



LIBRARY PLAN

2021-2025



LITERACY AND ACCESS FOR ALL

Table of Contents

<i>Your Library</i>	03
<i>Your Library Board</i>	03
Our vision	04
Our mission	04
Our partners	04
Our values	04
Strategic planning framework	05
The role of libraries	06
Community wellbeing	06
Economic benefits	06
Agility and innovation	07
Ongoing roles	07
Key directions	08
How we report on our key directions	08
Key direction 1: Literacy for all, reading for pleasure	10
Key direction 2: Connecting people to knowledge and each other	12
Key direction 3: Creative learning – a rehearsal for life	14
Key direction 4: All for one and one for all, working with our partners	16
Key direction 5: Practice sustainability and protect our environment	17
Key direction 6: Measure the impact and continually improve	19
Key direction 7: Recruiting and retaining highly motivated staff	21
Conclusion	23

Your Library

Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation (operating as *Your Library*) provides library services to Knox City Council, Maroondah City Council and Yarra Ranges Council.

Together, the three municipalities cover a large geographic area in outer metropolitan Melbourne. They have a combined population of 440,136 and a diverse range of communities.

Municipality	Population	Area
Knox	165,147	113.8 km ²
Maroondah	119,401	61.4 km ²
Yarra Ranges	159,955	2,500 km ²



The Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation was established in 1996 by the Member Councils in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*.

The Board governs the Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act, the Regional Library Agreement and other adopted policies and procedures.

The day-to-day management of Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, supported by the Corporate Management Team.



Your Library Board

The Board is made up of two nominated Councillors from each of the Member Councils.



Cr Yvonne Allred
Knox City Council



Cr Tasa Damante
Maroondah City Council



Cr Len Cox
Yarra Ranges Council



Cr Marcia Timmers-Leitch
Knox City Council
(Deputy Chair)



Cr Kylie Spears
Maroondah City Council
(Chair)



Cr Fiona Mc Allister
Yarra Ranges Council

Our vision

Literacy and access for all – no one left behind!

Our mission

To provide something indispensable or enriching every day – **for free** – to everyone in the community.

Our partners

Your Library achieves our vision, mission and key directions by working in partnership with our Member Councils, other levels of governments, businesses, educators, charities, neighbourhood houses, learning centres and other not-for-profit organisations to progress our shared interest in achieving a better future for our communities.

Collaborations and partnerships are important enablers. They are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.

Our values

Our plans, decisions and actions are informed and guided by our values.

Fairness and equity: We are committed to advancing fairness and equity for all.

Social responsibility: We contribute to our community and demonstrate corporate and social responsibility.

Diversity and inclusion: We respect and celebrate the diversity of our communities. Acceptance and inclusion are at the core of what we do.

Sustainability: We build the four pillars of sustainability into everything we do.

Agility and innovation: We are agile and responsive to changing community needs. We provide opportunities for people to be innovative through our services, spaces and collections.

Strategic planning framework

Your Library Board has developed this four-year Library Plan, a six-year Strategic Resource Plan and a Long-Term Financial Strategy.

Our Board develops these plans by reviewing and considering:

- community needs and aspirations that have been identified through an omnibus survey
- community feedback via 'Your Comments Count'
- advice from our Council officers on broader library services and infrastructure trends
- reviews undertaken by our Member Councils in relation to their individual library services and infrastructure.

A four-year Action Plan based on this Library Plan is agreed upon with each Member Council when they adopt their Council and Health and Wellbeing Plans. These plans provide individual Council-focused outputs and outcomes during the four years covered by this Library Plan.



The role of libraries

Libraries are more than just books. They contribute to social cohesion and connections.

Your Library has a huge front door, both physically and virtually. We provide valuable services to the wide range of our community members, at all ages and stages of their life. From storytime for babies and their caregivers, to homework clubs for teenagers, job search services for adults and delivery services to older residents in aged care, we cater for everyone.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

While our local libraries maintain their traditional focus on literacy and learning, they also embrace their role as a crucial part of the social infrastructure for community wellbeing in a much more sophisticated and open way. We are part of an overall learning, literacy, entertainment and wellbeing landscape.

We support the health and wellbeing of our community through our collections, programs, information services, places and spaces, and partnerships. Our local libraries are safe spaces that provide community connections, access to resources and expertise in information provision.

We focus on physical, mental and social health. We challenge social isolation and support physical and mental health through opportunities for learning, connecting and participating. We contribute to improved individual and community health and wellbeing outcomes through supporting and complementing initiatives by our partners.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The economic value of libraries is made up of both direct and indirect benefits to the community. Libraries provide direct benefits to marginalised and disadvantaged groups by providing them with access to government websites, advice and help. Indirect benefits include improved literacy skills, digital skills and improved career development outcomes.

Libraries are also essential for providing access to internet and online services. Research has shown that the free wi-fi provided by libraries leads to tangible developments in job opportunities, which are felt by the wider community through business development and increased cash generation.

Additional research shows that Victorian libraries contribute an estimated \$328 million per year in economic activity, and generate \$4.30 in benefits for every \$1 invested.

AGILITY AND INNOVATION

As the world evolves and transitions into the digitalisation of information, so too do libraries. As the shutdowns associated with COVID-19 demonstrated, the value of a free and equal public institute that fosters healthy communities, creativity and support networks is more important now than ever.

During the pandemic, in a matter of weeks, we went from members collecting their items and attending events in branches to providing online orders, postal and courier delivery services, and online storytimes and other events.

Your Library continues to be agile and innovative to ensure we can adapt to our fast-changing world.

ONGOING ROLES

Your Library:

- fosters the joy of reading and learning
- supports the development of all forms of literacy
- provides opportunities and spaces for individual and community activities that support and promote health and wellbeing
- enables independent lifelong learning, research and innovation
- supports local businesses (e.g. training and access to resources in partnership with our Member Councils and other organisations, such as neighbourhood houses and learning centres)
- creates formal and informal spaces that allow for:
 - learning and training spaces, communal meetings and workshops
 - chill-out spaces to escape the noise of everyday life
 - a community 'living room' that could include a cafe and/or catering area that would be a relaxing place for people to linger in and interact
- contributes to and facilitate local community COVID-19 recovery efforts in partnership with our Member Councils and other organisations
- sustains young families (especially those who would benefit from access to early years' literacy programs and resources)
- connects and support people and communities who are disenfranchised or socially isolated, such as:
 - CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse)
 - LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning)
 - victims of domestic violence
 - homeless
 - digitally excluded
- reaches out to community members who are not yet aware of the range and scale of our service offerings
- provides community library services for all, in places that are at the heart of local communities, so that no one is left behind!

Key directions

HOW WE REPORT ON OUR KEY DIRECTIONS

Your Library is improving the way we measure the impact of our work (our outcomes). This does not mean we stop measuring library activity and use (our outputs). It is an additional stream of information about behaviour change, attitudes, how people feel about themselves and other qualitative indicators, especially social connections.

We:

- increase our focus on capturing and telling stories about the way libraries change lives
- run more regular, but smaller, focused and themed community and user surveys, with questions that focus on the difference that the use of the library made to the person, as well as what they did in the library
- share stories in our regular reporting to the Board, Member Councils and the community, using photos, images, videos and voices of our users
- connect our reporting to our Member Councils' health and wellbeing indicators and the strategies that arise from the Libraries for Health and Wellbeing: Strategic Framework
- use economic indicators to measure the value of activity and return on investment.



Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs provide an urgent call for action to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality and foster economic growth. They also highlight the importance of addressing climate change and protecting the environment.

We used the SDGs to guide this plan and set the direction for our future services, programs, collections, collaborations and partnerships. We address each goal directly and practically through our own actions, and also provide our users with the information and resources they need to take action themselves.

For example, we commit to taking action on climate change (SDG 13) by reducing the environmental impact of our services. We also provide information, resources and opportunities for the community to learn and reduce their own environmental impact.

In the discussion about our key directions, the SDGs that apply to each of our key directions are indicated using the icons below.



Key direction 1:

Literacy for all, reading for pleasure

Literacy – the ability to read and comprehend text – is strongly related to educational success and economic wellbeing. Literacy is a core skill that is needed to fully take part in modern life.

We are not born knowing how to read. Literacy has to be learned. Like all skills, it is maintained and improved by practice – the more you practice you get, the easier it gets and the more you get out of it.

Research indicates that literacy improves economic outcomes at an individual level. Functional literacy is a building block for other literacies (e.g. digital, democratic, financial, numerical and social). Without an adequate level of literacy, everything is a greater struggle, and your participation as a citizen can be limited.

Our libraries can play a vital role in reaching people who have been excluded from society because of their low literacy or low digital literacy

STRATEGIES

Increase the number of readers

1. Design campaigns to increase the numbers of active readers by providing more of what people want to read
2. Make it easy to join and borrow materials online
3. Provide tutorials to help people download items to their devices
4. Provide opportunities to borrow library materials in non-traditional locations

Increase how much, and how broadly, they read

5. Build collections that entice and inspire
6. Broaden the scope and range of collections, particularly eCollections
7. Promote reader development and reader advisory initiatives (e.g. book groups, author talks and online reading groups) that encourage people to expand their reading horizons, knowledge and understanding
8. Engage with research to understand why people read or do not read, and develop activities to encourage more reading

Offer digital access

9. Offer free public access to the internet and WiFi
10. Provide access to devices (e.g. laptops and iPads)
11. Run information and digital literacy programs, including online and face-to-face support from library staff
12. Participate with partners in programs to improve digital access and citizenship

Make every child a reader

13. Run programs that stimulate language and literacy development from babyhood
14. Support parents and caregivers to read to their children
15. Recognise that play stimulates learning and literacy (e.g. offer play spaces in libraries)
16. Create and promote attractive and engaging collections for children and young people



QUALITY
EDUCATION



REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Increased literacy
- Improved school readiness
- Greater fairness and equity of access
- Improved digital inclusion and cybersafety
- More informed decision-making

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number of members
- Number of new and active members
- Number of items loaned per member (physical and digital)
- Size of collections
- Funds spent on collections
- Number of, and attendance at, literacy programs
- Satisfaction with literacy programs
- Turnover of collections
- Turnover of eResources



Key direction 2:

Connecting people to knowledge and each other

Libraries are inclusive places for everyone, regardless of their social, economic, religious, political or ethnic status. The physical spaces of libraries have changed dramatically over the past two decades, but they are still places where people can connect with one another and with ideas, stories and experiences that grow knowledge and understanding.

Your Library is an embodiment of social equity, established to service all members of the community equally. We provide a variety of spaces for different needs – active and noisy, quiet and conversational, work and study, and ‘chill-out’.

We provide an extensive collection of physical and online resources that supports the diverse needs of our community.

We recognise that our services must extend beyond the library walls and our outreach programs bring them to where our communities live, work and play.

STRATEGIES

Value diversity

1. Run public programs that engage communities and celebrate their diversity
2. Co-host events with the community on topical issues and festivals (e.g. Pride festival)
3. Offer programs for new migrants to the area to introduce them to the library and the community
4. Offer programs for people who are socially, mentally or physically challenged or disadvantaged
5. Timetable quiet times in the library to help customers who experience sensory overload
6. Reflect the widest possible range of interests and perspectives in the collections

Provide creative and safe spaces

7. Include (internal and external) spaces in new library buildings or refurbishments that can adapt as needs change, and provide opportunities for community involvement in the design process
8. Ensure that, where it is practical and safe, libraries are accessible 24/7
9. Install gender-neutral signage (e.g. toilets and baby change rooms)
10. Encourage the use of library spaces for debate, performance and creative endeavour
11. Ensure that, when local libraries are being constructed or refurbished, the design includes different zones to allow noisy and interactive events to be run alongside chill-out spaces where people can escape the noise of everyday life

Reach out to the community

12. Revitalise and rethink traditional outreach activities to deliver a wider range of library services to communities and events
13. Work with social housing providers to deliver digital programs (e.g. sharing books and offering help with digital reading devices)
14. Take library resources and programs to other community venues, such as community and recreation centres
15. Provide opportunities for online connection for people who can't visit a physical library

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Greater social cohesion and reduced isolation
- A more tolerant and inclusive society
- More connected communities and strengthened democracy

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number of community outreach activities
- Annual customer satisfaction survey
- Alignment with Member Councils' wellbeing indicators frameworks

3 GOOD HEALTH
+ WELLBEING5 GENDER
EQUALITY10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES

Key direction 3:

Creative learning – a rehearsal for life

Once someone leaves the formal educational system, it can be difficult for them to find opportunities to learn in a practical, enjoyable and fun way. Libraries provide opportunities for individual learning and creativity. This is even more important as the Eastern Region rebuilds its economy after COVID-19.

Your Library is an informal learning place and an essential component of the learning pathways.

STRATEGIES

Provide learning opportunities

1. Run programs, events, workshops and tutorials to support learning aligned with community needs
2. Support children and young people's learning through play and doing (e.g. gaming and coding workshops)
3. Provide places for study and group working
4. Offer online databases and collections that support learning and information needs for reliable, quality content
5. Partner with similar agencies to deliver greater collective impact (e.g. neighbourhood houses and Learn Locals)
6. Create enriching online environments for people who are unable to visit our libraries

Offer support for jobseekers and businesses

7. Support jobseekers (e.g. help with CV and online applications)
8. Provide co-working spaces where practical
9. Work with local economic development agencies and business associations to provide resources, services and spaces for business activities

Provide access to technologies

10. Make 3D printers, VR headsets, robots and other emerging technologies available in libraries
11. Offer borrowable tech and maker kits along with resources to support learning and use in the home
12. Partner with digital and IT companies/organisations to deliver programs with more impact
13. Provide technologies that make it possible and easy for those with a disability to access technology (e.g. screen reader technologies for the sight-impaired)

Sustainable Development Goals

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Improved job prospects for our young people and unemployed
- New skills leading to new opportunities
- Increased numbers involved in learning
- Increased library use by under-represented communities

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Attendance numbers at learning programs
- Satisfaction with learning programs
- Satisfaction with a range of technology options
- Improved segmentation of community to meet a diversity of needs



NO
POVERTY



ZERO
HUNGER



DECENT WORK
+ ECONOMIC
GROWTH



INDUSTRY,
INNOVATION +
INFRASTRUCTURE





Key direction 4:

All for one and one for all, working with our partners

Your Library achieves our vision, mission and key directions by working in partnership with our Member Councils, other levels of governments, businesses, educators, charities, neighbourhood houses, learning centres and other not-for-profit organisations to progress our shared interest in achieving a better future for our communities.

Through partnerships, we increase the likelihood of each organisation achieving their mission and amplifying their reach.

STRATEGIES

Develop partnership opportunities

1. Work with our partners to meet the lifelong learning, literacy, entertainment and wellbeing needs of our communities through our joint services, programs and collections
2. Use the Sustainable Development Goals to guide our existing and future collaborations and partnerships

Promote our work

3. Promote our collaborations and partnerships through social media and our membership eNewsletter

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Successful collaborations and partnerships
- Better outcomes for our communities

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number of partnerships
- Qualitative and quantitative feedback from our collaborators and partners



Key direction 5:

Practice sustainability and protect our environment

Your Library uses four pillars of sustainability – ethical, economic, environmental and social – in everything we do. In partnership with our Member Councils and suppliers, we must reduce our environmental footprint and lead by example.

STRATEGIES

Find new opportunities for sustainable practices

1. Ensure all new vehicles are either hybrid or fully electric
2. Offset our fleet emissions through Greenfleet Australia's native biodiverse forests planting program
3. Mandate that all future tenders reduce our environmental impact through:
 - a. the environmental business practices of our suppliers
 - b. our purchased goods or services having the least possible environmental footprint
4. Provide information on sustainable practices in our collections, talks and programs, and lead by example

Seek out opportunities to be more sustainable

5. Take advice from our Member Councils
6. Ensure that 10 per cent of our tender evaluations is based on the sustainable practices of our suppliers and the environmental impact of the goods or services supplied
7. Reduce the use of plastic in book coverings and other items
8. Broaden the scope and range of our environmental collections, particularly eCollections

Reducing our carbon footprint

9. Ensure that all PCs and laptops achieve at least a 5-star energy rating, saving up to 130 kWh of electricity and 90 kilos of greenhouse gas emissions per PC (enough to fill a large room)
10. Install electric charging stations at Administration
11. Work with our Member Councils to see if electric charging stations can be installed at our local libraries

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Reduced environmental impact of our services and collections
- A community that is more informed on best environmental practices

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- All fleet vehicles being either hybrid or all-electric over the next four years
- All tenders have an environmental impact weighting of 10 per cent for evaluation purposes
- Annual contribution made to Greenfleet Australia for native biodiverse forests planting offset
- All PCs and laptops have at least a 5-star energy rating

6

CLEAN WATER
+ SANITATION

7

AFFORDABLE
+ CLEAN ENERGY

11

SUSTAINABLE
CITIES +
COMMUNITIES

12

RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION

13

CLIMATE
ACTION

14

LIFE BELOW
WATER

15

LIFE ON
LAND

Key direction 6:

Measure the impact and continually improve

Your Library promotes, measures and evaluates our services for continuous improvement.

We promote our many programs and services using all available media. Our promotion includes reports, media releases and social media posts to demonstrate the differences that our services, programs and places make in the lives of individuals and the wellbeing of our communities.

Your Library uses the SMART (stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) methodology when developing our services.

We constantly measure and evaluate our services for continuous improvement. Our evaluation involves the systematic collection of information about the program characteristics, activities, and/or outcomes so that decisions can be made about what the programs are doing and how to improve program effectiveness.

Evaluation is integrated into every aspect of our services, initiatives or strategies from initial planning through to formal review. This is an ongoing cycle that contributes to continuous service improvement.

STRATEGIES

Reporting

1. Provide quarterly Board reports that describe the outputs and outcomes from the services delivered
2. Publish an annual report that includes information about the activities undertaken

Feedback

3. Provide opportunities to measure our performance and outcomes through:
 - an online feedback page on our website
 - hard copy feedback forms in every branch
 - short, targeted surveys to assess the impact of a service (e.g. after a program or activity)
 - short targeted online surveys
 - a six-monthly omnibus survey to capture feedback on all our services
4. Promote our many programs and services through using different types of media (e.g. virtual networks and social media)

Create awareness of library services and activities

5. Participate in community events and gatherings, partnerships and networks
6. Find new ways to contact potential or disenfranchised members

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Programs based on community feedback and needs

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Quarterly reports
- Annual Report
- Short, targeted surveys
- Biennial (every 2nd year) omnibus survey
- Public Libraries Victoria Network Annual Survey
- Social media engagement statistics (e.g. likes and shares; audience growth, rate of followers, followers vs following ratio, active fans, clicks per post and organic vs paid results)

Sustainable Development Goals



Key direction 7:

Recruiting and retaining highly motivated staff

Our staff are the key to developing and delivering quality services. Staff need to be digitally literate and have excellent problem-solving and customer service skills.

We start by identifying what aspects of culture and strategy we want to emphasise in a role, and then looking for those in the candidates.

Employee development and education is an important part of our staff retention program. Our corporate training is designed to help staff build new skills, learn new technologies and engage with new processes. Offering study leave and reimbursement of tuition fees for outside courses helps our staff feel valued and invested in *Your Library*.

We believe in an increasing returns model – the longer someone is with *Your Library*, the more productive they become over time. This is a long game, and we make sure that every employee is engaged with and part of our ongoing success.

STRATEGIES

Recruit and retain staff

1. Provide opportunities for acting roles
2. Hire staff that reflect the surrounding community (e.g. making a second language highly valued)
3. Employ suitably qualified and/or experienced managers and staff who are appropriately trained to carry out their responsibilities
4. Employ specialist staff with non-library related qualifications to enrich and support library programs and functions (e.g. literacy, information technology, youth work, education, marketing and administration, and community liaison)
5. Facilitate a planned induction and orientation program for all new staff and staff who have changed positions

Provide awareness training

6. Provide diversity and ability awareness training to help staff communicate with all library members and users, including people with disabilities
7. Provide cultural and gender awareness training to help staff meet the service needs of people from different cultural backgrounds (e.g. our Indigenous communities, adult new readers, people who speak languages other than English, and LGBTIQ+ communities)
8. Encourage staff to expand their library and cross-sectoral networks and further their professional development by reading, exchanging ideas online and attending courses, conferences and meetings
9. Participate in statewide projects and training run by State Library Victoria

Offer ongoing staff training and professional development

10. Maintain a formal process of continuing professional education, augmented by informal skills transfer, mentoring and information sessions for staff
11. Provide initial and refresher customer service training for all staff
12. Offer ongoing information and digital literacy training (including self-paced online learning)
13. Offer ongoing problem-solving and customer service skills training (including self-paced online learning)
14. Provide reader development and readers advisory training
15. Encourage job rotation and staff exchanges to facilitate training and development, especially for staff in small branch libraries

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Motivated and skilled staff who are sensitive to cultural differences and highly regarded by our communities
- Job satisfaction and increase in staff engagement

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Short, targeted surveys
- Biennial omnibus survey
- Feedback from social media and our contact and feedback forms



GOOD HEALTH
+ WELLBEING



GENDER
EQUALITY



DECENT WORK
+ ECONOMIC
GROWTH



Conclusion

LIBRARY SERVICE EVOLUTION

Your Library has evolved from the traditional view of books being the only source of knowledge and authority. Our local libraries are multifaceted community facilities that are highly valued by our members and communities.

We aim to know and understand our members, and potential members, so well that our collections, programs and services sell themselves. We ensure that our services, collections and spaces continue to provide fair and equitable access to everyone. *Your Library* is an informal learning place and an essential component of the learning pathways.

Your Library plays a vital role in reaching people who have been excluded from society because of their low literacy or low digital literacy. We recognise that our services must extend beyond the library walls and our outreach programs bring the services to where our communities live, work and play.

OUR TEAM

We empower our staff to lead and make decisions that improve library services for our communities.

We believe in an increasing returns model – the longer someone is with *Your Library*, the more productive they become over time. This is a long game, and we make sure that every employee is engaged with and part of our ongoing success.

PARTNERSHIPS

Your Library achieves our vision, mission and key directions by working with partners to progress our shared interest in achieving a better future for our communities. We encourage our staff and partners to use their initiative and give you their best.

SUSTAINABILITY

Your Library uses the four pillars of sustainability – ethical, economic, environmental and social – in everything we do. With our Member Councils, partners and suppliers, we operate by these four pillars and lead by example within our spheres of influence.

PLACES & SPACES

Our local libraries provide places and spaces that give free and equal access to knowledge, resources and education. Our designs emphasise spaces that foster connection and creativity. New or refurbished library buildings focus on sustainability and innovation, and flexible, multipurpose spaces feature strongly.

We provide a variety of spaces for different needs – active and noisy, quiet and conversational, work and study, and ‘chill-out’.

PLANNING, MEASURING & REPORTING WHAT WE DO

Your Library uses the SMART (stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) methodology when developing our services.

We constantly measure and evaluate our services for continuous improvement. Our evaluation involves the systematic collection of information about the program characteristics, activities, and/or outcomes so that decisions can be made about what we are doing and how to improve our service effectiveness.

Finally, we report regularly through our quarterly Board and annual reports.

