government funding for library infrastructure presents significant setbacks. Projects aimed at extending, upgrading, or establishing new libraries are now ineligible for support, despite their importance in meeting the growing demand from our community.

We ask the State Government to recognise the essential roles libraries play in our society and prioritise funding support.

Victorian Government funding for public libraries has failed to keep pace with inflation and the escalating demand for services. As we approach the 2024/25 Budget, we seek your support to advocate for improved funding to ensure the sustainability and growth of our library system.

Specifically, we are seeking a \$4.5 million boost to the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program over three years to support necessary refurbishments, digital upgrades, and the replacement of outdated mobile library vehicles.

Library Support Services
 6/1 Danaher Drive
 South Morang VIC 3752

Postal Address
 Bag 65
 Bundoora VIC 3083
 Australia

Enquiries: (03) 9408 7888
 ypmail@ypri.vic.gov.au
 ypri.vic.gov.au
 ABN 20 240 549 119



Additionally, we seek a \$15 million increase to the Public Libraries Funding Program over three years to reverse the decline in state funding. This funding augmentation would enable libraries to meet the evolving needs of Victoria's expanding population, counter inflationary pressures, and facilitate extended operating hours.

Expanding library access hours will ensure that all Victorians have equitable access to essential resources and services. Furthermore, reinstating infrastructure funding will enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities, provide adequate facilities for parents and breastfeeding mothers, and modernise digital infrastructure.

We invite you to visit our library and engage in further discussions regarding the State Budget submission prepared by Public Libraries Victoria on our behalf. For more information or to arrange a meeting, please contact me on mobile 0408 524 460 or jcowell@ypri.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Cowell
Chief Executive Officer
Yarra Plenty Regional Library

* In 2022-23, we had over 1.2 million visitations across our libraries – increasing by more than 76% - from 714,864 visitors in 2021-22. [Yarra Plenty Regional Library Annual Report 2022–2023 \(ypri.vic.gov.au\)](#), page 16.

Agenda Item 3: Proposed Budget 2024/2025 (DECISION)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Luciano Lauronce, Finance and Administration Manager
Attachment:	3. – Proposed Budget 2024/2025

REPORT

SUMMARY

This report is for the Board Member's decision.

INTRODUCTION

The Board is required to approve the Regional Library Service Budget on an annual basis in accordance with Section 127 of the Local Government Act 1989.

REPORT

The proposed 2024/2025 Budget represents a strategic commitment to fiscal responsibility and maintaining high service standards across all Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) Branches. Aligned with the Priority Action Plan 2024/2025 and Regional Library Agreement, this budget reflects our dedication to meeting community needs and advancing our organisational goals.

Total library operating expenditure for 2024/2025 is set at \$19.13 million, making a \$1.07million (5.94%) increase over the 2023/2024 forecast. This growth is primarily attributed to two key areas:

Employee Costs

- An addition of 2.87 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions will support various initiatives, including enhancing visitor experiences at Click & Collect Hubs, ensuring night shift coverage at Banyule and Whittlesea branches, and meeting regulatory requirements for the Mobile Library service. Additionally, key corporate projects such as YPRL business transition and gender equality obligations necessitate additional staffing.
- Other employee cost components are also rising due to adjustments in line with the Enterprise Agreement, changes in superannuation percentages, and updates to the workcover premium scheme.

Materials & Services

- Increment driven by estimated inflationary pressures.
- Additional resources to accommodate increased service levels as well as supporting YPRL Staff.

Capital expenditure for 2024/2025 amounts to \$2.15 million. Although the collections budget remains steady at \$1.65 million, our investment in plant and equipment demonstrates strategic allocation of resources (mainly funded by the Asset Replacement Reserve). This encompasses the continuation of our ongoing renewal program, the enhancement of our Mobile Library trailer, and the rescheduled refurbishment of Thomastown (2023/2024 carry forward).

Income sources primarily comprise two main revenue streams:

State Government Operating Grant

The projected increase in State Government Operating Grant income is expected to reach \$2.91 million, reflecting an anticipated rise of \$70k. This moderate anticipated growth of 2.45% over the 2023/2024 forecast is based on recompense for CPI increases in operating costs. The absence of an increase in this grant in the financial year 2023/2024 has had significant repercussions in subsequent years, particularly considering the compounding effect.

Council Contributions

Budgeted at \$15.52 million, Council Contributions income indicates a \$1.01 million (6.97%) increase from the 2023/2024 forecast. This increment above the rate cap for 2024/2025 is a consequence of funding additional operating requirements and the stagnation in the State Government Operating Grant.

Overall, the projected income for the 2024/2025 budget ensures coverage of operating expenses and partial funding for capital investments during the financial year.

CONSULTATION

The budget has been prepared by the YPRL Finance Manager with input and advice from the Executive Leadership Team.

CRITICAL DATES

The proposed Budget 2024/2025 should be adopted by the Board and provided to the Minister for Local Government by 30 June 2024, following a 4-week public advertising process. The critical steps for the budget process are:

Proposed Budget submitted to the Board for approval	18 April 2024
Budget available for public inspection and comment until 27 May 2024	29 April 2024
Budget and submissions presented to the Board for adoption	27 June 2024
Copy of adopted Budget submitted to the Minister	30 June 2024
Public notice advising adoption of the Budget	1 July 2024

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications are included in the body of the report.

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

Sections 127 and 130 of the Local Government Act (1989) as amended, states that YPRL must prepare a Budget and the Board is required to adopt the Budget on an annual basis.

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

Outcome:

- **Organisational strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

Priorities:

- Governance and technology.
- A resilient and thriving organisation.

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

The proposed 2024/2025 Budget represents a strategic commitment to fiscal responsibility and maintaining high service standards across all Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) Branches. Aligned with the Priority Action Plan 2024/2025 and Regional Library Agreement, this budget reflects our dedication to meeting community needs and advancing our organisational goals. Overall, the projected income for the 2024/2025 budget ensures coverage of operating expenses and partial funding for capital investments during the financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to:

1. **APPROVE the Proposed Budget 2024/2025 for public display.**

M: _____
S: _____

2. **AUTHORISE the Chief Executive Officer to give public notice of the preparation of the Regional Library Corporation Budget in accordance with Section 129 (1) and (3) of the Local Government Act**

M: _____
S: _____

3. Consider any submissions made in accordance with Section 129 (2) of the Local Government Act at the next Board meeting.

M: _____
S: _____

Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Budget
2024/2025

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1. Executive Summary

The proposed 2024/2025 Budget represents a strategic commitment to fiscal responsibility and maintaining high service standards across all Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) Branches. Aligned with the Priority Action Plan 2024/2025 and Regional Library Agreement, this budget reflects our dedication to meeting community needs and advancing our organizational goals.

Total library operating expenditure for 2024/2025 is set at \$19.13 million, making a \$1.07million (5.94%) increase over the 2023/2024 forecast. This growth is primarily attributed to two key areas:

Employee Costs

- An addition of 2.87 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions will support various initiatives, including enhancing visitor experiences at Click & Collect Hubs, ensuring night shift coverage at Banyule and Whittlesea branches, and meeting regulatory requirements for the Mobile Library service. Additionally, key corporate projects such as YPRL business transition and gender equality obligations necessitate additional staffing.
- Other employee cost components are also rising due to adjustments in line with the Enterprise Agreement, changes in superannuation percentages, and updates to the workcover premium scheme.

Materials & Services

- Increment driven by estimated inflationary pressures.
- Additional resources to accommodate increasing service demands as well as supporting YPRL Staff.

Capital expenditure for 2024/2025 amounts to \$2.15 million. Although the collections budget remains steady at \$1.65 million, our investment in plant and equipment demonstrates strategic allocation of resources (mainly funded by the Asset Replacement Reserve). This encompasses the continuation of our ongoing renewal program, the enhancement of our mobile library trailer, and the rescheduled refurbishment of Thomastown (2023/2024 carry forward).

Income sources primarily comprise two main revenue streams:

State Government Operating Grant

The projected increase in State Government Operating Grant income is expected to reach \$2.91 million, reflecting an anticipated rise of \$70k. This moderate anticipated growth of 2.45% over the 2023/2024 forecast is based on recompense for CPI increases in operating costs. The absence of an increase in this grant in the financial year 2023/2024 has had significant repercussions in subsequent years, particularly considering the compounding effect.

Council Contributions

Budgeted at \$15.52 million, Council Contributions income indicates a \$1.01 million (6.97%) increase from the 2023/2024 forecast. This increment above the rate cap for 2024/2025 is a consequence of funding additional operating requirements and the stagnation in the State Government Operating Grant.

Overall, the projected income for the 2024/2025 budget ensures coverage of operating expenses and partial funding for capital investments during the financial year.

2. Budget Process Overview

2.1 Linkage to the Library Plan

YPRL has a comprehensive Library Plan that aligns operational, corporate, and strategic plans to deliver excellent library services for our diverse and multicultural communities. The Library Plan ensures that the budget is developed in response of YPRL priorities over the next 12 months and subsequent three financial years. YPRL’s Board will be held accountable through the Annual Report and the Annual Audited Financial Statements.

2.2 Budget Process

The preparation of the budget begins with senior officers developing the budget in accordance with the Act and regulations, the Library Plan 2021/2025, and the Priority Action Plan 2024/2025. The ‘proposed’ Budget is then submitted to the Board for approval ‘in principle’.

YPRL is then required to give public notice that it intends to adopt the proposed budget. It must give 28 days’ notice of its intention to adopt the proposed budget and make the budget available for inspection. A person has a right to make a submission on any proposal contained in the budget and any submission must be considered before adoption of the budget by the Board. The final step is for the Board to adopt the budget after receiving and considering any submission from interested parties. Please note that YPRL has not received any public submission to the proposed budget in past years.

The budget is required to be adopted by 30 June each year and a copy submitted to the Local Government Minister. The key dates for the 2024/2025 budget process are summarised below:

Proposed Budget submitted to the Board for approval	18 April 2024
Budget available for public inspection and comment until 27 May 2024	29 April 2024
Budget and submissions presented to the Board for adoption	27 June 2024
Copy of adopted Budget submitted to the Minister	30 June 2024
Public notice advising adoption of the Budget	1 July 2024

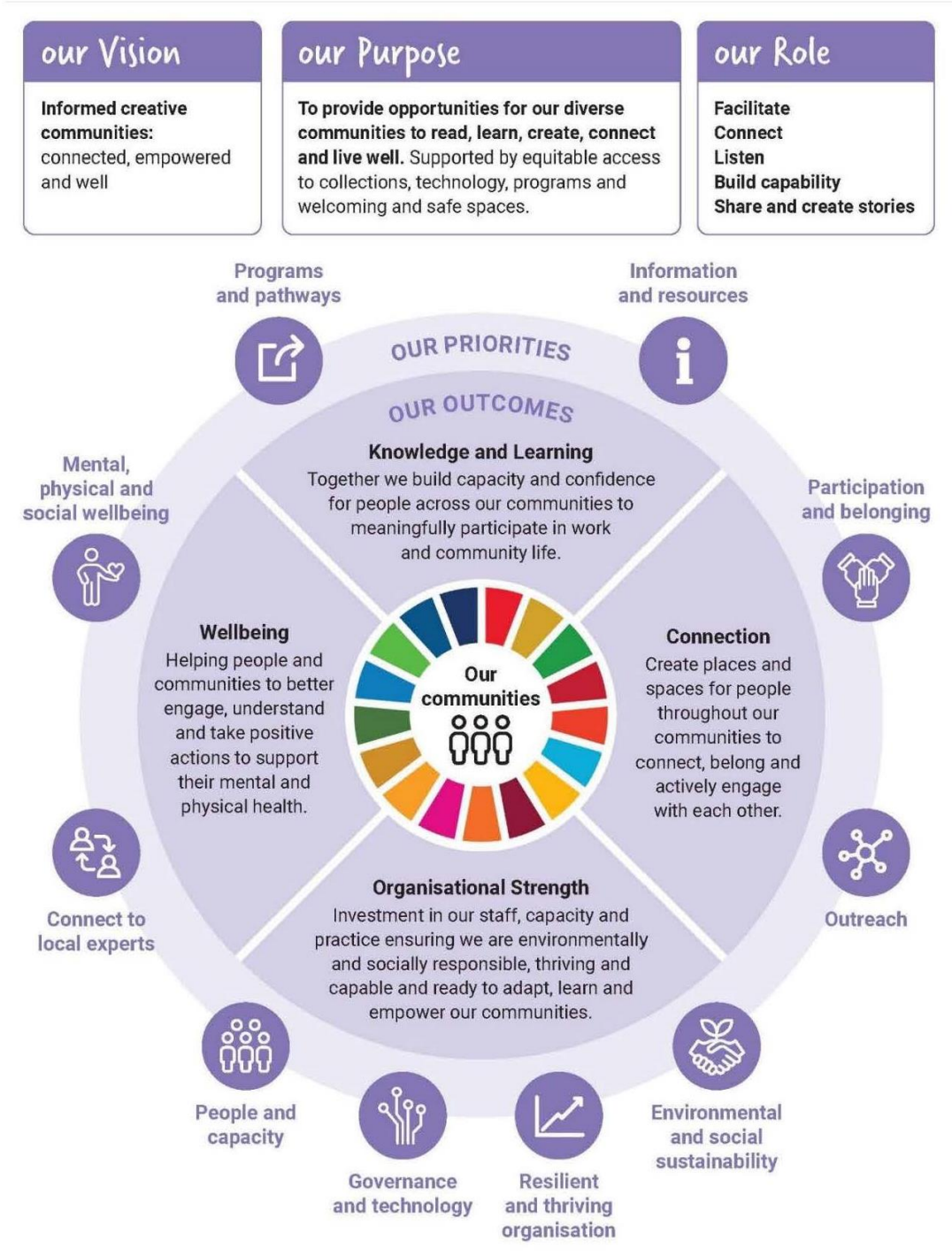
2.3 Budget Influences

The budget was developed based on a number of influences and assumptions, which are likely to impact the funding for delivering YPRL’s services. The most significant factors include the additional of 2.87 FTE to support various initiatives, the rising of employee cost components, the increase in material & services in response to inflationary pressures and to accommodate growing service demands. Furthermore, the implication of stagnation in grant funding from the State Government.

3. Strategic Plan and measuring success

YPRL is committed to implementing and monitoring this strategic plan. To do this, we will use a range of indicators to evaluate progress and performance. These indicators will include the measurement and assessment of our organisational activity, as well as the broader outcomes we contribute to at a community level.

3.1 Our Plan on a Page



3.2 Organisational performance indicators

These indicators tell us about the use and efficacy of our services.

Organisational examples:

- Collections measures, including volume of digital and physical loans and age of the collection.
- Service measures, including the number of members, branch visits, program and events attendance, and computer and Wi-Fi use.
- Library benchmarks, including the costs for service provision.

3.3 Community indicators

These indicators assess a range of community outcomes. In combination, they provide a view on how YPRL is creating a positive impact in our communities. Over the course of this strategic plan, YPRL will look to use existing tools to understand how communities are being positively impacted through our service, alongside exploring and aligning to other outcomes frameworks.

Localised and existing tools:

- Community surveys, including library satisfaction surveys, and program and events feedback.
- Case studies, including stories of our users and how our service has impacted them.

National and International frameworks

Victorian public libraries have committed to embedding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our planning. The SDGs provide a framework to demonstrate how libraries can support positive change, from quality education to reducing inequalities. This helps libraries reflect on and align with other organisations to determine how they can create localised outcomes that contribute to meaningful change for the whole of a nation.

4. Financial Statements

The budget information for the year 2024/2025 has been supplemented with projections to 2027/2028. This section includes the following financial statements prepared in accordance with the Act and regulations:

- Comprehensive Income Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Cash Flows
- Statement of Capital Works
- Statement of Human Resources

4.1 Comprehensive Income Statement

For the four years ending 30 June 2028

	Notes	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	2025/26 \$	Projections 2026/27 \$	2027/28 \$
Income						
Contributions income		2,883,659	2,909,595	2,982,335	3,049,438	3,110,427
Grants - Operating		63,000	0	0	0	0
Grants - Capital		14,503,931	15,515,499	16,673,526	17,161,013	17,619,477
User fees and charges		209,984	239,380	245,365	250,886	255,904
Interest income		270,000	290,000	210,000	180,000	150,000
Other income		191,342	174,125	179,349	184,281	188,888
Total Income	5.1.1	18,121,916	19,128,599	20,290,575	20,825,618	21,324,696
Expenses						
Employee costs		11,620,829	12,380,477	13,331,709	13,665,002	13,972,465
Material and services		4,216,125	4,454,977	4,588,627	4,714,814	4,832,684
Utility charges		1,732,817	1,785,435	1,838,998	1,889,570	1,936,810
Depreciation		82,597	82,597	82,597	82,597	82,597
Amortisation - Right of use		392,738	416,312	441,291	467,768	495,834
Finance costs - leases		10,834	8,800	7,353	5,866	4,306
Total Expenditure	5.1.2	18,055,940	19,128,599	20,290,575	20,825,618	21,324,696
Surplus/(Deficit) of the year		65,976	0	0	0	0
Underlying Surplus/(Deficit) of the year		2,976	0	0	0	0

4.2 Balance Sheet

For the four years ending 30 June 2028

	Notes	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	2025/26 \$	Projections 2026/27 \$	2027/28 \$
Assets						
Cash and cash equivalents		2,831,367	2,530,371	2,646,129	2,766,567	2,891,852
Trade & other receivables		90,738	92,553	94,404	96,292	98,218
Other financial assets		3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Non-financial assets		42,110	42,110	42,110	42,110	42,110
Total Current Assets		5,964,215	5,665,034	5,782,643	5,904,969	6,032,180
Non-Current Assets						
Bookstock, Plant & Equipment		4,846,206	5,209,556	5,154,492	5,097,914	5,039,922
Right of use Assets		495,578	412,981	330,384	247,787	165,190
Total Non-Current Assets		5,341,784	5,622,537	5,484,876	5,345,701	5,205,112
Total Assets	5.2.1	11,305,999	11,287,571	11,267,520	11,250,670	11,237,292
Liabilities						
Current Liabilities						
Trade and Other Payables		685,116	698,818	712,794	727,050	741,591
Current Lease Liabilities		77,893	81,880	86,016	90,303	94,749
Employee Provisions		2,246,273	2,290,075	2,335,876	2,388,434	2,448,144
Total Current Liabilities		3,009,281	3,070,773	3,134,687	3,205,787	3,284,485
Non-Current Liabilities						
Employee Provisions		100,557	102,518	104,568	106,921	109,594
Non-Current Lease Liabilities		478,286	396,406	310,390	220,087	125,338
Total Non-Current Liabilities		578,843	498,924	414,958	327,008	234,932
Total Liabilities	5.2.2	3,588,124	3,569,696	3,549,645	3,532,794	3,519,416
Net Assets		7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875
Equity						
Accumulated Surplus		7,031,370	7,453,370	7,398,306	7,341,728	7,283,736
Reserves		686,505	264,505	319,569	376,147	434,139
Total Equity		7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875	7,717,875

4.3 Statement of Cash Flows

For the four years ending 30 June 2028

Notes	Forecast 2023/24 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$	Budget 2024/25 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$	2025/26 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$	Projections 2026/27 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$	2027/28 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$
Cash flows from operating activities					
	14,503,931	15,515,499	16,673,526	17,161,013	17,619,477
	2,883,659	2,909,595	2,982,335	3,049,438	3,110,427
	208,205	237,565	243,514	248,998	253,978
	270,000	290,000	210,000	180,000	150,000
	191,342	174,125	179,349	184,281	188,888
	(11,574,813)	(12,334,714)	(13,283,858)	(13,610,092)	(13,910,081)
	(4,594,800)	(4,857,587)	(5,015,941)	(5,168,326)	(5,313,978)
Net cash provided by operating activities	1,887,524	1,934,483	1,988,925	2,045,312	2,098,712
Cash flows from investing activities					
	(2,373,233)	(2,148,785)	(1,783,934)	(1,832,992)	(1,878,817)
	-	-	-	-	-
Net cash used in investing activities	(2,373,233)	(2,148,785)	(1,783,934)	(1,832,992)	(1,878,817)
Cash flows from financing activities					
	(10,834)	(8,800)	(7,353)	(5,866)	(4,306)
	(84,076)	(77,893)	(81,880)	(86,016)	(90,303)
Net cash used in financial activities	(94,910)	(86,693)	(89,233)	(91,882)	(94,609)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	(580,619)	1,005	115,758	120,437	125,286
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	3,411,986	2,530,367	2,531,371	2,647,129	2,767,567
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	2,831,367	2,531,371	2,647,129	2,767,567	2,892,852

4.4 Statement of Capital Works

For the four years ending 30 June 2028

	Notes	Forecast	Budget	Projections		
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Bookstock		1,556,233	1,651,785	1,701,339	1,748,125	1,791,828
Plant & Equipment		817,000	497,000	82,596	84,867	86,989
Total Capital Expenditure	5.4.1	2,373,233	2,148,785	1,783,934	1,832,992	1,878,817

Capital expenditure – Funding sources

	Budget	Asset	Council's
	2024/25	Replacement	Contributions
	\$	Reserve (*)	2024/25
	\$	\$	\$
Bookstock	1,651,785	-	1,651,785
Mobile library trailer improvement works	120,000	120,000	-
Ongoing plant and equipment renewal plan	75,000	-	75,000
Thomastown refurbishment (2023/2024 carry forward project)	302,000	302,000	-
Grand Total	2,148,785	422,000	1,726,785

(*) The Asset Replacement Reserve forecast for 30 June 2024 is \$686k.

4.5 Statement of Human Resources

For the four years ending 30 June 2028

	Forecast	Budget	Projections		
	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Staff expenditure	\$11,620,829	\$12,380,477	\$13,331,709	\$13,665,002	\$13,972,465
Full-time equivalent staff	105.03	107.09	111.76	111.76	111.76

5. Notes to the Financial Statements

This section presents detailed information on material components of the financial statements. YPRL assesses which components are material, considering the dollar amounts and nature of these components.

5.1 Comprehensive Income Statement Notes

5.1.1 Income

Income is based on Council Contributions, Grants (primarily State Government Grants), Library Fees and charges, Interest income and Other income.

	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	Change %	Change \$
Grants - Operating	2,883,659	2,909,595	0.90%	25,936
Grants - Capital	63,000	0	(100.00%)	(63,000)
Contributions income	14,503,931	15,515,499	6.97%	1,011,568
User fees and charges	209,984	239,380	14.00%	29,396
Interest income	270,000	290,000	7.41%	20,000
Other income	191,342	174,125	-9.00%	-17,217
Total Income	18,121,916	19,128,599	5.56%	1,006,683

Grants – Operating

The estimated increment of the State Government grant is 2.45% against the 2023/2024 forecast. This moderate anticipated growth is based on recompense for CPI increases in operating costs. The absence of an increase in this grant in the financial year 2023/2024 has had significant repercussions in subsequent years, particularly considering the compounding effect.

Other operating grants received in the financial year 2023/2024 are considered non-recurring, and as such, are not anticipated to continue into the 2024/2025 year.

	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	Change %	Change \$
State Government Grant	2,840,027	2,909,595	2.45%	69,568
Middle Years Program Grant	27,000	0	(100.00%)	(27,000)
Local History Grant	14,882	0	(100.00%)	(14,882)
Healthy Bodies/Minds Grant	1,250	0	(100.00%)	(1,250)
16 Days AGV Grant	500	0	(100.00%)	(500)
Total Grants - Operating	2,883,659	2,909,595	0.90%	25,936

Grants – Capital

The State Government Living Libraries Infrastructure Program awarded a non-recurring grant to YPRL for replacing the 16-year-old outreach vehicle.

Contributions Income - Council Contributions

The Member Council contributions are based on the cost apportionment model detailed in the YPRL Library Agreement (November 2015). The overall increase from the 2023/2024 forecast is \$1.01m (or 6.97%). This increment above the rate cap for 204/2025 is a consequence of funding additional operating requirements and the stagnation in the State Government Operating Grant.

	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	Change %	Change \$
Banyule	5,662,325	6,046,726	6.79%	384,401
Nillumbik	3,077,341	3,197,205	3.90%	119,864
Whittlesea	5,764,265	6,271,568	8.80%	507,303
Total Council Contributions	14,503,931	15,515,499	6.97%	1,011,568

Other Income Streams

YPRL's other income streams are projected to rise by \$32k (4.79%) from the 2023/2024 forecast. User fees and charges are set to increase by an average of 3%, which is below the expected CPI of 3.50%. Additionally, the economic environment remains favourable for the return of term deposit investments. However, these positive variances are offset by income sources that are not expected to persist into 2024/2025.

	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	Change %	Change \$
User fees and charges	209,984	239,380	14.00%	29,396
Interest income	270,000	290,000	7.41%	20,000
Other income	191,342	174,125	(9.00%)	(17,217)
Total other income	671,326	703,505	4.79%	32,179

5.1.2 Expenditure

The operating expenditure budgeted for 2024/25 is based on the following key drivers:

- An increase of FTE to support various initiatives. This includes enhancing visitor experiences at Click & Collect Hubs, ensuring night shift coverage at Banyule and Whittlesea branches, and meeting regulatory requirements for the Mobile Library service. Additionally, key corporate projects such as YPRL business transition and gender equality obligations necessitate additional staffing.
- Estimated impact of inflation (3.50%).
- Quantum increase in employee costs as per Enterprise Agreement and the change in the superannuation percentage.
- The resources required to meet the expectation of our community for high quality services.

	Forecast 2023/24 \$	Budget 2024/25 \$	Change %	Change \$
Employee costs	11,620,829	12,380,477	6.54%	759,648
Material and services	4,216,125	4,454,977	5.67%	238,852
Depreciation	1,732,817	1,785,435	3.04%	52,618
Amortisation - Right of use	82,597	82,597	0.00%	0
Utility charges	392,738	416,312	6.00%	23,574
Finance costs - leases	10,834	8,800	(18.77%)	(2,034)
Total Operating Expenditure	18,055,940	19,128,599	5.94%	1,072,659

Employee Cost

The increment of \$760k or 6.54% comparing to forecast 2023/2024 is due to:

	FTE Growth	Budget Impact
Increment of FTE to support various initiatives. This includes enhancing visitor experiences at Click & Collect Hubs, ensuring night shift coverage at Banyule and Whittlesea branches, and meeting regulatory requirements for the Mobile Library service. Additionally, key corporate projects such as YPRL business transition and gender equality obligations necessitate additional staffing.	2.86	\$371k
Enterprise Agreement increment, band level progression – to reflect the quantum increases as per Enterprise Agreement (1.95%) and the band level progression of staff.	0.00	\$226k
Superannuation rate increment to 11.50% – to meet legislative requirements	0.00	\$52k
2023/2024 savings – YPRL’s prudent management took a proactive approach to offset the lack of increase in the State Government’s grant income and the changes in the workcover premium scheme.	0.00	\$111k
Total EFT/Impact	2.86	\$760k

Materials and services

Materials and services are expected to increase by \$239k (5.66%). The key movements within materials and services are:

	Budget 2022/23 \$	Budget 2023/24 \$	Change %	Change \$
Information Technology services, small value leases, and licenses costs	1,133,697	1,173,376	3.50%	39,679
Collection content costs	848,180	877,866	3.50%	29,686
Cleaning costs	558,934	602,671	7.83%	43,737
Collection processing costs	477,155	493,855	3.50%	16,700
Staff/Volunteers training, recruitment, and health & safety costs	202,035	233,006	15.33%	30,971
Courier and postage costs	177,882	238,350	33.99%	60,468
Program costs	179,853	158,584	(11.83%)	(21,269)
Building maintenance costs	80,749	80,601	(0.18%)	(148)
Initiatives costs	106,942	106,942	0.00%	0
Consultancy costs	99,417	111,794	12.45%	12,377
Printing, stationary, and external communications	98,861	102,321	3.50%	3,460
Other Material and services costs	85,758	88,760	3.50%	3,002
Insurances	62,747	69,247	10.36%	6,500
Equipment and motor vehicle maintenance costs	59,979	60,032	0.09%	53
Auditing service costs	27,000	39,000	44.44%	12,000
Bank services	13,740	15,240	10.92%	1,500
Legal expenses	3,220	3,333	3.50%	113
Total Operating Expenditure	4,216,149	4,454,977	5.66%	238,828

Utility charges

Linked to the network costs, utility charges are expected to rise by 6%.

Depreciation

The increase in depreciation expense is the result of the increment on capital expenditure.

Amortisation – Right of use and Finance costs - leases

The reduction in amortisation and finance costs expenses is due to the end of the servers' lease contract.

5.2 Balance Sheet Notes

5.2.1 Total Assets

Total assets include current assets, assets that can reasonably expect to be converted into cash within one year, and non-current assets. While maintaining a solid cash and cash equivalent position, total assets are slightly decreasing due to the amortisation of Right of use Assets (leased assets).

5.2.2 Total Liabilities

Total liabilities include current liabilities, debts or obligations that are due to be paid to creditors within one year, and non-current liabilities. The decrease in total liabilities is mainly driven by the repayment of the lease liabilities in the financial year.

5.3 Statement of Cash Flows Notes

5.3.1 Net cash provided by operating activities

Net cash provided by operating activities is expected to remain stable for year 2024/2025 and the three subsequent financial years to 2027/2028.

5.3.2 Net cash used in investing activities

Net cash used in investing activities is the result of the funding requirement to support the investment in bookstock, and plant and equipment.

5.3.3 Net cash used in financial activities

Net cash used in financial activities is the result of the repayment of YPRL lease obligations.

5.4 Statement of Capital Works Notes

Collection budget, Bookstock, provides \$1.65M to be spent on the procurement of physical collection items such as adult, junior and teen books, DVDs, and CDs. The proposed collection budget equates 2023/2024 budget as per the temporary closure of the Rosanna Branch.

The Collections Asset Strategic Framework articulates a rationale, priorities, and targets for the YPRL's collection from a service provision. The four focus areas which underpin the Framework are:

- Current and relevant collections
- Optimised access
- Curated collections
- Ensured sustainability

The 2024/2025 Collections budget represents the minimum required to deliver the actions described in the Framework.

Plant & equipment budget of \$497k will be allocated as follows:

	Budget 2023/24 \$
Mobile library trailer improvement works	120,000
Ongoing plant and equipment renewal plan	75,000
2023/2024 Thomastown carry forward project	302,000
Total Plant & Equipment	497,000

6. Financial Performance Indicators

The financial indicators are used as a guide to assess YPRL financial position and performance. These indicators are:

Indicator	Calculation	Description	Target
Working Capital	Current assets/current liabilities	Measures the ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months. A ratio of one or more means that an entity has more cash and liquid assets than short-term liabilities.	1.30
Underlying Result	Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)/adjusted underlying revenue	Measures the ability to generate surplus in the ordinary course of business, excluding non-recurrent capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions and other contributions, to fund capital expenditure from its net result.	\$0.00
Investment Gap	Renewal and upgrade expenditure/depreciation	This compares the rate of spending on renewing, restoring, and replacing existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate that spending on existing assets is faster than the depreciation rate.	0.90

Overall, for the years up to 2027/2028, YPRL continues to be financially sound reflecting the ongoing commitment of Member Councils.

Financial Indicators	Forecast 2023/24	Budget 2024/25	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Budget 2027/28
Working Capital	1.98	1.84	1.84	1.84	1.84
Underlying Result	\$3k	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Investment Gap	1.37	1.20	0.97	0.97	0.97

Venue hire - Fees & charges

Venues	Capacity	Seniors Citizens		Community Groups		Private Groups	
		Hourly \$	Full day rate (8hrs) \$	Hourly \$	Full day rate (8hrs) \$	Hourly \$	Full day rate (8hrs) \$
Ivanhoe							
Yarra-me Djila Theatrette	80	16.00	96.00	40.00	239.00	80.00	478.00
Meeting room 1.34	10	590.00	35.00	10.00	58.00	20.00	115.00
Wilim Ngarrgu 1.39	54	8.50	50.50	34.50	166.00	69.00	414.00
Wilim Ngarrgu 1.40	54	8.50	50.50	34.50	166.00	69.00	414.00
Combined	110	16.00	96.00	40.00	239.00	81.00	492.00
IT Lounge 2.27	17	Free	N/A	Free	N/A	37.00	N/A
Tom Roberts Room	14	6.00	35.00	18.50	111.50	37.00	222.50
Clara Southern Room	14	6.00	35.00	18.50	111.50	37.00	222.50
Nellie Ibbott Chamber	60	8.50	50.50	34.50	166.00	69.00	414.00
Thomastown							
Community room 1	40	6.00	35.00	24.50	136.00	47.50	278.00
Community room 2	25	6.00	35.00	18.50	111.50	37.00	222.50
Community room 1 & 2	70	8.50	50.50	34.50	166.00	69.00	414.00
Computer room	16	Free	N/A	Free	N/A	37.00	N/A
Diamond Valley							
Community room	20	6.00	35.00	18.50	111.50	37.00	222.50
Watsonia							
Community room	25	6.00	35.00	18.50	111.50	37.00	222.50
Mill Park							
Computer room	16	Free	N/A	Free	N/A	37.00	N/A

Venue hire – Other fees & charges

Description	Fees & Charges
Deposit - Community and Seniors groups	\$150
Deposit - Commercial and individual	\$300
Support staff - Theatre Tech	Provided on application
Support staff - IT	Provided on application
Support staff - Catering	Provided on application
After hours event	Provided on application
Security staff	Provided on application
Catering	Provided on application
Venue damages	Variable

Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Plenty Regional Library acknowledges the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation, the traditional owners of this Country, paying respect to Elders past, present, and emerging, who have been an integral part of the region's history. We acknowledge the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the right to self-determination in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect. We support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Recognition of Diversity and Inclusion

Yarra Plenty Regional Library is committed to equality, inclusivity, and respect. We welcome and respect everyone in our communities irrespective of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, or generation.

www.yprl.vic.gov.au

Agenda Item 4: Quarterly Finance Report March 2024 (NOTING)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Luciano Lauronce, Finance and Administration Manager
Attachment:	4a – Balance Sheet March 2024 4b – Cash Flow Statement March 2024

REPORT

SUMMARY

This report is for Board Members' information.

INTRODUCTION

The March 2024 Quarterly Financial Report presents YPRL's operating result and capital expenditure financial performance against budget and includes the following financial statements:

- Balance Sheet (attached)
- Statement of Cash Flows (attached)

REPORT

Operating Result

As of 31 March 2024, YPRL has achieved a \$935k underlying operating surplus. This result compares favourably to the YTD budget by \$176k. Furthermore, the year-end underlying forecast compares slightly favourable to the annual budget by \$3k. This is the result of prudent and proactive budget management to address unfavourable budget pressures.

March 2024 Financial Quarterly Report

Operating Result

	YTD Actuals	YTD Budget	YTD Variance	Annual Budget	Annual Forecast	Forecast Variance	Note
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income							
Grants - Operating	2,883,659	2,895,683	(12,024)	2,895,683	2,883,659	(12,024)	1
Grants - Capital	0	150,000	(150,000)	150,000	63,000	(87,000)	2
Contributions income	10,877,948	10,877,946	2	14,503,931	14,503,931	0	
User fees and charges	156,435	179,256	(22,821)	234,984	209,984	(25,000)	3
Interest income	238,808	157,500	81,308	210,000	270,000	60,000	4
Other revenue	148,340	118,609	29,731	156,342	191,342	35,000	5
Total Income	14,305,190	14,378,994	(73,804)	18,150,940	18,121,916	(29,024)	
Expenses							
Employee costs	(8,688,671)	(8,742,316)	53,645	(11,670,829)	(11,620,829)	50,000	6
Material and services	(3,068,990)	(3,111,276)	42,286	(4,111,125)	(4,216,125)	(105,000)	7
Depreciation/Amortisation expense	(1,361,562)	(1,361,562)	0	(1,815,414)	(1,815,414)	0	
Utility charges	(241,949)	(246,495)	4,546	(392,738)	(392,738)	0	
Finance costs - leases	(8,630)	(8,127)	(503)	(10,834)	(10,834)	0	
Total Expenses	(13,369,802)	(13,469,776)	99,974	(18,000,940)	(18,055,940)	(55,000)	
Accounting Surplus (Deficit)	935,388	909,218	26,170	150,000	65,976	(84,024)	
Underlying Surplus (Deficit)	935,388	759,218	176,170	0	2,976	2,976	

Notes:

1. The absence of a rise in the State Government's operating grant for 2023/2024, in contrast to the budgeted amount, led to a shortfall of \$56k. This negative impact has been offset by supplementary grants secured by YPRL. However, these additional funds will be entirely absorbed by the associated costs required to fulfill the commitments of those grants.
2. Capital grant, Living Library Infrastructure Grant, partially recognised as income in the financial year 2022/2023.
3. Lower income than budgeted from photocopy fees because of the roll-out of new printers and a reduction in public printing.
4. Additional interest income as interest rate levels continues to favour YPRL investment returns.
5. Workcover reimbursement income offsets unfavourable employee cost variance and additional income from consultancy services to external organisations.
6. YPRL's prudent management took a proactive approach to offset the lack of increase in the State Government's grant income and additional materials and services expenses.
7. Additional resources required due to high visitation rates at branches and the associated costs to meet the supplementary grants commitments.

Capital Expenditure

As of 31 March 2024, overall capital expenditure totals \$1.15m. Compared to budget, YTD and year-end forecast variances are favourable by \$803k and \$478k, respectively.

March 2024 Financial Quarterly Report**Capital Expenditure**

	YTD Actuals	YTD Budget	YTD Variance	Annual Budget	Annual Forecast	Forecast Variance	Note
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	
Capital Expenditure							
Bookstock	1,074,021	1,203,315	129,294	1,646,233	1,556,233	90,000	8
Plant and Equipment	74,228	748,753	674,525	1,205,000	817,000	388,000	9
Total Capital Expenditure	1,148,250	1,952,068	803,818	2,851,233	2,373,233	478,000	

Notes:

8. YPRL Collections Team anticipates delays in the delivery of certain themed collection items. Nonetheless, the team is actively collaborating with suppliers to fulfill budget commitments by selecting alternative themes when necessary.

9. The year-to-date (YTD) variance is primarily attributed to the reschedule of refurbishment works at both Lalor and Thomastown branches. Refurbishment works at Lalor are scheduled to commence during the months of April and May, whereas those at Thomastown will run into the next financial year. As a result, the year-end forecast variance aligns with the delay in Thomastown's refurbishment and the acquisition of the outreach vehicle in the 2022/2023.

Investment performance

YPRL continues to maximise the allocation of funds in “at call” and “term” deposits and achieve the best investment result in the current macroeconomic conditions.

The YTD investment performance for the current financial year was:

- Interest income (accrual basis): \$239k
- Average investment return: 4.70% pa (per annum)
- Average 3-month Bank Bill Swap Rate (BBSW) midpoint average: 4.28%
- Average RBA's cash rate: 4.35% pa
- Weighted average investment duration: 117 days
- Counterparty: Commonwealth Bank Australia

As of 31 March 2024, the investment asset allocation comprises:

At call deposits

- Allocation: \$1.00m
- Interest rate: 4.35% pa

Term deposits

- Allocation: \$6.50m
- Average interest rate: 4.88%
- Average 3-month Bank Bill Swap Rate (BBSW) midpoint average: 4.28%
- RBA's cash rate: 4.35% pa
- Average maturity: 139 days
- Counterparty: Commonwealth Bank Australia

Financial Position

YPRL, as of 31 March 2024, continues to remain financially sound and maintain a strong liquidity position with a working capital ratio, which assesses YPRL's ability to current commitments, of 2.49 (1.3, YPRL's target).

CONSULTATION

Consultation was held with the Executive Managers during the preparation of this report.

CRITICAL DATES

N/A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications are included in the body of the report.

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

Section 138 of the Local Government Act (1989) as amended states that a quarterly finance report is to be presented.

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

Outcome:

- **Organisational strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

Priorities:

- Governance and technology
- Environmental and social sustainability

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

As of 31 March 2024, YPRL has achieved a \$935k underlying operating surplus and overall capital expenditure totals \$1.15m. Compared to Budget 2023/2024, year-end underlying result and total capital expenditure forecast variances are favourable to budget.

YPRL continues to remain financially sound and maintain a strong liquidity position with a working capital ratio of 2.49 (1.3, YPRL's target).

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and NOTE the Quarterly Finance Report March 2024.

M: _____

S: _____

March 2024 Financial Quarterly Report

Balance Sheet

	Jun 2023	Mar 2024	YTD Variance
	\$	\$	\$
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,411,986	1,139,649	(2,272,337)
Trade & Other Receivables	88,959	68,904	(20,055)
Other financial assets	3,000,000	6,500,000	3,500,000
Other Assets	42,110	34,999	(7,111)
Total Current Assets	6,543,055	7,743,552	1,200,497
Non-Current Assets			
Bookstock, Plant & Equipment	4,205,790	4,053,477	(152,313)
Right of use Assets	578,175	517,175	(61,000)
Total Non-Current Assets	4,783,965	4,570,653	(213,312)
Total Assets	11,327,020	12,314,204	987,184
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and Other Payables	734,053	944,136	210,083
Current Lease Liabilities	84,076	80,872	(3,204)
Employee Provisions – Current	2,202,228	2,087,292	(114,936)
Total Current Liabilities	3,020,357	3,112,301	91,944
Non Current Liabilities			
Employee Provisions – Non Current	98,585	119,548	20,963
Non Current Lease Liabilities	556,179	495,068	(61,111)
Total Non-Current Liabilities	654,764	614,616	(40,148)
Total Liabilities	3,675,121	3,726,917	51,796
Net Assets	7,651,899	8,587,288	935,389
Equity			
Accumulated Surplus	6,277,394	7,212,783	935,389
Reserves	1,374,505	1,374,505	(0)
Total Equity	7,651,899	8,587,288	935,389

March 2024 Financial Quarterly Report

Statement of Cash Flows

	Mar 2023 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$	Mar 2024 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Contributions income	10,324,908	10,877,948
Grants - Operating	2,875,427	2,883,659
Grants - Capital	87,629	0
User fees and charges	150,674	156,435
Interest income	94,364	172,851
Unearned Income (Grants - Capital)	62,371	0
Other income	168,716	148,340
Payments to employees	(8,326,131)	(8,688,671)
Materials & Services and other payments	(3,449,423)	(3,101,705)
Net cash provided by operating activities	1,988,535	2,448,857
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for library books, plant and equipment	(1,445,537)	(1,148,250)
Investments (payments)/redemptions	2,000,000	(3,500,000)
Net cash used in investing activities	554,463	(4,648,250)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Interest paid – lease liability	(9,095)	(8,630)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(75,939)	(64,315)
Net cash used in financial activities	(85,034)	(72,945)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	2,457,964	(2,272,337)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	4,351,250	3,411,986
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	6,809,214	1,139,649

Agenda Item 5: OHS Policy (DECISION)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Rob Green, Executive Manager Corporate Services
Attachment:	5 – YPRL OHS Policy 2024

REPORT

SUMMARY

This report is for the Board Member's decision as part of the 12 monthly review process.

INTRODUCTION

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace and developing and maintaining a robust occupational health and safety management system in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. YPRL's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy forms the foundation of YPRL's OHS Manual which includes all YPRL OHS policies and procedures.

YPRL has an established OHS management system which is made up of the following elements:

1. Policies, procedures and planning
2. Incident reporting
3. OHS Committee
4. Training and development
5. Workcover management

The OHS Policy provides the framework for YPRL's OHS management systems and is reviewed annually.

REPORT

A significant review and update of the OHS Policy was undertaken in 2018 to strengthen the policy framework and support YPRL's continued commitment to health and safety. The last update to this policy was June 2023 and therefore there are only a few updates.

This OHS Policy review has included the correction of several minor grammatical changes and no further legislation updates.

The OHS Policy provides information and direction about YPRL's:

- OHS policy position;
- OHS management system;
- Consultation and communication between workers and managers;
- The role and function of Health and Safety Representatives;
- The role and function of the OHS Committee;
- OHS training;
- OHS purchasing controls;

- OHS risk management; and
- OHS issue resolution.

The OHS Policy forms the foundation of YPRL's OHS manual which also contains all OHS related procedures.

CONSULTATION

The OHS policy has been reviewed by the Executive Manager Corporate Services and YPRL's OHS Committee. The Executive Leadership Team, Branch Managers and staff have also been consulted through the policy review. Benchmarking has been undertaken with Nillumbik Council and three other Library Trusts including Whitehorse Manningham, MYLI and Geelong.

CRITICAL DATES

N/A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

This policy is connected to sixteen Acts/Regulations listed within the Related Legislation section and an annual policy review strategy.

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

Outcome:

- **Organisational strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

Priorities:

- Governance and technology
- Environmental and social sustainability

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

Approving the updated Policy will allow YPRL to stay on track with the appropriate and 'best practice' procedures related to a positive OHS culture. It also demonstrates YPRL as a 'Safety First Culture'.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and APPROVE the minor updates to the OHS policy.

M: _____

S: _____

Policy Adopted by YPRL Board	
Policy Name	Occupational Health and Safety Policy
Version number	5.00
Policy date	April 2024
Date to be reviewed	April 2025 or earlier due to legislative changes
Responsibility	CEO
Related YPRL Policies and Procedures	Equal Employment Opportunity Anti-Discrimination Bullying and Sexual Harassment Policy Complaint Resolution Procedure Emergency Procedures Employee Assistance Program Procedure Employee Code of Conduct OHS Manual Performance Improvement Disciplinary Policy Responsible Conduct (Public) Policy and Procedure

Purpose

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is firmly committed to:

- Developing and maintaining a culture that encourages workers to actively manage health, wellbeing, and safety hazards and risks;
- Providing a shared responsibility for health, wellbeing, and safety. Everyone has a duty of care for their own safety and for the safety of others.
- Engaging with workers in creating safe working environments and safe systems of work;
- Take all necessary and practical steps to provide and maintain a healthy and safe workplace environment.

Our Commitments

- We are committed to all our work activities being carried out safely, and with all possible measures taken to remove (or at least reduce) risks to the health and safety of workers, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and anyone else who may be affected by our operations.
- We are committed to ensuring we comply with the relevant legislation, regulations, and applicable Codes of Practice and Australian Standards.
- We will aim to engage and consult with all workers and others involved with our business to ensure hazards are identified and the risks associated with them removed or reduced to the greatest degree.
- We have a workplace environment where workers and others involved with our business are encouraged and supported to raise health and safety issues and help reduce and manage them.

Scope

This policy applies to all YPRL Employees. This includes employees, volunteers, placement students and relevant contractors.

Related Legislation

Accident Compensation Act 1985
Accident Compensation (Occupational Health and Safety) Act 1996
Age Discrimination Act 2004
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
Equal Opportunity Act 2010
Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994
Equipment (Public Safety) Regulations 2017
Fair Work Act 2009
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (amended July 2022)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Sex Discrimination Act 1984
Vic Compliance Codes and codes of practice
Workers Compensation Act 1958
Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013
Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Regulations 2014

Definitions

A **Worker** includes employees, contractors and sub-contractors and their employees, labour hire employees, apprentices and trainees, work experience students and volunteers.

A **Health and Safety Representative (HSR)** is a worker elected by members of their work group to represent them in health and safety matters.

Policy

YPRL aims to achieve a safe work environment that eliminates unsafe work practices and conditions from the workplace. Our commitment to health and safety will be fulfilled by ensuring we:

- Maintain an OHS management system that facilitates a structured approach to the management of workplace hazards and risk;
- Provide appropriate OHS training for our workers, and ensure our people are informed of, and understand their responsibilities, and demonstrate commitment to accountability and leadership in health and safety;
- Promote active participation and recognise the value of involving workers in OHS consultation and decision making;
- Assess all risks before work starts on new areas of operation, for example, buying new equipment and setting up new work methods and processes, and locations; and vehicles
- Actively identify and manage OHS risks, through the systematic identification of hazards, evaluation of risks and implementation of effective risk controls;
- Promptly report hazards, incidents, near misses and injuries;
- Conduct thorough investigations where appropriate, and implement control measures to eliminate or minimise the risk of reoccurrence;

- Actively prevent injuries and illness to our workers and provide effective and supportive injury management programs;
- Comply with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations and any other relevant requirements, statutory acts, regulations, and legislation;
- Allocate adequate resources to plan for and maintain a safe, healthy, and supportive working environment;
- Measure, monitor and review the effectiveness of OHS performance.

Occupational Health and Safety Management System

YPRL uses an OHS management system that facilitates a structured approach to the elimination, reduction and management of workplace hazards and risk, that:

- Identifies workplace hazards;
- Assesses risks to health & safety from those hazards; and
- Implements appropriate measures to control those risks

YPRL's OHS management system is made up of the following elements:

- Policies, procedures, and planning
- Incident reporting
- OHS Committee
- Training and Development
- Workcover Management

This system will provide written procedures and instructions to ensure safe systems of work.

Consultation and Communication

YPRL acknowledges that the best health and safety outcomes will be achieved through open communication and cooperation between workers and managers. Therefore, workers are encouraged to:

- Ask questions relating to OHS
- Bring up safety concerns
- Make recommendations regarding OHS
- Give regular feedback
- Become involved in the evaluation of safety issues
- Participate in OHS related problem-solving processes

It is important that workers help shape decisions about health and safety particularly when:

- Identifying hazards and assessing risks
- Making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those hazards or risks
- Proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of workers
- Purchasing of new equipment, furniture, or products
- Developing or changing job tasks or safety procedures

All workers are encouraged to raise any work health and safety concerns that they may have with their Manager and/or Health and Safety Representative.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSR)

HSRs are elected by members of a work group to represent their interests in work health and safety matters. HSRs must undertake approved training to exercise their powers and may:

- Consult with workers on a regular basis
- Inspect a work area as required
- Participate in workplace incident investigations as required
- Participate in change management discussions that may affect the health and safety of workers
- Provide advice to managers on the health & safety of workers in their work group.

Occupational Health and Safety Committee

The OHS Committee provides the forum for constructive discussion of measures to improve health and safety in the workplace. At YPRL the OHS Committee meets bi-monthly and:

- Facilitates cooperation between YPRL and workers in the instigation, development, and implementation of OHS policies and procedures
- Assists in developing standards, rules and procedures relating to health and safety
- Consults with workers regarding their health and safety concerns
- Consults with management regarding work health and safety concerns including change that may influence workplace health and safety more broadly
- Ensures the conduct of regular workplace inspections

Approved minutes of the latest OHS Committee meeting will be made available for all workers to view.

Training

YPRL will arrange for appropriate health and safety training to be undertaken by workers as required.

Where required, YPRL workers are to demonstrate their competencies to perform required tasks safely.

Purchasing Controls

To ensure that new uncontrolled risks are not brought into the workplace, the Manager recommending a purchase must make certain that any new equipment, furniture, or products are safe and have prior approval from an HSR prior to ordering. Any risks associated with new equipment, furniture or products must be understood and controlled before they are introduced into the workplace.

Risk Management

YPRL must ensure OHS hazards are routinely identified, in consultation with relevant persons, including reviewing existing workplace hazards and new hazards that may be introduced when work practices change.

The purpose of any health and safety risk assessment is to ensure that, for any identified hazards, appropriate control measures are implemented in order to protect workers and visitors from risks to their health, safety, and wellbeing.

Control measures for workplace health and safety hazards should be implemented as required using the following hierarchy of control. In order of preference these measures relate to:

1. Elimination (removal of the hazard)
2. Substitution (substitute the hazard for something which is less hazardous)
3. Isolation (isolate the hazard from people)
4. Engineering control (redesigning the plant or work process to reduce the risk)
5. Administrative control (provision of training, policies and procedures, signage)
6. PPE (protect the worker with appropriate PPE)

Outcomes of risk assessments will be documented and shared, the control measures reviewed at least annually or earlier should a task or activity be the subject of a workplace incident or a change process or requirement. Current risk assessments will ensure that YPRL achieves the goal of eliminating or minimising the risk to the health and safety workers may be exposed to.

Specific procedures to manage workplace risks are in the OHS Manual.

Occupational Health and Safety Issue Resolution

Wherever possible, any OHS concerns will be resolved through consultation between workers, their representatives and/or their manager. If the concern cannot be resolved, then it can be referred to their Executive Leadership Team Manager for resolution. Ultimately any issue remaining unresolved may be referred to the CEO. Where the issue remains unresolved any party may refer the issue to WorkSafe Victoria.

Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- Ensuring YPRL complies with relevant legislation and regulations through delegation to, and regular liaison with, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the OHS Committee
- Reviewing OHS performance of the organisation in conjunction with the ELT
- Determining the OHS performance measures of ELT, monitoring those measures and reviewing them as part of the annual performance review process
- Ensuring ELT members participate in OHS training
- Fostering a strong work health and safety culture where worker input is valued

The **Executive Leadership Team** is responsible for:

- Ensuring YPRL complies with all legislation relating to occupational health and safety
- Providing a workplace that is, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy workplace for workers and visitors, in particular in their areas of control
- Modelling health and safety leadership
- Fostering a strong work health and safety culture where worker input is valued
- Demonstrating a commitment to good health and safety performance by talking about safety at regular meetings and ensuring safe work practices are followed
- Eliminating or minimising all workplace hazards and risks as far as is reasonably practicable
- Monitoring health and safety standards across the organisation
- Considering recommendations from the Leadership team and OHS Committee and providing direction where required
- Allocating resources where required
- Monitoring all situations that may adversely impact on occupational health and safety

- OHS Policy development and endorsement

Managers and Supervisors are accountable and responsible for:

- Maintaining a workplace that is safe and without risk to occupational health & safety
- Implementing health and safety policies and procedures
- Undertaking training so that Leaders and OHS Committee members are knowledgeable about OHS obligations and responsibilities
- Providing necessary supervision regarding employee occupational health and safety
- Leading by example, encouraging high standards of health & safety in all work practices
- Ensuring that OHS policies and procedures are implemented in the workplace and/or systems under their control
- Ensuring any requests to purchase equipment, furniture or products for the workplace have undergone full risk assessment in consultation with the HSRs prior to ordering and introduction to the workplace.
- Ensuring training is completed to ensure safe working practices before using equipment. Training Attendance register must be sent to People & Culture.
- Taking all necessary and practicable steps to provide a safe and healthy workplace for workers and visitors, in particular in their areas of control
- Consulting with workers in all matters relating to health and safety in the workplace
- Providing safe systems of work, eliminating, or minimising any hazards at the workplace
- Maintaining facilities for the wellbeing of workers
- Inducting their workers in OHS systems of work and procedures and supervising the practice of safe work practices and procedures
- Providing any information, instruction, training, and supervision needed to make sure that all workers are informed of this policy and are safe from workplace injury and risks to their health
- Providing training to everyone, when returning from extended leave and when workplace practices change
- Promoting wellness and providing opportunities to everyone and encourage participation in wellness activities
- Offering EAP services to ensure employee(s) feel supported by YPRL (FREE Professional Confidential counselling 24 hours a day)
- Ensuring that OHS is a standing agenda item at all staff meetings.
- Ensuring an Incident Report is completed for all work-related injuries, hazards, near misses and incidents
- Investigating and if possible, resolving all Incident Reports and developing strategies to prevent recurrence of incidents
- Providing a suitable injury management and return to work program
- Promoting healthy workplace practices that identify and address psychosocial hazards, e.g., encouraging everyone to go home on time, take a lunch break, set realistic deadlines, take a holiday, allocate time to things they enjoy

People & Culture are responsible for:

- Informing employees of any legislation and industry trends and changes
- Assisting in the development and implementation of policies and procedures
- Sourcing providers for health and safety training
- Attending appropriate industry forums and networking activities to keep abreast of trends, developments, and legislative changes
- Allocating a Return-to-Work Coordinator, and managing Workcover claims
- Supporting Managers to consider Flexible Working Arrangements

- Preparing OHS reports for the Board, ELT, BM and OHS Committee meetings

Workers are responsible for:

- **Safety first.** Taking all practicable steps and reasonable care to ensure their own health, wellbeing, and safety, and that of others in the workplace.
- If you are unwell stay home and rest. Stay SAFE
- Complying with all occupational health and safety policies and procedures
- Complying with any reasonable directions (such as safe work procedures, wearing personal protective equipment)
- Contributing to, and being involved in, the ongoing management of occupational health and safety
- Co-operating with their supervisors and managers to achieve workplace that promotes health, safety, and wellbeing
- Immediately reporting all injuries, incidents, hazards and near misses that may adversely impact on workplace health and safety
- Participating in all mandatory training including OHS induction and training
- Participating in wellness and other OH&S programs provided by YPRL
- Recognising the importance and actively commit to work-life balance to maintain a mentally healthy workplace. e.g., include go home on time, take breaks, set realistic deadlines, take a holiday, allocate time to things you enjoy.

Contractors, sub-contractors and self-employed persons are defined as workers under the OHS Act if they carry out work in any capacity for YPRL. They are required to:

- Comply with the requirements of OHS legislation
- Have in place any occupational health and safety policies and programs required under OHS legislation
- Consult with YPRL about occupational health & safety matters and comply with YPRL policies
- Work safely and to include the health & safety of YPRL employees, volunteers, and visitors in their safety plans.

Visitors must:

- not put themselves or any other person at the workplace at risk of harm
- comply with our occupational health & safety policy and procedures.

Breach of Policy

All workers are required to comply with this policy and the supporting procedures in the OHS Manual. If a worker breaches this policy or its supporting procedures in the OH&S Manual, they may be subject to action in accordance with YPRL's Performance Improvement & Disciplinary Policy which may include the termination of employment or association.

If a contractor is found to have breached this policy, their contract may be terminated, or may not be renewed in the future.

[END OF OHS POLICY]

Agenda Item 6: Christmas and New Year 24/25 Opening Hours (DECISION)

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Author: Robyn Ellard, Executive Manager Public Participation

REPORT

SUMMARY

This report is presented to the Board for approval. A decision is required to approve the Christmas and New Year library opening hours.

INTRODUCTION

YPRL's proposed Christmas/New Year Opening Hours 2024/25 include public holiday closures and reduced hours to reflect reduced community usage on non-public holiday days.

REPORT

An evaluation of key performance measures has been undertaken to investigate the most efficient and financially prudent model of branch opening hours across Christmas/New Year 2024/25, while maintaining a good level of service for our community. All branches will remain open during the holiday period (except for Christmas Eve and public holidays), with reduced opening hours.

Christmas Day falls on a Wednesday this year. New Year's Day falls on a Wednesday.

Collection item due dates will be extended over this period. Details of the proposed opening hours for all branch libraries are as follows:

December 2024	Hours	Libraries Closed
24 Tuesday	Christmas eve: all libraries close at 12noon	All from 12noon
25 Wednesday	Christmas Day: all libraries closed	All – Public Holiday
26 Thursday	Boxing Day: all libraries closed	All – Public Holiday
27 Friday	Reduced opening hours: 10am – 5pm	None
28 Saturday	Standard opening hours	None
29 Sunday	Standard opening hours	None
30 Monday	Reduced opening hours: 10am – 5pm	None
31 Tuesday	Reduced opening hours: 10am – 5pm	None
January 2025	Hours	Libraries Closed
1 Wednesday	New Year's Day: all libraries closed	All – Public Holiday
2 Thursday	Normal hours resume	None

Mobile Library

The Mobile Library service will close for the Christmas/New Year period from end of route Monday 23 December 2024 and resume Tuesday 28 January 2025.

Outreach Vehicle

The Outreach vehicle service will close from end of route Friday 20 December 2024 and resume Thursday 2 January 2025. The Outreach staff will provide a double delivery to clients for this period.

Library Hubs

- Hurstbridge and Bellfield Hubs will be closed between Christmas and New Year.
- Kirrip and Galada Community Activity Centres will be open as they will have MCH staff onsite during this period.
- Donnybrook Pop Up subject to Shared Cup café Christmas close down.

Impact on staffing

Staff shift changes for the Christmas period will be handled in line with YPRL's Enterprise Agreement.

CONSULTATION

Senior Leadership team and branch staff
Mobile and Outreach library staff
Member Council staff regarding Hubs

CRITICAL DATES

18 April 2024 – Christmas/New Year Opening Hours approved by YPRL Board.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

N/A

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

Outcomes:

- **Connection:** Create places and spaces for people throughout our communities to connect, belong and actively engage with each other.
- **Organisational Strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.
- **Wellbeing:** Help individual and communities better engage in, understand, and take positive actions to support their mental and physical health.

Priorities:

- Participation and belonging.
- Outreach.
- A resilient and thriving organisation.
- Mental, physical and social wellbeing.

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

Approving YPRL’s proposed Christmas/New Year Opening Hours 2024/25 provides certainty for staff planning leave, Managers planning staffing requirements during opening hours and the Marketing team to prepare communications well ahead of the holiday period.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and APPROVE the Christmas and New Year 2024 – 2025 Opening Hours proposals.

M: _____
S: _____

Agenda Item 7: Public Interest Disclosure Procedures (DECISION)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Rob Green, Executive Manager Corporate Services
Attachment:	7. – YPRL Public Interest Disclosure Procedure

REPORT

SUMMARY

YPRL's Public Interest Disclosure Procedures have been reviewed and are presented for Board adoption

INTRODUCTION

YPRL's Public Interest Disclosure Procedures are reviewed every two years.

REPORT

The purpose of YPRL's Public Interest Disclosure Procedures is:

- To provide people with clear guidance about making disclosures about improper
- conduct within Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) without fear of reprisal, in
- compliance with section 58 of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 (the Act).
- To ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures
- and protecting them when they do.
- To meet YPRL's obligation to establish and publish procedures under the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012. These procedures establish YPRL's public interest disclosure procedures for the public and YPRL employees.

A major review was undertaken of the Public Interest Disclosure Procedures in February 2020, in response to changes made to the Public Interest Disclosures Act (2012). In 2022, a minor review and update was completed with changes including combining the previously separate policy and procedure documents into one single document and updating contact details for YPRL's Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator. In 2024, a further minor review was undertaken updating the scope of who it applies to. No significant changes to the Act or other related legislation has been made so no other changes to the Procedure were required.

The Public Interest Disclosure Procedures cover:

- The Public Interest Disclosures reporting process;
- How YPRL assesses whether a disclosure has been made in accordance with the Act;
- Confidentiality and records management;
- Public Interest Disclosures Register and Reporting;
- Managing the welfare of disclosers; and
- Education and training for employees;

The Public Interest Disclosure Procedures will be available to employees internally and on YPRL's website to ensure members of the public, volunteers and contractors have access to the procedures, and the instructions they contain.

CONSULTATION

The draft Public Interest Disclosure Procedures have been reviewed by the Executive Manager Corporate Services. Minor changes have been made including updating the scope of who it applies to and no significant changes to the Act or other related legislation has been made. Finally, that the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator be updated to Kate Karrasch to reflect Kate's return into the Executive Manager Corporate Services role.

A desktop review of City of Whittlesea, Nillumbik Shire and Banyule City Councils' Public Interest Disclosure documents was also undertaken as part of this review.

CRITICAL DATES

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

The YPRL Public Interest Disclosure Procedures contribute to good governance of YPRL and respond directly to strategies identified in the current Library Plan as follows;

Outcome:

- **Organisational strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

Priorities:

- People and capacity.
- Governance and technology.

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

Adoption of the Public Interest Disclosure Procedures will demonstrate YPRL’s continued commitment to the aims and objectives of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 by providing clear guidance about how to make a disclosure about improper conduct within YPRL and how YPRL protects those involved with a disclosure.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and APPROVE the revised Public Interest Disclosures Procedures.

M: _____
S: _____

Policy Name	Public Interest Disclosure Procedures
Version number	5.0
Policy date	April 2024
Date to be reviewed	April 2026 or upon significant change to the Act, the Regulations or the IBAC Guidelines
Responsibility	Executive Manager Corporate Services
Related Policies and Procedures	Employee Code of Conduct Conflict of Interest Procedure Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy Fraud and Corruption Prevention Framework Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

To provide people with clear guidance about making disclosures about improper conduct within Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) without fear of reprisal, in compliance with section 58 of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 (the Act).

To ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

To meet YPRL's obligation to establish and publish procedures under the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012.

Scope

This procedure applies to all existing individuals engaged by YPRL and the public. This includes employees, volunteers, placement students (excluding students under 18 years of age and relevant contractors).

Related Legislation

- Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012;
- Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Act 2019.

Definitions

For the purposes of this procedure only, the following definitions shall mean:

Act	Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012
Detrimental Action	<p>The Act makes it a criminal offence for a person to take or threaten to take detrimental action against a person in reprisal for making or being connected with a public interest disclosure. Detrimental action includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action causing injury, loss or damage; • Intimidation or harassment; • Discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person's employment, career, profession, trade or business, including the taking of disciplinary action (unless the substantive basis can be demonstrated as not in reprisal, and there are good and sufficient grounds that would fully justify action against any other person in the same circumstances). <p>Examples of detrimental action: <i>refusing a deserved promotion to a person who makes a disclosure; demoting or transferring a person due to the making of a disclosure; threats to a person's personal safety or property; intimidating and/or harassing a discloser or a discloser's family or friends.</i></p>
IBAC	Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission
Improper Conduct	<p>A disclosure may be made about improper conduct by a public body or public official. For the purposes of the Act, improper conduct means corrupt conduct or conduct that constitutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a criminal offence; • serious professional misconduct (conduct that constitutes a serious breach of an established professional code of conduct and/or other serious departures from the person's professional responsibilities); • dishonest performance of public functions; • intentional or reckless breach of public trust; • intentional or reckless misuse of information; • substantial mismanagement of public resources; • substantial risk to health or safety of one or more people; • substantial risk to the environment; • conduct of any person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ that adversely affects the honest performance by a public officer of their functions; ○ that is intended to adversely affect the effective performance by a public officer of their functions for the benefit of the other person. <p>Less serious or trivial conduct is excluded from the definition of improper conduct.</p> <p>Examples of Improper Conduct: <i>A YPRL employee takes a bribe or receives a payment other than their wages in exchange for discharging their public duty, favours unmeritorious employment applications from friends and family, or sells confidential information.</i></p>
Principal Officer	YPRL CEO
Public Interest Disclosure	A public interest disclosure is a disclosure by a natural person of information that shows or tends to show, or information that the person reasonably believes shows or tends to show improper conduct or detrimental action. YPRL is a public

	body for the purposes of the Act and a public officer can be a YPRL employee (including temporary/contract employees) or Board member.
Public Interest disclosure Complaint	A public interest disclosure that has been determined by IBAC to be a public interest complaint
Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator	Coordinates the receipt and recording of disclosures and IBAC responses, as well as considering discloser welfare management. At YPRL the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator is: Kate Karrasch Executive Manager Corporate Services Phone: 9117 6117 Email: kkarrasch@yprl.vic.gov.au
Specified Conduct	Is any one of the above types of Improper Conduct, or conduct that involves substantial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismanagement of public resources; or • Risk to public health or safety or the environment; or • Corruption. <p>The specified conduct must be criminal in nature or a matter, on reasonable grounds, for which an Officer could be dismissed.</p> <p>Examples of specified conduct: A YPRL employee misappropriates revenue for their own private expenditure, uses a YPRL credit card for their own private purposes, steals books from the YPRL collection.</p>

About these Procedures

The three main purposes of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 are:

1. To encourage and assist people to make a disclosure of improper conduct and detrimental action by public officers and public bodies;
2. To provide certain protections to people who make a disclosure, or those who suffer detrimental action in reprisal for a disclosure;
3. To ensure that certain information about a disclosure is kept confidential – the identity of the person making the disclosure and the content of the disclosure.

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is committed to the aims and objectives of the Act. YPRL does not tolerate improper conduct, corrupt conduct, or misconduct by employees, officers, contractors, or Board members, nor the taking of reprisals against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

YPRL recognises the value of transparency and accountability in administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, misconduct in public office involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, misusing information or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety, or the environment.

In accordance with the Act, the CEO will notify IBAC, as soon as practicable, if there is reasonable suspicion that corrupt conduct may have occurred or may be occurring.

If the reasonable suspicion relates to the CEO, the Chair of the YPRL Board will notify IBAC.

Disclosures can be made direct to the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC):

Address: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001

Website: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 735 135

The remainder of this procedure relates only to disclosures made directly to YPRL.

Public Interest Disclosures Reporting Process

Anyone (both members of the public and employees of a public body) can make an oral or written disclosure about improper conduct or detrimental action relating to YPRL or an officer.

To make a public interest declaration contact YPRL's Public Disclosure Coordinator:

Kate Karrasch
Executive Manager Corporate Services
Mail: Bag 65, Bundoora Vic 3083*
Phone: 9117 6117
Email: kkarrasch@ypri.vic.gov.au

An oral disclosure must be made in private and may be made in person, or by telephone to YPRL's Public Disclosure Coordinator (including by leaving a voicemail message on the specified telephone number), or by some other form of non-written electronic communication.

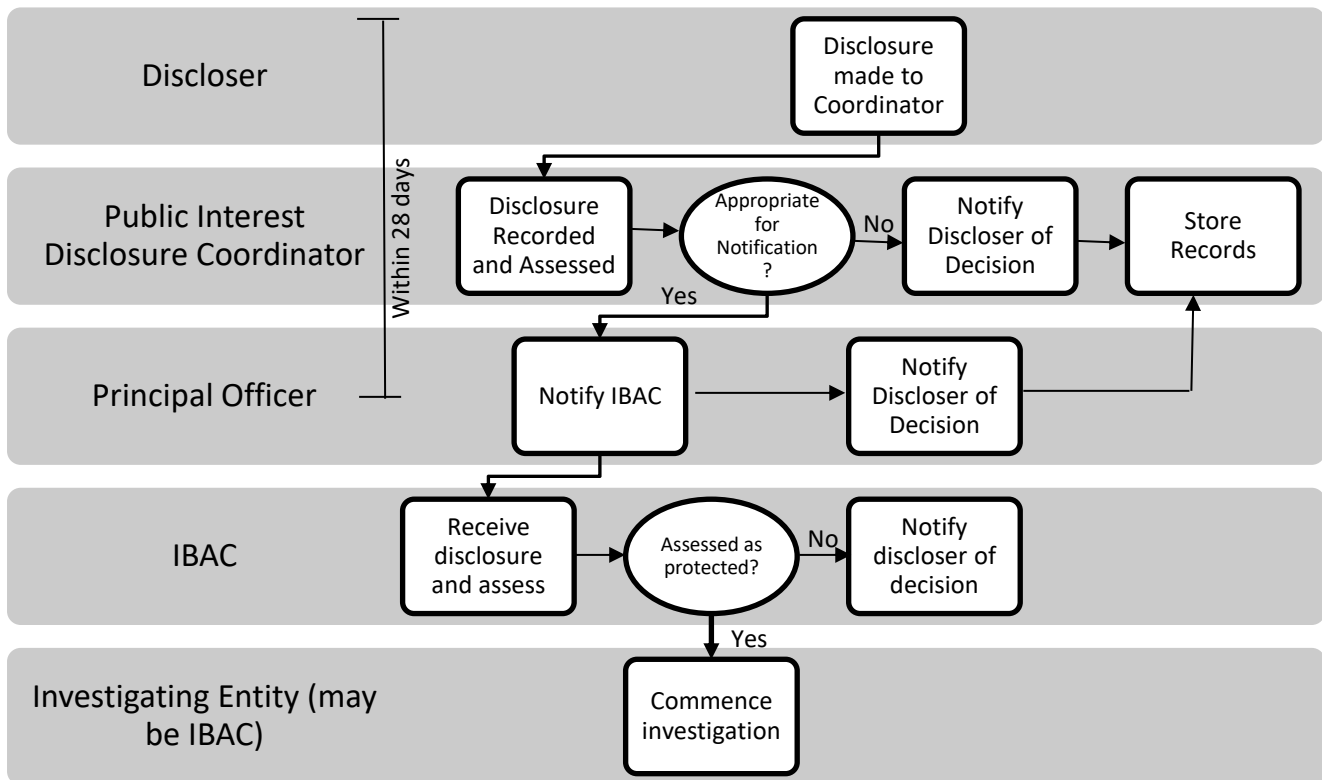
A written disclosure to YPRL must be delivered personally to YPRL's head office at Suite 6, 1 Danaher Drive, South Morang Vic 3752, or sent by email to the official email address of YPRL's Public Disclosure Coordinator.

* Where a written disclosure is being provided by post, YPRL recommends that the disclosure be sealed in an envelope which is clearly marked with one of more of the following:

- Private & Confidential: Public Interest Disclosure
- To the personal attention of the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator

In the event a disclosure is being emailed to a YPRL email address other than the official email address of the Public Disclosure Coordinator, YPRL recommends that the discloser insert in the email subject line one of the above labels set out above to posted items.

Flowchart 1: Public Interest Disclosures Reporting Process



If the disclosure is about the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator, report directly to the Principal Officer.

If the disclosure is about the Principal Officer, report directly to the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator or Chair of the YPRL Board.

If the disclosure is about a YPRL Board member, it must be made to IBAC. If a disclosure concerning a YPRL Board member is made to YPRL, the discloser will be advised of the correct body to which the misdirected disclosure should be directed.

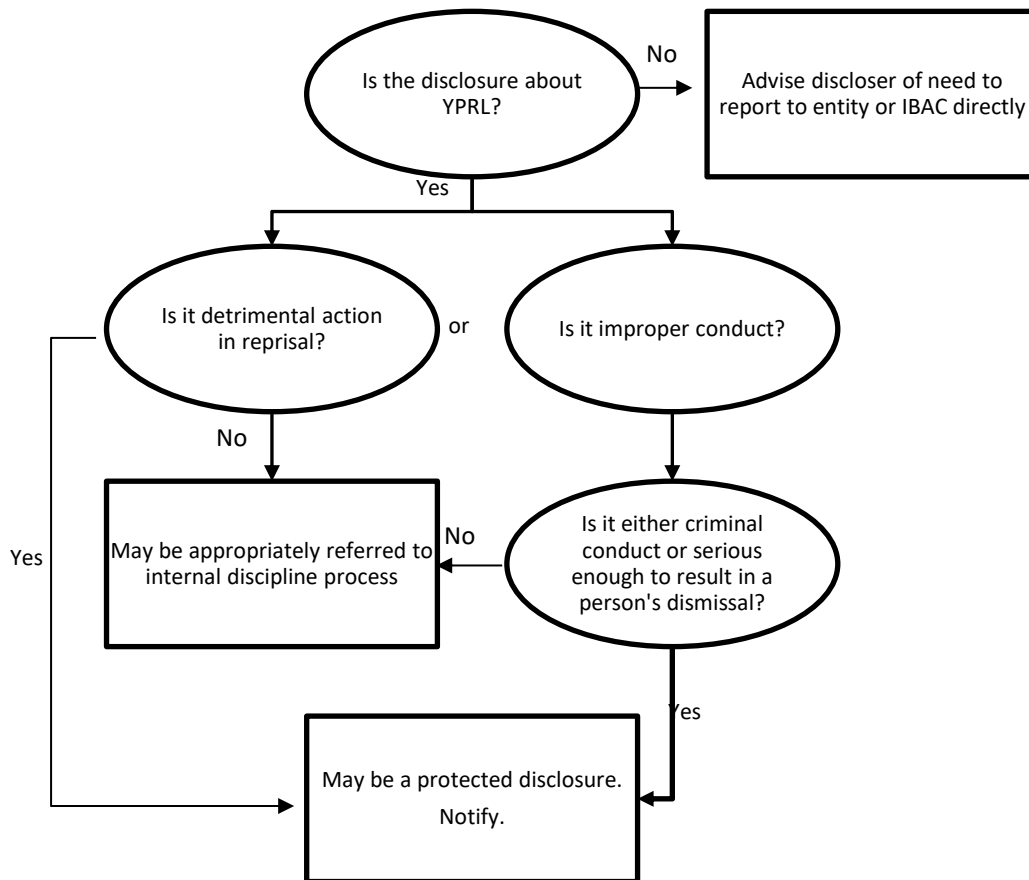
If YPRL is not the correct body to receive the disclosure, the misdirected disclosure will be referred to IBAC.

Assessing whether the disclosure has been made in accordance with the Act

A public interest disclosure must be made by a natural person (that is, an individual person or a group of individuals making a joint disclosure, rather than a corporation).

Where a disclosure by a natural person has been received by the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator, they will assess whether the disclosure has been made in accordance with the Act and is, therefore a public interest disclosure using Flowchart 2 below.

Careful consideration will also be given to understanding the discloser’s connection to the alleged conduct, how they came to know about the conduct, how detailed the information is that that been provided to enable consideration of whether there is improper conduct or detrimental action, and the reliability of the information.

Flowchart 2: Is it a public interest disclosure?

A public officer, which includes a YPRL officer or employee, is given specific protections under the Act to provide information to other public officers or to the IBAC in dealing with a disclosure they have received. When a public officer acts in good faith and in accordance with the Act, Regulations and the IBAC Guidelines, the public Officer does not commit an offence under laws imposing a duty to maintain confidentiality or restricting the disclosure of information.

Confidentiality and Records Management

YPRL will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the discloser and the content of the disclosure. The Act makes it a crime to disclose information connected with a disclosure made in accordance with the Act. The Act requires any person who receives information as part of handling or investigating a public interest disclosure, not to disclose that information except in certain circumstances. The limited circumstances in which a person may disclose information about a public interest disclosure include:

- Where disclosure is required by YPRL (or one of its officers) in the exercise of functions of YPRL under the Act;
- Where necessary for the purpose of the exercise of functions under the Act;
- In accordance with a direction or authorisation given by the entity (i.e., IBAC) investigating the disclosure;
- To the extent necessary for the purpose of taking lawful action in relation to conduct that is the subject of an assessable disclosure including a disciplinary process or action;
- Where IBAC has determined that an assessable disclosure is not a Public Interest disclosure and the discloser or YPRL subsequently discloses the information;
- When an investigative entity has published a report to Parliament, in accordance with its confidentiality obligations;
- For the purpose of obtaining legal advice in relation to matters specified in the Act;
- In order to enable compliance with Act:

- Where a person does not have a sufficient knowledge of the English language, to obtain a translation from an interpreter;
- Where a person is under 18 years of age, to a parent or guardian;
- Where a person with a disability is not able to understand, to an independent person;
- In disciplinary actions or legal proceedings for certain offences in the Act or other specified Acts;
- The discloser has given their consent, in writing, to the disclosure of their identity;
- When publishing statistics in the annual report of a public body.

The discloser of a public interest complaint may always seek advice and support from specified categories of persons without seeking permission. This enables information and content about an assessable disclosure to be provided to a registered health practitioner, trade union, employee assistance program, the Victorian WorkCover Authority, or, for the purposes of an application, to the Fair Work Commission.

The Act prohibits the inclusion of particulars in any report or recommendations that are likely to lead to the identification of the discloser. The Act also prohibits the identification of the person who is subject to the disclosure in any particulars included in an annual report.

YPRL will ensure all files, whether paper or electronic, are kept in a secure location and can be accessed only by the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator and Principal Officer. All printed material will be kept in files that are clearly marked:

“Public Interest Disclosure Act matter.

Warning: Criminal penalties apply to any unauthorised accessing or divulging of information concerning a public interest disclosure.”

All electronic files will utilise the highest level of security available including password protection for all documents. All materials relevant to an investigation, such as interview records, will also be stored securely with the discloser files.

Register and Reporting

The Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator will establish a secure register to record the information required to be published in the annual report, and to generally keep account of the status of disclosures. The register will be confidential and will not record any information that may identify a discloser.

The register will contain:

- The number and types of disclosures made during the year;
- The number of disclosures referred to IBAC for determination;
- The number and types of disclosed matters referred to IBAC for investigation.

The Executive Manager Public Participation will ensure that YPRL’s annual report includes information about how to access YPRL’s Public Interest Disclosure Procedures and the number of disclosures notified to IBAC under the Act during the financial year.

Managing the welfare of the discloser

Commitment to protecting disclosers

YPRL is committed to the protection of disclosers against detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of public interest disclosures. The Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator will determine whether the discloser is at risk of detrimental action, and take all reasonable steps to ensure such detrimental action does not occur including:

- Examining the immediate welfare and protection needs of a discloser and taking proactive steps to ensure personal and professional support is available within the workplace;
- Advising the discloser of the legislative and administrative protections available to them;
- Listening and responding to any concerns of harassment, intimidation or victimisation in reprisal for making a disclosure;
- Keeping record of all aspects of the case management of the discloser including all contact and follow-up action; and
- Ensuring the expectations of the discloser are realistic.

It should be noted that some of the protections set out in the Act protecting a Public Interest discloser are only available to the person who makes a disclosure. The IBAC has pointed out that the consequence of this is, if a person makes a disclosure on behalf of another individual, then it is the notifier who may receive those protections, and not the person on whose behalf they have made the disclosure. The person on whose behalf the disclosure has been made will only be entitled to protections against detrimental action taken against them in reprisal for the disclosure made by the notifier.

Occurrence of detrimental action

If a discloser reports an incident of harassment, discrimination or adverse treatment that would amount to detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of the disclosure, the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator will:

- Record details of the incident;
- Advise the discloser of their rights under the Act;
- Advise the Principal Officer of the detrimental action.

The Principal Officer must ensure that all YPRL employees refrain from any activity that is or could be perceived to be, victimisation or harassment of a person who makes a disclosure, while upholding the protections and confidentiality required.

The taking of detrimental action in reprisal for the making of a disclosure can be an offence against the Act as well as grounds for making a further public interest disclosure.

Loss of protections caused by actions of the discloser

A discloser is not protected if they commit an offence under the Act, including:

- Providing false or misleading information, or further information that relates to a public interest disclosure that the person knows to be false or misleading;
- Claiming that a matter is the subject of a public interest disclosure knowing the claim to be false;
- Falsely claiming that a matter is the subject of a disclosure that IBAC has determined to be a public interest disclosure complaint.

A discloser is not protected against legitimate management action being taken by the Corporation in accordance with the Act.

The discloser will still be held liable for their own conduct that they disclose as part of making a public interest disclosure.

Education and Training for employees

YPRL will:

- Ensure appropriate training is provided at all levels of YPRL to raise awareness of how a public interest disclosure may be made, and to take reasonable steps to ensure employees are familiar with YPRL's Public Interest Disclosure Procedures;
- Ensure employees have access to a copy of these procedures;
- Incorporate into its induction procedures training about YPRL's general obligations under the Act and the rights and obligations of all employees;
- Introduce periodic refresher training for existing employees about their rights and obligations under the Act;
- Provide additional training and assistance to any YPRL employees with specific responsibilities and functions to handle and manage Public Interest Disclosures under the Act, including the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator.

Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- As Principal Officer the CEO must notify IBAC, as soon as practicable, if there is a reasonable suspicion that corrupt conduct may have occurred or be occurring.

The **Chair of the YPRL Board** is responsible for:

- Notifying IBAC, as soon as practicable, if there is reasonable suspicion that corrupt conduct may have occurred or may be occurring which involves the CEO.

The **Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator** is responsible for:

- Ensuring the welfare of any internally employed discloser;
- Receiving disclosures and making assessments as to whether notification to IBAC is required, and ensuring all disclosers are aware of their ability to submit to IBAC directly;
- Notifying disclosers of YPRL's decision regarding IBAC notification;
- Regardless of whether the disclosure is notified to IBAC, ensuring that the protections set out in the Act are afforded to the discloser;
- Establishing and managing a confidential public interest disclosure records management system;
- Collating non-identifying statistics on disclosures made;
- Taking all necessary steps to ensure the identity of the discloser, the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure and the nature of the matter, are kept confidential; and
- Liaising with IBAC as required.

The **Executive Manager Public Participation** is responsible for:

- Publishing non-identifying statistics on disclosures made in the annual report.

All employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this procedure should the Act and YPRL Procedures require them to make a public interest disclosure or participate in an investigation arising from a public interest disclosure;
- Reporting known or suspected incidences of improper conduct or detrimental action;
- Supporting those who have made a legitimate disclosure;
- Refraining from any activity that is, or could be perceived to be, victimisation or harassment of a person who makes a disclosure;

- Protecting and maintaining the confidentiality of a person they know or suspect to have made a disclosure.

Breach of Procedure

All employees are required to comply with this procedure. If an employee breaches this procedure, they may be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases this may include termination of employment.

[END OF PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES PROCEDURES]

Agenda Item 8: CEO Presentation on IFLA 2023 Key Ideas (NOTING)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Jane Cowell, Chief Executive Officer
Attachment:	8. – IFLA World Libraries in Congress CEO Presentation Slides

REPORT

SUMMARY

This report is for the Board's information.

INTRODUCTION

A presentation will be provided by the CEO highlighting the key learnings from the IFLA World Libraries in Congress 2023 Conference attended by the CEO.

CONSULTATION

N/A

CRITICAL DATES

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

N/A

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN

Outcome:

- **Organisational strength:** Investment in our staff, capacity, and governance to ensure we are capable and ready to adapt, learn and empower our communities in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

Priorities:

- People and capacity.
- Governance and technology.

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

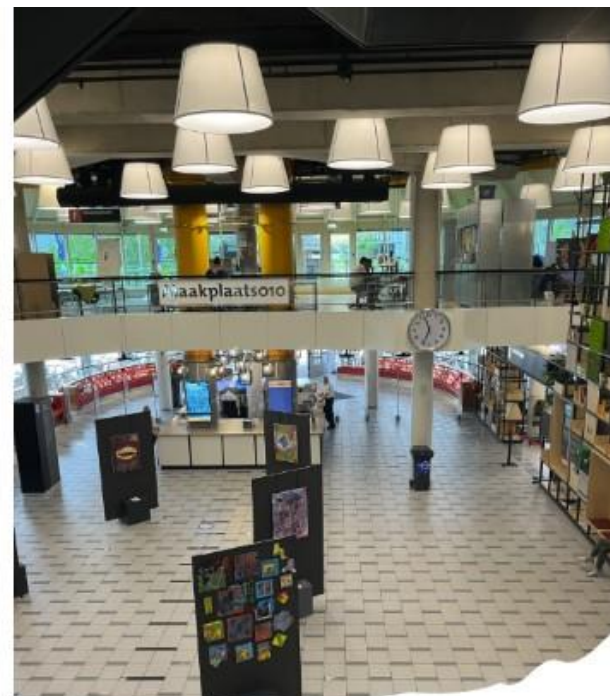
Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolve to RECEIVE and NOTE the CEO Presentation

M: _____
S: _____



**Yarra Plenty Regional Library
Jane Cowell CEO**

**World Library Congress 2023
Rotterdam**

Libraries as
Actors for
Climate
Empowerment



How Can Libraries Accelerate Climate Empowerment?



Getting local populations involved as much as possible with environmental initiatives. The term "climate change" could "turn people off"
Talk in terms of saving money, insulating your home or getting kids more active instead.



- Strong relationship for Climate Change empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals



Libraries support democracy

Information Crisis – deep fakes, misinformation, disinformation

Community Polarisation – no place for respectful debate, community conversations

Libraries can start small – build small democratic experiences.





Library Design

- Lochal Tilberg – redesigned Railway Workshop





IFLA Public Library Business Meeting

IFLA/Systematic Public Library of the Year Award 2023 Winner announced







The Artificially Intelligent Librarian: threat or chance?



“AI is here to stay. It should be all inclusive for everyone. Libraries have a role in this. Libraries can build trust and connection. It’s important to make AI inspiring and fun!”

Erik Boekesteijn



IFLA UNESCO Public Library Manifesto



Agenda Item 9: Libraries After Dark Statewide Report (NOTING)

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Robyn Ellard, Executive Manager, Public Participation
Attachment:	9. – Libraries After Dark Final Report

REPORT

SUMMARY

For the Board's review and consideration: this report from Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) details the Libraries After Dark (LAD) statewide evaluation and makes recommendations for the next stage.

INTRODUCTION

LAD aimed to reduce social isolation in communities at risk from gambling harm, especially those close to high-loss pokies venues. Selected libraries were resourced to extend staffed opening hours one evening a week and offer creative programs designed to reduce loneliness and foster social connection. Mill Park Library was one of those selected in the first round for the program. Watsonia Library was funded by Banyule City Council from 2021-2023 to develop a Libraries After Dark program. Thomastown Library trialled the Libraries After Dark program between 2022-2023 funded by YPRL.

REPORT

LAD was implemented in 23 libraries across Victoria between 2019 and 2023 with funding from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. In the report, it is noted that anecdotal evidence strongly suggests LAD succeeded in reaching those at risk of gambling harm, as well as people experiencing isolation and loneliness more broadly, which are well-documented risk factors associated with harmful gambling. The program also benefitted other vulnerable groups, including people experiencing homelessness, low-income families, and students seeking safe places to study.

PLV has announced that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee of the Victorian Parliament has recommended that the Victorian Government consider extending its support for LAD or similar programs. Public Libraries Victoria also joins the call for renewed investment in LAD. While a handful of libraries and LGAs (such as YPRL and City of Whittlesea at the Mill Park Library) continue to support the program, the majority require additional resources to ensure outcomes are sustained and libraries can extend their opening hours to meet community needs.

CONSULTATION

N/A

CRITICAL DATES

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

POLICY STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

N/A

LINKS TO LIBRARY PLAN**Outcomes:**

- **Knowledge and learning:** Together we build capacity and confidence for people across our communities to meaningfully participate in work and community life.
- **Connection:** Create places and spaces for people throughout our communities to connect, belong and actively engage with each other
- **Wellbeing:** Help individuals and communities to better engage in, understand and take positive actions to support their mental and physical health.

Priorities:

- Programs and pathways.
- Information and resources.
- Participation and belonging.
- Mental, physical and social wellbeing.
- Connect to local experts.

DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to the Library must disclose any interests, including type of interest.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

LAD raised awareness that libraries, in addition to their traditional offerings of books, literacy and lifelong learning, are powerful community resources evolving into civic spaces that support social connection, personal wellbeing and creativity. LAD is part of this evolution, improving understanding among library staff of the risks associated with loneliness and the role that libraries can play in building social connection. As PLV notes in the report, due to the important role of libraries in supporting social connection, Victoria's Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) of Parliament recommended that the Victorian Government consider extending its support for the LAD program following its November 2023 inquiry into gambling and liquor regulation.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board resolves to RECEIVE and NOTE the Libraries After Dark Statewide Report 2024.

M: _____

S: _____

DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW
**LIBRARIES
AFTER DARK**



Final report and recommendations for the future

February 2024

Prepared by Angela Savage
and Christine Peters
Public Libraries Victoria



 **Public Libraries
Victoria**

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**Libraries
Change Lives**

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Abbreviations and acronyms

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this report.

LAD Libraries After Dark
PAEC Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
PLV Public Libraries Victoria



Acknowledgements

Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) acknowledges Merri-bek City Council (previously Moreland City Council), which piloted the Libraries After Dark program in 2017–19 in Glenroy (Moreland), Preston (Darebin), Mill Park (Whittlesea/Yarra Plenty Regional Library) and Broadmeadows (Hume).

Managed by Merri-bek City Council in association with the Victorian Local Governance Association, between 2019 and 2023 the program expanded to encompass 23 libraries across the state. (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of participating library branches).

PLV also acknowledges the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, which funded the groundbreaking initiative from the beginning, first as a Prevention Partnership Program pilot and then through an ongoing community-led partnership. Quotes in this report are taken from the final report on the program submitted by Merri-bek Council to the Foundation in July 2023.

Finally, PLV acknowledges all those who contributed to the program’s success, particularly Judy Spokes, Rose O’Leary, Rev. Tim Costello, Cr Susan Rennie, and thanks every Victorian library that participated in the program.

Executive Summary

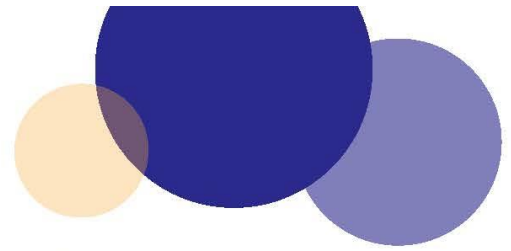
**THE LIBRARY IS
OPEN LATE EVERY
THURSDAY NIGHT...
FANTASTIC!**

The Libraries After Dark (LAD) program aimed to reduce social isolation in communities at risk from gambling harm, especially those close to high-loss pokies venues. Selected libraries were resourced to extend staffed opening hours one evening a week and offer creative programs designed to reduce loneliness and foster social connection. LAD was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and implemented in 23 libraries across Victoria between 2019 and 2023.

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests LAD succeeded in reaching those at risk of gambling harm, as well as people experiencing isolation and loneliness more broadly, which are well-documented risk factors associated with harmful gambling. The program also benefitted other vulnerable groups, including people experiencing homelessness, low-income families, and students seeking safe places to study.

In addition to their traditional offerings of books, literacy and lifelong learning, public libraries have evolved into civic spaces that support social connection, personal wellbeing and creativity. LAD is part of this evolution, improving understanding among library staff of the risks associated with loneliness and the role that libraries can play in building social connection.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee of Parliament has recommended that the Victorian government consider extending its support for LAD or similar programs. Public Libraries Victoria joins this call for renewed investment in LAD. Though a handful of local councils have continued the program since the cessation of Foundation funding, the majority require additional resources to ensure outcomes are sustained.



1. Overview

This report considers the Libraries After Dark (LAD) evaluation report in order to make recommendations for the next iteration of the program (LAD 2.0).

LAD was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and implemented in 23 libraries across Victoria (Appendix 1) under the leadership of the Merri-bek (formerly Moreland) City Council. It operated between 2019 and 2023, following a two-year Foundation-funded pilot.

The aim of LAD was to expand the recreational opportunities available to people in communities with few alternatives to local pokies venues. The program extended staffed opening hours of selected public library branches and offered creative programs designed to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

The strategic objectives of LAD were to:

- reduce social isolation in communities at risk from gambling harm, especially those close to high-loss pokies venues
- strengthen the role of public libraries as community lounge rooms – places that are welcoming, warm and inclusive
- promote the local library as an evening alternative to pokies venues, reducing exposure to gambling
- increase library staff knowledge of gambling harm and the support services available for those affected
- support library professionals to develop innovative approaches to social inclusion through creative programming, promotion and local partnerships.

LAD funding enabled participating libraries to stay open until 10 pm one day a week – generally Thursday – to offer a range of in-person and online programs, including cultural and educational activities. The extended opening hours also saw increased use of library services and resources more broadly.

Significantly, the program provided people in 23 local communities access to a free, safe, secure and inclusive environment as a viable alternative to a pokies venue. And because LAD was funded by the Foundation, taxes on pokies profits were used to support affected communities.

Further, hundreds of library staff participated in specialist training about the harms associated with gambling and why some communities are at

greater risk than others. The training enhanced the capacity of library staff to design events and activities to engage those who might be vulnerable. This included gambling harm information talks delivered by partner organisations such as [ReSPIN](#) and [Three Sides of the Coin](#) (both funded by the Foundation).



More broadly, participants were offered diverse recreational and social opportunities and connected to reliable local institutions to provide them with free, ready access to support, stimulation and social connections.

Notably, LAD raised awareness that libraries are powerful community resources for combatting social isolation, which is a significant driver of harmful gambling. This was apparent to Victoria's Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) of Parliament, which made the recommendation below following its November 2023 inquiry into gambling and liquor regulation.

Recommendation 1

The Victorian Government consider extending its support for the Libraries After Dark program, or similar programs. In addition, the Victorian Government undertake work to understand:

- what additional safe places of recreation may be needed by communities after hours as alternatives to gaming venues
- which geographic areas would benefit most from these programs
- the need and demand in the community for such programs
- whether the Libraries After Dark model can be expanded to benefit at-risk groups in the community.¹

Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) is committed to finding ways that public libraries can continue to support communities to mitigate loneliness and isolation and thereby reduce the risk of gambling harm. Accordingly, PLV recommends to the Victorian Government that LAD be provided ongoing funding when the current funding arrangements expire.

¹Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), [Gambling and liquor regulation in Victoria: a follow up of three Auditor-General Reports](#), Inquiry, November 2023, p. 24

2. Key Learnings

2.1 Effect on target and vulnerable populations

The LAD program sought to reduce social isolation and loneliness, which are well established risk factors for gambling harm. The focus was on communities in which a large number of high-loss pokies were located, with few alternative evening leisure options.

Ethical and privacy considerations meant it was difficult to collect meaningful data on participation in LAD by target and vulnerable populations. To question participants about their pokies use would have risked them feeling stigmatised and made library staff uncomfortable. Staff at several participating libraries commented they did not collect information on people's gambling behaviours.

However, useful anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that LAD was successful in reaching those at risk of gambling harm, as indicated by the following comments from participants in the Thomastown Library LAD program, part of Yarra Plenty Regional Library.

Going to the pub and having a gamble on the machines was important to me and my wife until a year ago. Now we are retired and cannot afford it. So, my wife dragged me to the old tool sessions and it has been fantastic. We enjoyed eating with new people, have a chat then go off to events and enjoyed getting back to books. – Peter, 70

I have been a gambler for a long time. I reached out and got some help at Whittlesea Community Connections. They mentioned Libraries After Dark at Mill Park and Thomastown. I come along not so much for the events, but for the chat, and not being alone. Now I have saved enough money for a new TV. – Nick, 56

My life has not been great. I fell into visiting the pub and playing the pokies. Being lonely and on my own I was easily led to gamble and in no time lost a lot of money. I then came along to the Thomastown Library and what a blessing. I love the lace making, food and not being on my own. It is just so nice to share a meal with others and not be on my own. – Vicky, 57



Staff at Sebastopol Library reported that individuals disclosed during 'incidental conversations' that they *certainly attended the library as an alternative to gambling venues* and that *they were in the recovery phase of gambling addiction*.

Several libraries noted that participants were more likely to self-identify as having a gambling issue when they attended sessions designed explicitly to address gambling-related harm. This was the case at Preston and Reservoir when the libraries hosted ReSPIN speakers.

At Glenroy Library, staff reported that: *anecdotally, we have seen a number of interventions and discussions take place between attendees and counsellors when we held some of the gambling harm-related events. There is one young person we still see occasionally, and he has always been very open in letting us know that he received help and appreciated the library's role in that.*

Only one library, Mildura, suggested that they did not reach the intended audience of those at risk of gambling harm, though their sessions were well attended and they did engage with people experiencing homelessness.

Further evidence showed the program reached people experiencing isolation and loneliness more broadly, which are factors that are associated with harmful gambling. The following comments are from

“we have seen a number of interventions and discussions take place between attendees and counsellors”



LAD played an important role in preventing social isolation in the community.

LAD participants at Thomastown Library.

...I have been coming along to events on a Thursday night at Thomastown. I have loved having a chat with people and it is so nice just not feeling alone. The staff are just lovely... I enjoy the craft, chatting, having a cup of tea and not being at home by myself. – Shannon, 42

I live on my own, and I am 82. It is so lovely to share a meal with others. This has meant a lot to me and I love coming into Thomastown, sitting down and sharing a meal, talking and getting to know other people. I love to crochet and knit, and I have been teaching others and chatting. What a wonderful idea. – Athena, 82

Comments from participants at Hoppers Crossing Library also demonstrate that people who experienced loneliness and isolation benefited from the program.

I was so excited to get out of the house.

I moved to the area just before COVID then had a baby. I haven't really had a chance to make any friends.

Staff at Portland Library in Glenelg Shire commented that LAD played an important role in preventing social isolation in the community. As an example, they referenced a woman who shared with staff that she had recently moved to the area, explaining that she:

...was very lonely, had no friends and has struggled with mental health problems. With some encouragement from staff the woman came in that night, sat, played Uno and had a big chat. She has regularly attended other sessions since.

Similarly, at Shepparton Library staff reported that: *we have mainly appealed to those who are lonely and looking for a connection.* This is echoed in feedback from a program participant.

I appreciate and am grateful for the Libraries After Dark activities. It gives me the opportunity to meet, communicate and connect with new people I would probably not get to meet.

At Bairnsdale Library in East Gippsland, staff said:

...through surveys carried out we have been able to establish that many of our attendees live alone and many said they would only be sitting at home if this [program] was not available; maybe the bright lights of the gambling venue would have lured them in if not for the Libraries After Dark program.

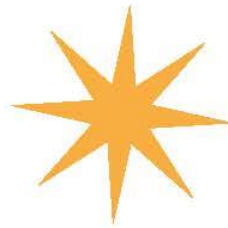
The LAD program at Carrum Downs Library in Frankston attracted a group of regular attendees. Staff reported that while they couldn't categorically state that participants were at risk of gambling harm, they believed the demographic was reflective of those vulnerable to gambling, as well as others in Carrum Downs in need of social connection and support.

At Watsonia Library in Banyule Council, the LAD coordinator said:

I have no evidence to suggest we have reached the target group, but I do know we have connected with people suffering from social isolation.

Insofar as loneliness and isolation are key drivers of gambling harm, LAD has had a significant effect on people at risk. Indeed, the Alliance for Gambling Reform describes libraries as *inoculators against social isolation*.²

² Cited in PAEC, 2023, p.24



2.2 Value of extended library hours

The value of extending staffed library hours into the evening is demonstrated by the 93 per cent of LAD evaluation survey participants who agreed they benefitted as a result.

Libraries that participated in the LAD program were supported to stay open until 10 pm one day a week as an alternative recreational venue for individuals whose loneliness and isolation put them at risk of harmful gambling.

Staff members involved found it particularly rewarding to witness the connections and relationships formed through the program. This anecdote from a Carrum Downs library staff member who regularly delivered LAD is typical of many anecdotes about the program.

A big highlight (for me) was Lorraine who is in her 70s, swears like a sailor and loves that she can hang out with a young group who don't mind her language. She came in one night just because she didn't want to spend the evening alone at home and has been a regular participant ever since.

In addition, the extended, staffed opening hours at libraries provided benefits to other vulnerable populations, including people experiencing homelessness and low-income families, with enhanced access to free library programs and resources.

We have become aware that there are a couple of people [coming in the evening] who may be experiencing food insecurity and we have been finding ways to help them access support, as well as making sure they are aware when we have extra items that they can eat or take home.
– Glenroy Library staff

Access to free, safe, welcoming and climate-controlled spaces beyond regular business hours helps provide vulnerable individuals a sense of security and support. In East Gippsland, for a local homeless person who was couch surfing, LAD provided a rare night out when other community venues such as Neighbourhood Houses and community centres were closed.

Although not a LAD primary target group, the extended hours saw a high level of library use by students seeking safe, quiet places to study. The needs of students are becoming particularly (though not exclusively) apparent in interface council areas, where long commutes mean young people can be home alone for extended periods.

Feedback clearly indicates that the students valued highly the late opening hours and additional space. There is also evidence that young people valued the extended opening hours for other reasons, as shown by the example below from Thomastown Library.

Me and my mate got caught doing burnouts behind the library. Freezing cold, starving and needed a coffee. A nice lady asked us to come in to Thomo [Library], we could eat our pizza in the library and grab a coffee. We did, now I got to know the staff, Mum and Dad are happy cause I'm out of trouble and staff helped me write a resume and I got a job. Thanks Thomo! – Mohamad, 19

Several councils have elected to maintain the LAD extended opening hours (see section 3), but most cannot due to budgetary constraints. Lack of funding for additional staff hours is the major obstacle to extending library hours, whether that's to open earlier, stay open later and/or open for longer (or at all) on weekends in response to community demand.

Staff members involved found it particularly rewarding to witness the connections and relationships formed through the program.





2.3 Effective programming

The LAD model was premised on proactively programming activities to address loneliness and social isolation. Library staff received comprehensive training on gambling harm and its associated risks, which greatly enhanced their understanding of the issue and influenced programming decisions. Programs included explicit gambling prevention and education programs in partnership with services such as Three Sides of the Coin and ReSPIN.

A staff member at Hume Libraries, which implemented LAD in Broadmeadows, Craigieburn and Sunbury, commented that: *while these sessions have been modestly attended, the discussions between presenters, gambling harm survivors and attendees have been lively with lots of stories and experiences shared.* The bulk of programming, however, was more general, aimed at attracting participants to the library, addressing loneliness and fostering social connection.

LAD activities that attracted higher attendance numbers varied considerably across library services. At Preston Library in Darebin, for example, film nights were among the best attended events. Hume libraries also saw a good turnout for the SCINEMA Film Festival, with comparable numbers for activities reflecting local culture, such as Turkish Australian Voices and Bollywood Dancing. Watsonia Library's Harry Potter Trivia Night was a big hit, together with a Retro Disco and Games Night, Community Christmas Celebration and Twilight Craft Market. Glenroy Library hosted the launch of a film on International Day of People with Disability, which was made by a local woman and regular library user and attracted a substantial audience.

In Ballarat's Sebastopol Library, social connection programs where conversation and recreation were the focus were the best attended. In Glenelg, art and craft events facilitated by external experts consistently booked out quickly; nutrition and wellbeing sessions delivered in partnership with Portland District Health proved popular; and live music nights were crowd pleasers. A big event for Shepparton Library was the launch of Juvenalia – an exhibition of early works of children's authors and illustrators – which was attended by Andy Griffiths, who signed books for two hours on the night.

Mildura Library's EnviroEdu session, a family friendly, hands-on session that promoted environment, conservation and sustainability and showcased native animals, was a highlight together with a jigsaw swap and cake decorating sessions.

However, attendance numbers are not necessarily the best measure of project or programming effectiveness. Several libraries noted that it was in the smaller group activities that they heard feedback about forming social connections, getting out of the house and making friends. They observed that in smaller groups, with the support of library staff, people had the time and opportunity to chat and establish connections. A staff member from Hopper's Crossing Library in Wyndham noted that: *seeing these connections being made was a real highlight for staff.*

In their evaluation of LAD, Sebastopol Library staff recommended a focus on low-key activities that prioritise wellbeing and social connections, using the best practice research available on minimising gambling harm. Further, the program coordinator explained that LAD had resulted in:

... a greater understanding of and pride in, the role that public library staff can play in forging connections within the community and providing safe places for recreation, capacity building programs and social connections.

Some libraries had to limit participant numbers due to space constraints and/or event capping in response to the COVID pandemic. COVID also affected staffing, with programs and events cancelled due to staff shortages (see section 2.5).



2.4 A place to just be

Participation data for the 12-month period from April 2022 to March 2023 shows that more than 8,800 people participated in LAD programs across 23 libraries, not including walk-ins. Program participants represented only a small proportion of all people who attended libraries after hours.

While LAD took a proactive approach to programming, evidence suggests that simply having a place to be, where the staff are friendly and welcoming, is valuable in addressing loneliness and social isolation. Over two years, 12,721 people made use of the Hoppers Crossing Library during LAD hours, for example, but only a small proportion – 19 per cent of survey respondents – participated in the 60 formal programs offered. The majority used the library to read, study or work, catch up with someone or just past the time. Hoppers Crossing in Wyndham was also one of several libraries that saw a significant number of students make use of the extended opening hours for study purposes.

A Glenroy Library staff member said:

... seeing people come into our lovely new building, finding their favourite places to sit and then gladly helping themselves to items from the tea trolley, has been one of the highlights. No matter whether they are here for a LAD event, coming to borrow, doing homework or meeting with a tutor, all express surprise and gratitude for this service.

A staff member at the Carrum Downs Library in Frankston noted:

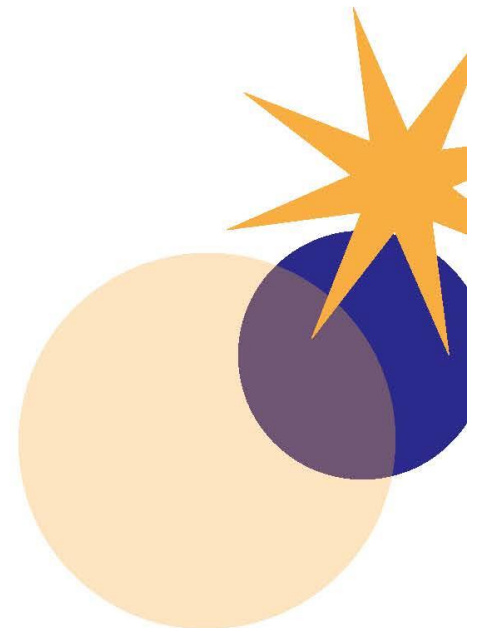
... the small but dedicated community of regulars who come in almost every week to hang out and use the space. [Staff] have gotten to know a number of people who come in for a quiet place to study, computer access, or for a social space they can sit and talk over a game of Uno.

In Glenelg, 80 per cent of library users who responded to a 2022 survey reported visiting the library alone, which reflects the proportion of single person households in the shire. A Glenelg Library staff member reported that LAD:

... has been successful in reinforcing the library as a safe and welcoming space for all to come... it is pleasing to discover that so many of our community members are comfortable with visiting our libraries alone.

Similarly for Shepparton Library, a highlight of LAD was: *seeing people just come in to use the space – families reading, students studying, the Human Book Club where people share their life experiences.*

The intrinsic value of libraries irrespective of program content is borne out in 2023 research that found: engaging with public libraries lifts the Subjective Health and Wellbeing of Victorian adults by 5.4 points (or 8 per cent).³ This is not to argue that program content is not important, but rather that keeping the library open for longer, with suitably skilled staff on hand, is valuable in itself.



**more than 8,800 people
participated in LAD programs
across 23 libraries**

³ *The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Public Libraries Across Victoria*, State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria, May 2023, p. 25.

2.5 Challenges

2.5.1 COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on participation in LAD programs and other library activities across all communities. This was particularly pronounced among older people, who exhibited hesitancy in attending events even during regular hours, let alone evening programs, due to concerns about the risk of infection. This led to low visitation numbers across all programs.

Lockdowns prohibited live events from taking place during 2020 and 2021. When libraries re-opened, capacity limits were in place for months, restricting numbers.

Between July and November 2022, insufficient staffing levels were a significant challenge, exacerbated by staff contracting COVID and needing to isolate.

However, anecdotal evidence reveals that post-lockdowns, people valued being able to return to libraries and participate in programs like LAD, as the comments below show.

I have been very lonely since COVID. I attended the Pasta Demonstration with my neighbour, what a wonderful night. Full of chatting and I have made a friend. This has meant a great deal to me and it is so nice to be able to visit the library for a chat. – Glenda, 71, Thomastown Library

So pleased to be making connections after COVID, it's taken me a long time to get back out there. – Hoppers Crossing Library

[After] a horrific few years spent isolating in lockdown, many were reluctant to circulate in group settings but found the... Libraries after Dark program a great start at socialising again. – East Gippsland Libraries

As is often the case with public libraries, one size never fits all.

2.5.2 No-shows and low attendance

An issue experienced by participating libraries was the no-show phenomenon, where individuals who registered for a LAD program neither cancelled their booking nor attended the event, causing an unfortunate situation where those on the waitlist missed out. This predicament is not specific to LAD, but an inevitable aspect of the free booking program model, where a 20 per cent no-show rate is standard.

Low attendance was also an issue at times, as reported by Portland Library:

It is disappointing when we have low numbers attend – we know this is sometimes due to other factors, for example: sports nights, other events, bad weather. We are very conscious of providing a variety of activities that cater for a diverse range of people.

A more flexible program model (see section 4.1) may address the issue of low attendance figures by allowing libraries to better align their opening hours with their respective community's needs and avoid clashes with other local cultural and social events.

2.5.3 Other

A couple of LAD programs in regional areas were affected by a lack of public transport, especially in the evening, as well as a lack of foot and vehicle traffic in the vicinity from 7:30 pm onwards, the latter due possibly to safety concerns.

In regional Victoria, libraries considered an 8:00pm closing time to be preferable in winter. Mildura Libraries commented that it was easier to attract participants to LAD in the warmer weather due to daylight savings. However, by contrast, a participant at Watsonia Library appreciated a place to come on the endless winter nights. As is often the case with public libraries, one size never fits all.

Some permanent library staff were reluctant to work late shifts or overtime. This potential problem was mitigated by employing dedicated LAD staff (see section 4.2).

Finally, floods in central and northern Victoria affected program delivery in Shepparton.

3. Legacy

3.1 Sustainability

Several libraries have continued to deliver LAD even though their grant has ended, including the four councils that piloted the program in 2017–19. In some cases, the number of libraries involved in the program has increased.

For example, Hume Council committed to fully fund expansion of the program for three years beyond the grant's 2021 expiry date. Merri-bek City Council continues LAD at Glenroy Library. And in July 2021, Darebin Council continued funding its LAD program at Preston Library and extended the program to Reservoir Library.

The LAD program was extended to the Point Cook Library from February to June 2023. And, noting a wonderful community response to this suite of programs and an impact in terms of wellbeing and social inclusion, Greater Dandenong Libraries elected to continue running it.

Glenelg Libraries was supported by the Shire Council to extend the program for 12 months after the funding ceased, with a review planned for December 2023. Goulburn Valley budgeted for LAD to continue at Shepparton Library until end-April 2024. And East Gippsland Shire Council is funding a scaled down LAD program at Bairnsdale Library at 41 per cent of the original budget.

Many councils do not have the resources to self-fund the LAD program and, unfortunately, budget constraints (including a reduced rate cap of 2.75 per cent in 2024) are forcing those councils that are supporting LAD to reconsider the future of the program. PLV recognises that additional funding support will be needed if LAD is to be sustained, let alone expanded.

As noted in section 1, the November 2023 PAEC inquiry into gambling and liquor regulation noted that LAD funding would not continue beyond 2024. PAEC recommended the Victorian government extend its support for LAD, or similar programs. PLV fully supports PAEC's recommendation and suggests that LAD could be funded as business as usual through the Public Libraries Funding Program, provided funding is increased to cover the extended opening hours (see section 4.4).



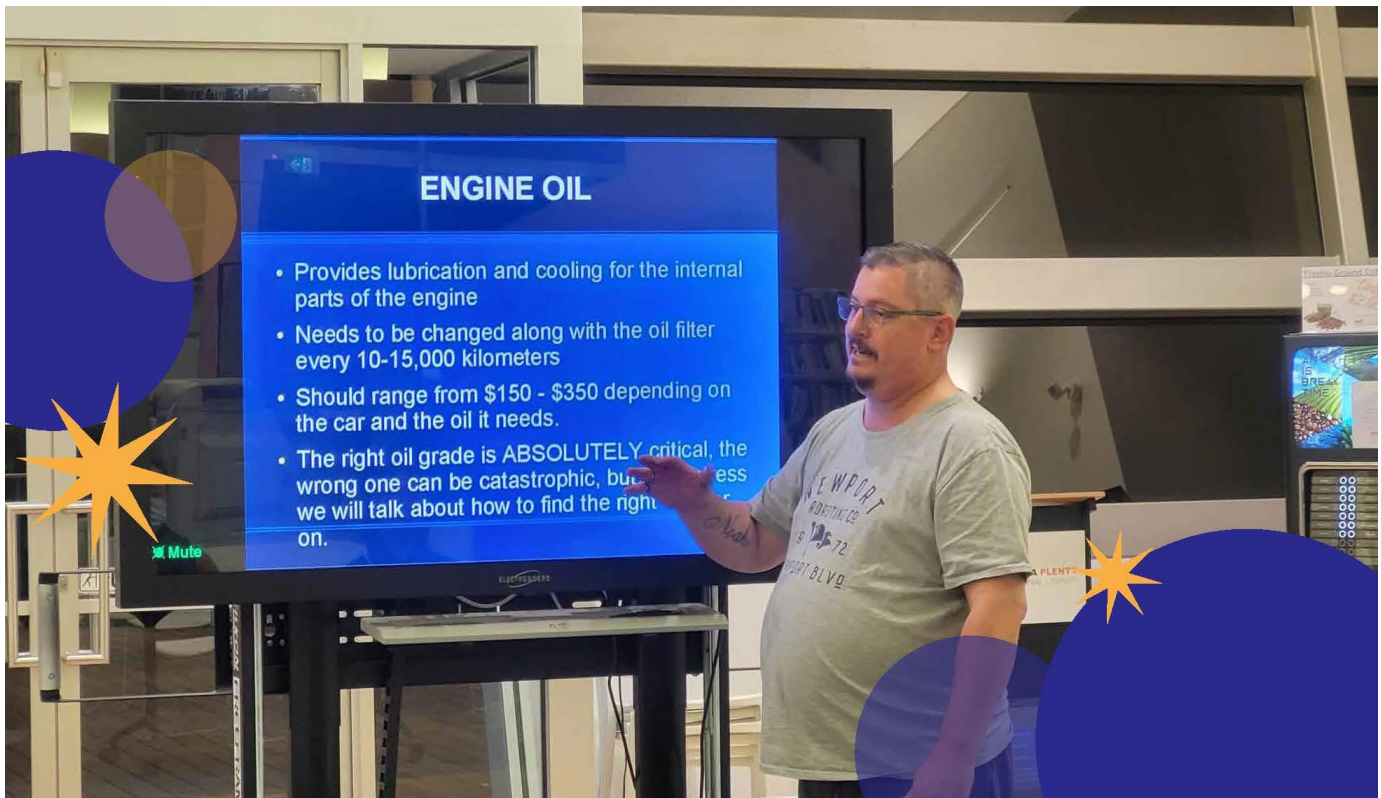
3.2 Review of opening hours

Some libraries reviewed their opening hours as a result of their LAD experience. Sebastopol Library, following the cessation of the LAD grant, reported that:

...the library service submitted a successful business case to permanently extend library opening hours once a week until 8 pm, maintaining the Thursday pattern. This is a significant legacy.

Mildura Library is also undertaking a review of its opening hours following its participation in the LAD program.

Hume Council committed to fully fund expansion of the program for three years beyond the grant's 2021 expiry date.



3.3 Programming

I feel like our staff have gained insight into gambling harm through the staff capacity building/training sessions that we were able to deliver to all our staff during COVID. The delivery of the programs...and the training have raised an awareness that we may not have focused on had we not participated in the program. We have further developed our connection with Council advocates in gambling prevention and have scheduled additional programming with gambling prevention support services.

– Dandenong Library staff

Over the past 10 years or so, the remit of public libraries has expanded. Books, information, literacy and learning remain at the core of the offering, but outcomes now include personal development and wellbeing, stronger and more creative communities and social connection.⁴ The significance of this shift is borne out in the results of two surveys of library users. In 2006, 47 per cent of respondents agreed that 'the library is a hub for community activities and connections'. By 2022, this had risen to 82 per cent.⁵

It is clear from staff testimonials like the ones above from Sebastopol and Dandenong libraries that the LAD program has helped improve understanding of the risks associated with loneliness and the role that libraries can play in addressing loneliness and building social connection.

Since June 2022, Chatty Cafés have been established in 23 public libraries in Victoria, nine of which participated in LAD. The aim of Chatty Café Australia is to support community connection through increased social interactions in local venues, including libraries. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the rise of the Chatty Café in public libraries builds on an increased awareness, facilitated by the LAD program, of social isolation and loneliness.

There is also evidence that ideas and connections seeded by LAD have flourished independently of the program. In Shepparton, for example, a group of people who met through LAD has since formed a Scrabble Club that meets weekly at the library.

A statewide programming ideas database will encourage and enable libraries to share examples of effective and/or popular programming, as well as list individuals and organisations that make good program partners. LAD was the inspiration for the database, which is being developed by PLV's Programs and Partnerships Special Interest Group.

⁴ See, APLA-ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, May 2021

⁵ Inside our public libraries: Findings of the Victorian Public Library Survey and Victorian Public Library Census, 2002.



4. Libraries After Dark 2.0

Above all, let [Libraries After Dark] bring you joy and nurture your passion for making connections with people. – Glenroy Library staff

Taking into account key findings and learnings, PLV makes the following recommendations for a future iteration of the LAD program.

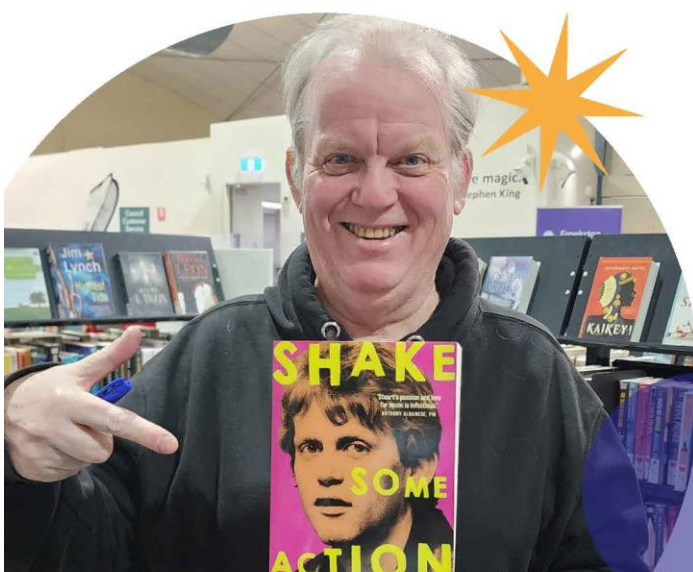
4.1 Flexible program model

Feedback from participating libraries has identified that a more flexible approach to delivering the LAD program would mitigate some of the challenges. Instead of a one-size-fits-all model of closing at 10 pm on Thursdays, libraries could tailor LAD to meet the needs of individual communities, choose different days of the week to extend opening hours and customise finishing times.

The program would also be enhanced by taking on board an evaluation of the LAD program objectives from a community perspective and addressing systemic barriers to accessing library services and programs. These might include issues relating to the (un)availability of public transport, demographic factors such as an ageing population, and the needs of commuter communities.

As noted in feedback from one participating library:

It is particularly important to realise that what works in a metropolitan setting does not automatically translate to success in a regional setting.



4.2 Program delivery recommendations

... [We] are looking to creating sub brands – LAD movies, LAD music, LAD craft, etc and have these on set dates within months (for example a movie on the first Thursday of each month) – Darebin Library staff

Program delivery recommendations from libraries that participated in the LAD program include:

- creating routine program schedules, such as a monthly book club, to encourage regular attendance
- considering partnerships to deliver ongoing events, chess clubs, craft organisations, etc – anything which can be self-managing, or at least [run with] low-level staff input
- continuing to prioritise wellbeing and social connections in low-key activities while incorporating best practice research to mitigate gambling harm
- collaborating with established community groups and encouraging them to meet in the library, participate in existing activities, and engage with the broader program (this approach will introduce library services to newcomers while enhancing engagement with regular users)
- working strategically with legacy outcomes in mind and building the program around existing community partnerships while working towards new and sustainable partnerships and collaborations
- using the skills and interests of library staff for programming (e.g. art/craft skills, chess/board game skills, etc)
- being flexible and imaginative. Thinking about what a community might enjoy. Talking to people who use the library about their interests. Sometimes this will lead to an event or spark an idea for a program.



4.3 Staffing recommendations

... [There] should be a core team to both plan and be there on the night to run the programs and each event... Familiar staff faces mean that people coming to the library get to know you and you remember them... [Library] staff who experience the library during Libraries After Dark like that it is a special entity with a different approach. There is more social interaction. – Glenroy Library staff

Libraries overwhelmingly recommend that dedicated staff with appropriate skills deliver the LAD program. Staffing-related recommendations from libraries that participated in the program include:

- conducting a thorough staff consultation process prior to any change in library opening hours
- employing/deploying a dedicated LAD program officer to organise, plan, evaluate and work on the nights that the LAD program is operating. The program officer should have oversight of LAD programming across all participating library branches
- ensuring that staff allocated or recruited to operate LAD have the skills to foster meaningful professional connections with patrons
- if deploying existing staff to manage the LAD program, encouraging them to put regular library work aside on LAD evenings and focus on interacting with those coming into the library
- having consistency in staff rostered on for LAD to help build relationships with regular attendees
- promoting LAD internally so that all library staff can encourage the people with whom they interact to attend, as appropriate
- providing training and regular refresher training on gambling harm prevention to all library employees, not only those involved in LAD, engaging specialists in the field and presenters with lived experience.

LAD is a more vibrant program if there is money to cover more than staff funding and extending library opening hours.

4.4 Management and administration

While Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation grant funding for LAD has ceased, PAEC has recommended the Victorian government consider extending its support for LAD, or similar programs.

PLV is keen to work with the Victorian government to explore how resources can best be provided for the next iteration of LAD. In the first instance, PLV recommends consideration be given to funding LAD as part of business as usual, with an increase in the Public Libraries Funding Program for the extended library opening hours.

Given the risk of harmful gambling associated with loneliness and isolation, consideration should be given to providing all libraries with the capacity to extend their opening hours to 8 or 9 pm one evening a week, not just libraries in communities with high-loss pokies.

Should the Victorian government wish to continue funding LAD as a standalone program, PLV recommends that it assume oversight of LAD 2.0 as the peak body for Victoria's public libraries. This is endorsed by Merri-bek Council, which previously administered the program.

As a Public Libraries Funding Program or a standalone program, PLV recommends that the Victorian government consider resourcing the peak body to manage LAD 2.0 as a broad, statewide initiative. PLV management would include the following supports:

- a LAD program working group within the PLV Programs and Partnerships Special Interest Group to coordinate the program under the guidance of a PLV project officer
- a template LAD 2.0 plan, with an emphasis on providing safe, welcoming environments and programs for vulnerable or isolated community members



- an online repository to share assets, program plans, funding opportunities, delivery partners (including those with expertise in reducing gambling-related harm), and training material, managed through the Programs and Partnerships Special Interest Group with the support of a PLV project officer
- centralised marketing collateral for participating libraries
- integration of the LAD website as a subsite within the existing PLV platform
- promotion of the program widely through social media, mainstream media, conferences and other speaking opportunities, etc
- development of strategies for evaluating program outcomes in collaboration with participating libraries.

Finally, while the chief cost of delivering LAD is staff time (and overtime), the provision of additional resources would enhance the quality and appeal of activities libraries are able to offer their communities.

LAD is a more vibrant program if there is money to cover more than staff funding and extending library opening hours. While it is possible to provide free light refreshments, start small special interest groups and run events without much in the budget, a few interesting speakers and special events will bring in people from the community who are not aware the event is part of a special program.

– Glenroy Library staff

Appendix 1

Participating library services and branches

Ballarat Libraries

Sebastopol

Brimbank Libraries

Sunshine

Deer Park

Sydenham

Casey Cardinia Libraries⁶

Pakenham

City of Greater Dandenong Libraries

Dandenong

Springvale

Darebin Libraries

Preston

Reservoir

East Gippsland Shire Library

Bairnsdale

Frankston Libraries

Carrum Downs

Glenelg Libraries

Portland

Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation

Shepparton

Hume Libraries

Broadmeadows

Sunbury

Craigieburn

Merri-bek Libraries⁷

Glenroy

Mildura Library

Mildura

Wyndham Libraries

Hoppers Crossing

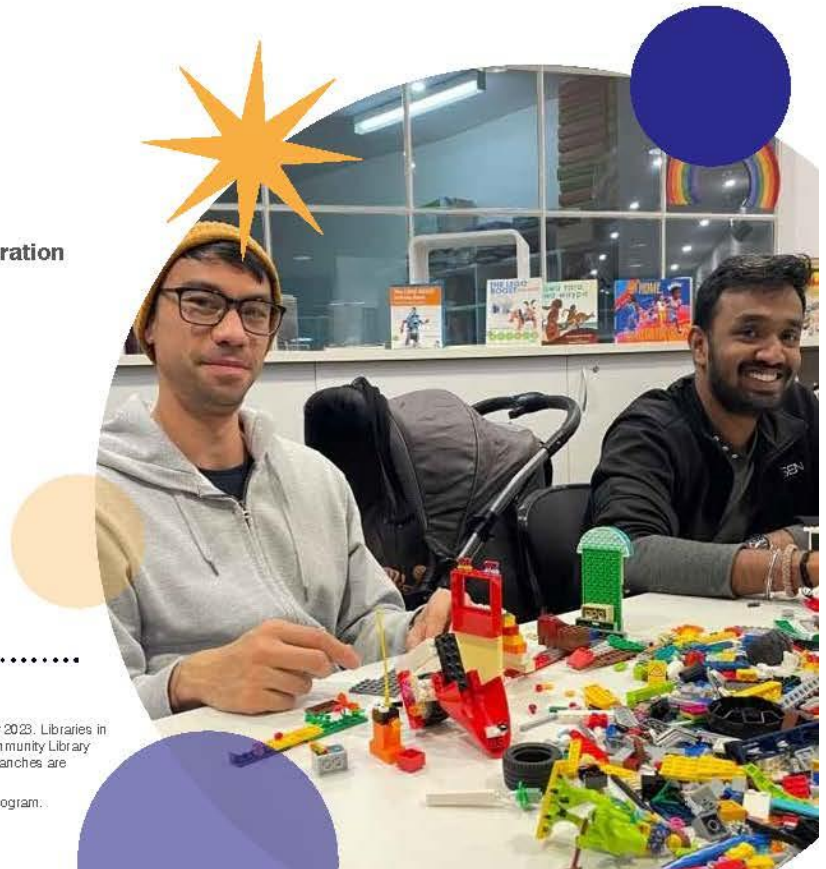
Point Cook Library

Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Mill Park

Thomastown

Watsonia



⁶ Casey Cardinia Regional Library Corporation ceased to exist from 1 July 2023. Libraries in Cardinia Shire, including Pakenham, have become part of MyLi – My Community Library – since the completion of the LAD program. The City of Casey's library branches are managed by Connected Libraries.

⁷ Name changed from Moreland Libraries during the course of the LAD program.



DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW

LIBRARIES AFTER DARK

Public Libraries Victoria

ABN 62 734 551 228
Reg. No. A00231906

PO Box 24131, 15 Southern Cross Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000

E ceo@plv.org.au
W www.plv.org.au

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G. Consideration of action petitions and joint letters

None

H. General Business

I. Reports from delegates appointed by the Board to other bodies

J. Urgent Business

K. Confidential Meeting (meeting closed to the public as per 89 (2) of the Local Government Act 1989)