

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL.

Learning and Library Strategy

2014 - 2024



MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL



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Mitchell Shire Council is appreciative of the contribution made by individuals, community groups and other organisations to the development of the Mitchell Learning and Library Strategy.

Thanks also to David Sinclair and Sarah-Jane Conroy from AEC Group who undertook the project.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to them, their cultures, and to elders both past and present.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Mitchell Shire is located in regional Victoria, just over an hour drive from the heart of Melbourne. Due to the relative affordability of housing in the area and its proximity to Melbourne, the southern region has become an attractive residential location especially for young families. High levels of population growth are expected to continue in the region over the next ten years and beyond. Compared to neighbouring local governments and Victoria as a whole, the Mitchell Shire scores poorly on a series of socio-economic measures such as unemployment rates and the proportion of residents completing Year 12.

1.2 Purpose

The Mitchell Shire Council (Council) recognises that in addition to providing core infrastructure and services, it must also take steps to support improvements in social and economic outcomes. This objective is reflected throughout Council's suite of community plans and strategies. Providing modern library services and supporting a culture of lifelong learning within the community are some of the ways in which these outcomes can be achieved. The purpose of this report is to identify Council's role in the strategic development of libraries and lifelong learning.

1.3 Vision for Lifelong Learning and Library Services

The vision for the Mitchell Shire Council is: "Together with our community, create a sustainable future."

The vision for lifelong learning and library services is:

"To connect, inform and enrich our community."

We will achieve this through:

- Providing access to current and relevant resources and technologies
- Developing partnerships and creating opportunities to foster learning across all stages of life
- Delivering services that are adaptable and targeted to the needs of our community
- Providing spaces that are inviting, accessible and serve diverse community needs
- Ensuring our staff have technical and local knowledge and are experts in engaging with our community.

1.4 Process

This report has been developed following a five step process which has included:

- Establishment of a vision for the Learning and Library Strategy
- Comparison of the key socio-demographic measures and trends in the Mitchell Shire relative to comparison regions
- Review of best practice in service delivery within other jurisdictions and identification of the impact for the Mitchell Shire
- Detailed consultation exercise, which included:
 - Library staff
 - Key Council staff
 - Community (workshops and intercept surveys)
 - Schools (Principals and/or teacher librarians)
 - Higher education providers (e.g. GoTAFE, regional universities)
 - Regional development bodies (e.g. RDA Hume).

2. Lifelong Learning, Libraries and Local Government

Lifelong learning is a frequently misunderstood concept and libraries are often associated with rooms filled with dusty books. It is therefore important to establish a shared understanding of lifelong learning and contemporary libraries and library services before considering the appropriate role of local government in their delivery.

2.1 Lifelong Learning

“...a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances, and environments.” (Watson, 2003)

The rapid development and spread of new technologies like electronic tablets and smart phones mean it is increasingly important that we continue to learn new things throughout our lifetimes. Lifelong learning is about providing access to a range of learning opportunities throughout people’s lives to support continuous development and improvement of knowledge and skills.

A key feature of lifelong learning is that it is not confined to traditional teaching environments and can be undertaken in formal education, informal education and alternative learning environments. The following figure provides some examples of each type of setting encompassing traditional learning spaces (schools, universities, places of work) and alternatives such as community infrastructure.

Communities that engage in high levels of lifelong learning activities have been found to have higher levels of socio-economic prosperity and community cohesion. Education and skills development can have tangible economic outcomes. An assessment of the contribution of education to growth in per capita GDP in Australia between 1969 and 2003 found that about 31 percent of the real growth was contributed by education. This highlights the benefits of access to post compulsory education, particularly vocational education and training and higher education and its potential impact on individual and community outcomes (Cooray, 2009).

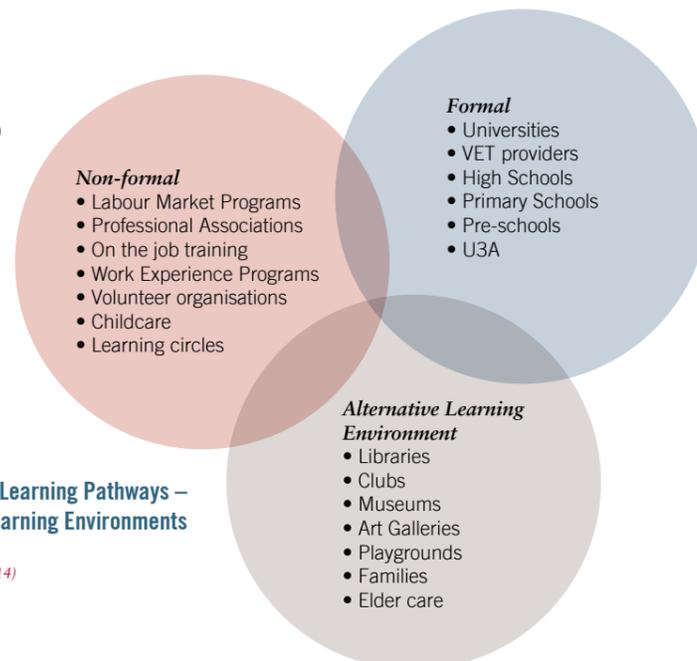


Figure 2.1. Lifelong Learning Pathways – Formal, Non-formal and Alternative Learning Environments

Refer: Lifelong Learning Council of Queensland (2014)

2.2 Contemporary Library Services

Community needs and expectations are changing, and to remain relevant libraries must also continue to evolve. While traditional lending remains at the heart of library services, libraries also need to provide contemporary services aligned to the needs of the community they serve. The Better Public Libraries report identified the following trends in public library service delivery:

- The adaptability of internal design, circulation spaces, access and hours of services will become key factors in the design and operation of libraries.
- Future libraries will be developed in partnership with other services with stand-alone libraries becoming increasingly rare.
- Long stay use of libraries for study purposes requires friendly and efficient support services such as toilets, catering and recreational quiet zones.
- Children’s and youth services will grow in importance as the library becomes a secure, electronic safe haven.
- Reading development and literacy are likely to become even more central to what libraries offer communities.
- The trend towards smaller, more targeted collections will continue.
- There will be a higher level of community engagement by library staff and programs will increasingly be delivered onsite.
- Librarians will change their role from custodians to knowledge navigators and their community development role will be enhanced.
- Libraries will become key communications centres, providing a way of navigating increasing flows of information from multiple sources.

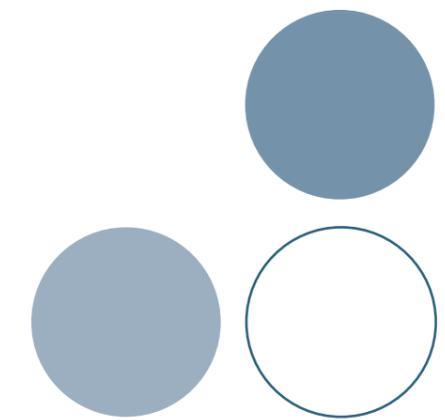
Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment. Better Public Libraries, 2003.

- Electronic links between homes and libraries and the delivery of services online will continue to increase.
- Virtual library services will be provided 24 hours a day.

There has been a significant and ongoing transition from standalone library services to the development of vibrant mixed spaces offered in partnership with other partners. In Australia and New Zealand, says Alan Bundy, president of Friends of Libraries Australia,

“it is now generally accepted that new public libraries should not be standalone, but should be, at minimum, within shopping centres as key retail anchors or collocated with other community facilities and agencies such as swimming pools, child care centres, family health and medical clinics — and that they should be multiuse and provide a range of spaces.”

In trying to activate libraries and make them busier spaces, partnerships with public and private stakeholders can have significant benefits, including additional exposure, creating key community assets and highly activated spaces. There are also cost efficiencies from sharing overhead costs and maximising the use of the available spaces.





2.3 Connection Between Lifelong Learning and Libraries

The provision of high quality and welcoming facilities is likely to be key to the success of any lifelong learning program. In communities with a strong lifelong learning focus, public libraries and other community hubs will be key nodes with a network of learning locations, which are likely to also include individual's homes and other public spaces. This role for public libraries is closely aligned to the changes in the services which contemporary libraries provide, with a greater emphasis on programming as well as traditional book lending.

2.4 Summary

Implications for the Learning Strategy

Lifelong learning is a potentially effective means of improving socio-economic outcomes for residents by improving their knowledge, skills and sense of personal fulfilment.

The delivery of a lifelong learning program is likely to involve multiple partners and Council's role will predominantly be as an enabling organisation and conduit to services rather than as a direct training provider.

Implications for the Library Strategy

Libraries have changed significantly and the traditional model, solely focused on lending and literacy is no longer valid, although these services remain part of the contemporary service offering.

There are clear opportunities for the lifelong learning and library strategies to work together in particular the use of library spaces and equipment for learning and the promotion of lifelong learning through the branch network.

3. Lifelong Learning Strategy

Although there is growing consensus that local government has a central role in supporting lifelong learning, as yet few councils have translated this intention into tangible delivery. The following sections set out a framework for the long-term development of lifelong learning in the Mitchell Shire and prioritised actions that will initiate practical delivery.

3.1 The Need for a Mitchell Shire Lifelong Learning Strategy

The recently announced closures of the Ford and Toyota factories provide examples of the need for a lifelong learning strategy. Technological advancement, shortened product lifecycles and rapid economic restructuring have made jobs increasingly short lived. In future employees are likely to need to continually develop and enhance their skills throughout their working life.

A socio-demographic profile of the Mitchell Shire is available at Appendix A. The profile shows the region has experienced strong population growth over the past five years and is expected to continue over the medium to long-term. However, there are also higher levels of unemployment, lower economic diversification and lower levels of educational attainment (including lower levels of year 12

and post-school qualification attainment) compared to State averages. The links between these types of socio-economic indicators and a host of outcome measures including economic output, average household incomes, mental and physical health are well established. Increasing access to a range of education and skills development opportunities could generate tangible benefits to the individuals involved and the overall community.

3.2 Current Provision

Although there is currently no lifelong learning strategy in place, the Mitchell Shire is home to multiple organisations which are already providing lifelong learning services. Most of these organisations have been consulted as part of this study and their services are summarised below.

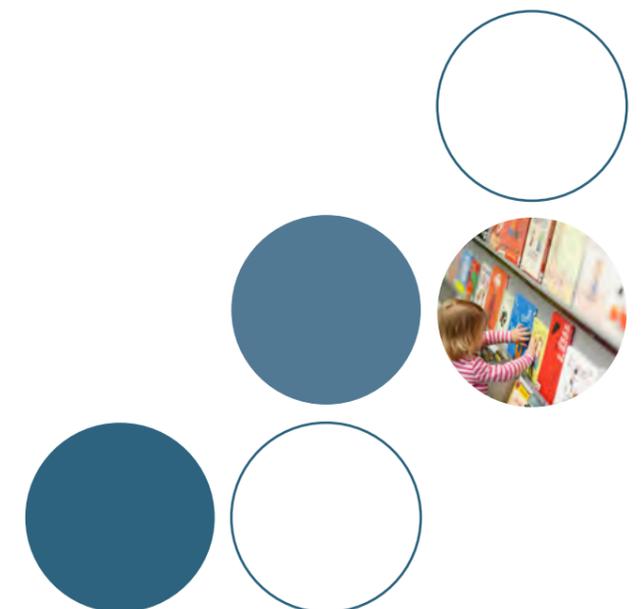


Table 3.1. Lifelong Learning Providers and Programs

Provider	Programs
<i>Council Services</i>	
Library Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four public libraries: • Children's activities • Borrowing services • Computer services: Use of PC's, internet, Microsoft Office, Free WiFi • Council customer service • Genealogy • Visitor information
Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitchell FREEZA: Program funded by State Government and Council to provide training for young people to organise art, music and cultural events for young people. • Mitchell Youth Council: Council Advisory Committee and Youth Development program. Youth Council provides a mechanism for Youth to advocate for the needs of young people and to meaningfully contribute to Council decision making. • Youth Grants Program: An annual program which aims to fund Youth lead projects or events. Youth Services provides support and mentoring for groups or individuals to apply for the funding and deliver the associated project. • Social Media: Administration of 6 facebook pages and 1 instagram account to facilitate youth connections with Council and activities. • Broadford Youth Centre. • National Youth Week Event. • Mitchell Services Information Card. • Skate parks: provision of skate park facilities and delivering of a mentoring program (in trial phase) and up skilling program. • Street Art workshops.
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal and child health service including assessment of child health and development as well as provision of general health services. • Kindergarten services (delivery of eight council run kindergartens). • Delivery of several playgroups, water awareness programs, and the toy library.
Community Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free workshops run by the Community Development Unit.
Arts and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of arts, culture and heritage exhibitions, events & activities. • Maintenance of an artist's register. • Council Chambers gallery space program.

Source: AEC

As well as providing some services directly, Council also provides opportunities for learning through the provision of community venues including 11 recreation and sporting reserves, 40 local parks, 10 public halls, libraries and community centres.

Despite the activity described in the table, the current provision of lifelong learning within the Shire is largely uncoordinated and focussed on the provision of a basic service rather than achieving lifelong learning outcomes. Services are poorly integrated with few formal partnerships between service providers.

Provider	Programs
<i>Other Providers</i>	
Private kindergarten/ childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple childcare options available in the Mitchell Shire.
Schools (primary and secondary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several secondary schools and over 15 primary schools.
State Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of State Services targeted towards community awareness, training, education, business and employment are available. • Programs are available through the following State Government Departments and/or delivery providers including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Centrelink – Nexus Primary Health – Department of Planning and Community Development – Playgroup Victoria – State Library Victoria. – Department of Education and Early Childhood.
GoTAFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (Seymour Campus) provides a variety of VET accredited courses.
University of the Third Age (U3A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seymour District and Kilmore District U3A organisations provide a range of learning activities and programs.
Community Recreational and Community groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clubs and organisations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APEX • Guides and Scouts • Legacy • Lions • Probus • Rotary • Youth Clubs. • A wide variety of sporting and arts and cultural activity clubs.
Regional Development Australia – Hume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of regional business and industry programs. • Focused on targeting training to assist business owners.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private businesses frequently offer in-house training and sponsorship for professional development of employees. • Private business also provides sponsorship opportunities for local community activities that have learning links.
Neighbourhood/Community Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood/Community houses provide a range of learning activities and programs

3.3 Strategic Priorities for the Mitchell Shire

The Mitchell Shire has recognised the potential benefits of Lifelong Learning and has embedded the concept within its suite of strategic documents. The following table highlights the key connections between these plans and lifelong learning.

Table 3.2. Mitchell Shire Strategic Plans and Lifelong Learning

Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance & Connection to Lifelong Learning
Mitchell Shire 2020 Community Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes Council's and community's vision, principles and priorities for the next 10 years. Establishes goals for several priority areas which have strong links to lifelong learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Leadership Governance and Advocacy Sustainable Development Economic Prosperity Social Well-Being Environmental Sustainability.
Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2013-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines Council's goals and priorities for 2013-31. Identifies nine priorities including: to provide and support programs and services to build vibrant and healthy communities where people are proud to live. Also identifies services to be targeted for the improvement and promotion of services to achieve this goal including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning assets such as library services Children's services Kindergartens Youth services Other community programs.
Youth Strategy 2014-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines Council's strategies for engaging youth in civic participation activities and responding to their needs. Priority 2 is Learning and Earning, which seeks to increase opportunities for young people to access and participate in learning activities.
Positive Ageing Strategy 2013-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes the actions that Council will take to: Manage the changing demand for services and facilities resulting from the ageing of the Mitchell community. Ensure that Mitchell's aged residents are given to the opportunity to participate in community activities. Relevant strategic directions include – achievement of an informed and engaged older population which aims to improve and promote access to information that supports and enhances the physical and mental health of older people in Mitchell Shire.

Table 3.2. Mitchell Shire Strategic Plans and Lifelong Learning

Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance & Connection to Lifelong Learning
Mitchell Early Years Plan 2012-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides strategic direction for the development and co-ordination of early year's programs, activities and local community development processes. Key priority areas with strong links to learning include: The management of reform for early childhood education. Reducing serious service gaps (provision of outside school hours care, vacation care and promoting and extending school holiday activities).
Access and Inclusion Plan 2013-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant strategic priorities related to learning outcomes include: <p>Priority 1: Promote inclusion and contribution in the community and encourage awareness and understanding by celebrating the diversity of people who live, work and visit the Mitchell Shire.</p> <p>Priority 2: Encourage an increase in economic opportunities for people with disability to contribute to the community that are sustainable and practical by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting equal opportunities for people with all abilities, to increase learning, skill development, employment and retention. Working with local businesses and traders to improve inclusiveness and accessibility for their business.
Integrated Community Services and Infrastructure Plan (ICSIP) 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides direction around infrastructure provision and the creation of community hubs. Makes recommendation for future capacity of library and learning facilities and the integration of these assets in a community hub in response to growth.
Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines goals to make Mitchell a healthier and more liveable community. Relevant goals and strategies for lifelong learning include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve health and well-being through increased physical activity and lifelong learning. Create a Shire which has confident, resilient and involved communities that work together to achieve shared goals. Proactively plan for the emerging needs of the Mitchell's growing population and changing demographic. Ensure the health and well-being needs of Mitchell's growing population and changing demographics are supported by appropriate and related policies.

Source: Mitchell Shire Council

The prevalence of learning related objectives throughout Council’s strategic plans demonstrates both a commitment to place lifelong learning at the core of its program and the critical role of learning and skills in residents’ everyday lives.

Council has several key roles in supporting lifelong learning including the direct delivery of some training services as well as coordination, support and promotion. Where possible, Council should focus its activities on areas which no other organisation can deliver, rather than in competing with other providers.

Key Council activities over the course of the strategy will include:

• Investment

Making targeted investments in the lifelong learning program will be critical to moving from planning to delivery stage. A large part of this investment will need to be in the form of staff resources to provide a coordination role which is currently missing. Integrating services will increase accessibility by removing the burden of identifying an appropriate course from participants who may not find it easy to engage with providers. This role can also increase awareness amongst providers of the opportunities to use Council infrastructure and staff skill sets.

• Planning and Coordination

There are already multiple groups involved in life-long learning. These activities are not coordinated which means that participants are left to identify courses for themselves which can be challenging particularly when potential students have limited language skills, do not have regular internet access or have been outside the education system for some time. Bringing together the disparate groups of service providers to identify partnership opportunities and connections has the potential to make existing lifelong learning services much more accessible and identify opportunities for an expanded range of services. It is also vital that lifelong learning is considered during planning of enabling infrastructure (e.g. transport infrastructure, public transport services and improvement of telecommunications).

• Promotion

Many, although by no means all, of the potential users of lifelong learning services may be unaware of the training and skills development opportunities which already exist in the Mitchell Shire. Developing greater community awareness through campaigns and integration of lifelong learning into other Council services including sport and recreation, libraries, mother and child health care is likely to increase awareness and take up. Internal promotion of lifelong learning through Council’s own activities supporting staff to become involved in, and ambassadors for, lifelong learning is another opportunity to increase awareness.

• Programs and Activities

Council already provides some well attended and highly valued life-long learning services. It is important that these continue and where appropriate are expanded. Continuing to deliver the current program through Council initiatives such as IT training, children’s activities and other literacy programs supports the development of the integrated community hubs.

• Advocacy

In addition to promoting lifelong learning within the Mitchell Shire, Council has a key role in supporting providers externally. Council staff can support providers in applying for external funding support and establish relationships with private sector employers as a means of opening up training and skills development opportunities e.g. engaging the large developers in the region to establish pathways to allow local workers to benefit from their training and skills development programs.

3.4 Lifelong Learning Strategy Action Plan

The following table sets out the Lifelong Learning Action Plan under the key activity headings and priority. The timing of the implementation of the Strategy will be determined by Council’s ability and willingness to invest in the program and the speed at which the strategy can demonstrate tangible outputs.

Table 3.3. Lifelong Learning Strategy Action Plan and Priority

Action	Local Government Role	Deliverables	Priority (Timing)
Continued delivery of training and governance to the community through Council training initiatives such as IT training, children’s activities and other literacy programs, community grants application training and others (based on community demand and need).	Programs and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide and evolve Council led training which is well used and popular such as IT skills support and children’s activities. Identify gaps in training provision which Council is best placed to address. Continue to monitor the take up and outcomes of each program and periodically assess. 	High (Years 1-2)
Embed lifelong learning as a component within key Officer roles within Council, including Economic Development, Library Services and Community Development. Ensure that policies/strategy plans address lifelong learning initiatives.	Planning and Coordination	<p>Key responsibilities to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure lifelong learning is appropriately considered in other Council decision making Develop matrix of available services Foster greater integration between service providers including education/health/council and the community Ensure integration and consistency with other strategic documents e.g. Youth Strategy Engaging with key stakeholders (both internal and external) to ensure that ‘buy-in’ from stakeholders is achieved (including ‘buy-in’ from relevant Council departments) <p>Key performance indicators would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available places Residents attending courses Residents completing courses Residents transitioning from one course to next stage 	High (Years 1-2)

Table 3.3. Lifelong Learning Strategy Action Plan and Priority

Action	Local Government Role	Deliverables	Priority (Timing)
Bringing together the disparate groups of service providers to identify partnership opportunities and connections for formal, non-formal and alternative learning environments.	Planning and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate workshop with all current providers. • Investigate the development of a partnership between Council and educational providers to ensure a collaborative approach to learning rather than a duplication of services • Identify connections and pathways which participants could use to develop related skills at various levels. • Prepare master matrix of available courses including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Subject – Capacity – Method of delivery – Entrance requirements – Timing – Fees – Location – Qualification/accreditation • Monitor ongoing needs of service providers (infrastructure, financial support, promotion). • Establish and maintain contact database for all providers. • Develop an assessment tool to assess and assist with the referral of participants to the most suitable provider/ agency appropriate to their skills and experience. • Establish and coordinate bi-annual workshop to discuss key issues. • Include lifelong learning as a question in community surveys and use ongoing community consultation/ engagement to identify, lead and inform lifelong learning initiatives. 	High (Years 1-2)
Identify opportunities to support community groups to increase their contribution to lifelong learning through assistance in applying for external funding and skills training.	Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote these services to all providers through annual workshops. • Support providers in identifying the most appropriate funding programs and develop strategy to access funding. • Work with these organisations to prepare funding submissions. • Provide Council letters of support detailing the coordinated approach to lifelong learning. • If there is sufficient demand, provide professional training sessions to groups to develop funding submissions skills for future rounds. • Undertake appropriate lobbying activity in support local providers. 	Medium (Years 3-5)

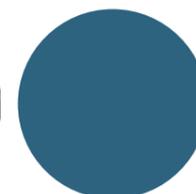
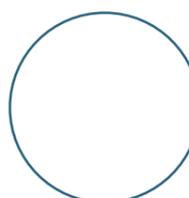
Action	Local Government Role	Deliverables	Priority (Timing)
Plan to accommodate lifelong learning activities within existing community facilities and any new community hubs which might be developed.	Planning and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with relevant Council staff and ensure the space and equipment needs of lifelong learning is incorporated within future plans for community infrastructure including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Libraries – Sport and recreation facilities – Council service centres – Health centres – Meeting spaces – Community information area – Ensure planning reflects the developing needs of service providers. 	High (Years 1-2)
Developing greater community awareness through campaigns and integration of lifelong learning into other Council services including sport and recreation, libraries, maternal child health care.	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop campaign launch and ongoing promotional strategy for integrated lifelong learning approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Day/week of action – Leaflet of coordinated services – Coverage in local media – Promotion using local celebrity or other well-known local campaign champion • Provide briefing to all frontline Council staff on the concept of lifelong learning strategy, associated policies and initiatives and encourage promotion when dealing with the public. • Identify opportunities for appointment of a 'Community Champion' to promote and advocate for the lifelong learning strategy. 	High (Years 1-2)
Investigate rebranding of the Council 'Library' service and associated learning and community hubs to 'Community Learning Centres' or 'Community Hubs'.	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebrand library providers to promote learning as associated partners. • Ensure that rebrand is supported by ongoing marketing and community information campaign. 	Medium (Years 3-5)
Supporting other service providers by making Council facilities available as venues for training events.	Programs and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify those service providers which require infrastructure and equipment support and develop a plan to make Council venues and equipment available at a reduced or negotiated cost. • Continue to monitor this as it is likely space constraints will increase overtime. 	Medium (Years 3-5)

Table 3.3. Lifelong Learning Strategy Action Plan and Priority

Action	Local Government Role	Deliverables	Priority (Timing)
Investment in creating lifelong learning infrastructure including both buildings and equipment.	Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with Strategic Planning team, ensure adequate long-term financial provision is made to support the creation of community infrastructure which can accommodate lifelong learning. Actively participate and promote lifelong learning opportunities in the planning of growth areas and new developments. Investigate existing Council infrastructure for the use in developing, planning and co-ordination of lifelong learning 	Medium (Years 3-5)
Considering lifelong learning needs during review and upgrade of systems, processes and technology across Council owned community assets to improve lifelong learning capability and outcomes.	Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with Council's IT and asset management staff ensure that periodic technology and software upgrades are undertaken in order to support delivery of lifelong learning initiatives and outcomes. 	Medium (Years 3-5)
Assess the costs and benefits of providing subsidised places to the most disadvantaged in the community.	Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with providers, identify barriers to greater uptake of services. If costs are identified as a major barrier, consider the cost and benefits of subsidising some spaces on appropriate courses in addition to costs associated with provision of infrastructure and equipment. 	Medium (Years 3-5)
Ensure that lifelong learning is considered during planning of enabling infrastructure to improve accessibility to learning (e.g. transport infrastructure, public transport services and improvement of telecommunications).	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with relevant Council departments (e.g. Strategic Planning, Community Development, Economic Development and others) and ensure enabling infrastructure considers lifelong learning, in particular equity and access issues. Where this is not the direct responsibility of Council's planning team identify the appropriate contact in other organisations or areas of Council e.g. Community Development. 	Medium (Years 3-5)
Internal promotion of lifelong learning through Council's own activities supporting staff to become part of, and ambassadors for, lifelong learning.	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify programs which might be appropriate to Council staff. Promote the program internally, consider incentives and support which could be offered to increase sign up. Encourage staff undertaking courses to promote the scheme to friends and family as well as the public as they provide services. 	Medium (Years 3-5)

Action	Local Government Role	Deliverables	Priority (Timing)
Establishing relationships with private sector employers as a means of opening up training and skills development opportunities e.g. engaging the large developers in the region to establish pathways to allow local workers to benefit from their training and skills development programs, address youth school retention rates and unemployment rates.	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the top ten employers in the Mitchell Shire including those operating in the region but based elsewhere, in particular developers in the region. Meet with these organisations and identify the training and skills development opportunities. Develop a formalised pathway to facilitate engagement by these operators with unemployed residents initially for training opportunities and ultimately as a gateway to employment. Facilitate strengthened relations between schools, vocational education and training providers and employers to assist with transition from school to work. 	Low (Years 6-10)
Obtaining external funding support for community assets and infrastructure (to support lifelong learning).	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage appropriate organisations to seek funding for new community infrastructure. This may include State and Federal government as well as private developers through developer contributions plans. 	Low (Years 6-10)
Lobbying to bring key employment to the region as a means of creating a pathway to employment post training e.g. relocation of a State Government agency.	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with economic development staff, advocate for major employer to re-locate to the region given lower land costs, growing population and lifestyle benefits for employees. 	Low (Years 6-10)
Activation of Community Learning Centre's through delivery of the Learning and Library Strategy.	Programs and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the library strategy to ensure there is flexible space which can be used for lifelong learning activities. Continue to breakdown traditional barriers by promoting the library as a community hub rather than traditional lending only service. 	Low (Years 6-10)

Source: AEC



3.5 Summary of Implications

The Mitchell Shire faces the same drivers which are necessitating the establishment of lifelong learning strategies as in other jurisdictions while also trying to improve socio-economic outcomes for some of its most disadvantaged citizens.

Rapid and sustained population growth in the region creates an opportunity to establish community infrastructure and other planning processes which place lifelong learning at the heart of the community and establishes a culture to support ongoing learning and development.

There are several learning and skills development providers in the region but these are poorly integrated. Council can have a critical role in bringing these groups together and where appropriate identifying, publicising and supporting a more joined up approach. Where appropriate, Council should engage public and private sector organisations to establish pathways to employment once training has been completed.

Lifelong learning will need to be embedded into key Council officer roles to lead the integration, and achievement of outcomes in this sphere. Opportunities include increasing the awareness of existing learning pathways and identifying future training needs, and how these can be addressed most efficiently.

4. Library Strategy

Resident surveys frequently identify libraries as one of the most highly valued of community services. The beneficial economic and social impacts of libraries are well understood and in 2011 a State Library of Victoria study estimated a return of \$3.56 from every dollar invested (State Library of Victoria, 2011). However, libraries also incur significant costs and therefore a library strategy is needed to align services to community needs and ensure resources are used to maximum community benefit.

4.1 The Need for a Mitchell Shire Library Strategy

Extensive research demonstrates that public libraries make a vital contribution to social, cultural, economic and educational development of communities. Over the last fifteen years throughout Australia and overseas, there has been a shift away from traditional service models towards libraries as community services hubs. In 2006, a landmark research study *Libraries Building Communities* summarised the ways in which public libraries contribute to building better communities as follows:

- Creating informed communities through the provision of access to local and global information sources.
- Providing free and universal access to information technology infrastructure, computer literacy and technology resources.
- Providing opportunities for lifelong learning through resources to support self-directed learning and programmed information and reading literacy activities.
- Building social capital by providing welcoming, neutral, community space that is open to all members of the community from all walks of life and by connecting individuals, groups and government.²

² *Libraries Building Communities: the vital contribution of Victoria's public libraries*, State Library of Victoria, 2005.

The trends that report identified are supported by the key findings of Stage 1 of "Tomorrow's Library", a State wide review of Victoria's public libraries (Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure 2012), which also acknowledges the challenges in making the transition from traditional models:

- Public libraries provide a wide range of services that are valued by the community.
- The environment in which public libraries operate is changing rapidly.
- Identifying emerging trends and changes can be difficult, as is anticipating the impact on library usage, particularly for smaller services.
- There is an ad hoc approach to implementing new services, for example some public libraries are providing commercially acquired e-books while others are not.
- The future of public library services is set to be exciting and innovative.
- To ensure public libraries remain valued and treasured public institutions, they must continue to adapt and evolve.
- Public libraries must continue to deliver high-quality services that meet the needs of their communities.
- It is important that public libraries position themselves to adequately embrace and meet the challenges of the future.



4.2 Current Provision

Council currently operates four libraries: Broadford, Kilmore, Seymour and Wallan, (a review of current services is available at Appendix B). A similar range and level of service is available across the network with limited specialisation between libraries. Where there are variances, for example in the provision of other Council services on site, these tend to be driven by the constraints of the built infrastructure rather than as a response to an identified community need. The Mitchell Shire Library Service is characterised by:

- A greater proportion of the population being members of the library service compared to Australian Library Information Association (ALIA) benchmarks.
- Above average numbers of visits to the libraries per capita than ALIA benchmarks.
- Below average numbers of loans per capita and below average stock turnover.
- Above average numbers of PC's per capita, with further investigation (through consultation) indicating that usage of these PC's is high and in many cases more PC's are demanded by the community.
- Library service expenditure is in line with ALIA benchmarks.

The library service has a traditional lending culture but already some libraries are experiencing higher levels of library visitation with decreased borrowing. This highlights that the library service is being still being used but the way in which it is being used is changing.

4.3 Strategic Priorities for the Mitchell Shire

The consultation process, backed up by a review of other contemporary library services and relevant strategic planning documents of the Mitchell Shire and relevant State Government agencies, has been used to develop common themes which underpin the Library Strategy:

- **Relevance:** The diversity of needs across the Mitchell Shire was identified and it was seen that library services should be tailored to meet the needs of local communities as far as possible, and that the libraries collections and services should reflect the diverse and changing needs of local communities. It was generally agreed that above all else the library service delivery points should be relevant in terms of contemporary services and to the community each library serviced. This includes ensuring that services reflect cultural requirements of communities as populations grow and become increasingly diverse.
- **Access and Equity:** Library services need to be inclusive and equitable. It was agreed that access to high quality core library services which are free at the point of delivery should be retained and that this was a central pillar of library services and should continue. This is not to say that it is not appropriate to charge fees for some value-added services, but fees must be set at a level which does not exclude some residents, and particularly some marginalised groups. Service delivery opening times was also a discussion point, with it agreed that under-utilised opening hours need to be reviewed for each of the libraries. Having later opening hours and/ or additional opening days on weekends for some libraries would greatly improve accessibility to the library service and cater for the changing needs of the community. A review of library service opening times would provide more clarity around demand for additional services and the feasibility of offering extended hours.
- **Promotion:** In many communities, promotion of library services is key to increasing usage and educating community members about the wide-range of contemporary and useful services are offered by libraries, aside from traditional book-lending services. Mitchell Shire library staff particularly highlighted that better promotion of library services and activities could increase engagement of the broader community with the service.

4.4 Library Strategy Action Plan

This section sets out the steps needed to deliver the strategic plan and identifies the highest priority tasks. The speed at which these can be delivered will be influenced by several factors, both internal and external to Council. In particular, the rate of observed population growth, the implementation of other overarching Council strategies and plans and Council's capacity and willingness to invest in the Learning and Library Strategy will all have a significant bearing on timing.

The socio-economic profile and analysis of current usage highlights variations in the community each library branch services and the ways in which they use the library. While traditional library service models have emphasised the need to provide a standardised service, contemporary approaches place a greater emphasis on aligning services to community needs, a point frequently cited during consultations. To improve the relevance of the existing branch network each has been assigned a theme or focus:

- Broadford: Community and Connectivity;
- Kilmore: Knowledge Centre and Library Core;
- Seymour: Leisure and History; and
- Wallan: Youth and Learning Excellence.

Assigning a theme does not mean pursuing entirely different services at each library. Traditional lending and other core programs would be common across all libraries, but some program areas would have a particular focus to better reflect the needs of the communities they service.

- **Flexibility of Spaces:** As well as acknowledging changes in library services, stakeholders recognised the likelihood of ongoing future change and the need to create spaces with inbuilt flexibility in order for services to remain relevant beyond the immediate future and to avoid creating spaces which limit future activities. Creating activated and busy spaces was seen as key to creating a modern library service delivery network.
- **Technology:** It was agreed that many of the changes which underpin the need to review library services are technology driven and the pace of change is almost certain to continue to increase. In order to be relevant, particular to younger members, but also to other sectors of the community, it was vital to engage and incorporate new technology and to ensure that communications were maintained at a standard to support access to global information. The provision of high speed internet through wireless technology is now a norm in modern public libraries.
- **Partnerships:** Like all local governments, the Mitchell Shire faces an almost infinite number of demands on its finite resources. This was recognised by stakeholders who saw the need to provide services which were appropriate and contemporary without committing Council to unsustainable costs. Commercial and other opportunities offer one way to reduce the overall net costs to Council and a range of options should be considered where appropriate.
- **Staff:** Library staff were acknowledged for their excellent work in delivering the current library services as well as their central role in any new model which might emerge. At its most basic, there is still a clear community expectation and requirement for trained staff and skill sets will need to be adapted to meet changing needs. Library staff are generally very change-friendly and have been very proactive in introducing innovative practice in the library services. However, in a rapidly changing environment, it will be important that library staff continue to take regular training.

4.4.1 Whole of Service Actions

Before considering library by library changes, there are a set of whole of service actions which should be included within the Strategy and which are most effectively applied across the entire network. Most focus on increasing online access and connectivity as well as opportunities to release staff time to allow increased interaction with library users.

The following table describes these actions and the associated priority for implementation.

Table 4.1. Whole of Service Actions and Implementation

Action	Comments
<i>Review Collection and Remove Under Utilised Stock</i>	
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the number of programs and other activities libraries undertake increases, space becomes increasingly heavily utilised Broadford, Seymour and Wallan libraries all have space constraints and are at or approaching the point where the physical limitations will prevent further program increases
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While new buildings could address these problems, removing parts of the collection which are very rarely used, or outdated, and or implementing more flexible storage solutions offers a much more cost effective solution Collection usage should be reviewed on a periodic basis with underused stock removed to create additional space for new stock, collections or casual seating.
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Priority: Short Term Action (Years 1-2) Review is underway, should be continued across all libraries
<i>Review Opening Hours</i>	
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an expectation of being able to access a range of services outside normal working hours.
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library service already provides some weekend and late night opening A detailed review should be undertaken to identify the opportunities to re-configure opening hours to better meet community needs. This includes considering review of opening and closing hours and weekend hours The review should include consideration of reallocating library service hours to ensure services are aligned to demand As a first step, data should be gathered on visitation per hour per day to provide an evidence base for these decisions Opening hours should be subject to ongoing periodic review
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Priority: Short Term Action (Years 1-2) Contingent upon improved data set on current visitation.



Action	Comments
<i>Implement Radio Frequency Identification</i>	
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RFID is the technology which allows users to check their own books in and out It is becoming increasingly common, particularly in metropolitan areas There can be some reticence to use the technology, particularly among more traditional library users One of its major benefits is in releasing staff from the issues and returns desk, increasing interactions with users The cost of these systems varies by library size and configuration
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average pay-back periods are around five years but this varies depending on the amount of lending and the staff resources freed up for other tasks The potential benefits at the Mitchell Shire are likely to be less than in other libraries as staff will still continue to provide Council customer services Council should engage providers for a quote to implement RFID at its libraries
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Priority: Longer-Term Action (Years 6-10) Borrowing is likely to continue to decline across all libraries Investigate costs involved in the installation and implementation Should be installed in any new branch as it is developed
<i>Increase Delivery of Services Online</i>	
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly larger library services are making their collection available online. In some services there is anecdotal evidence that library members may never actually set foot in a branch but instead join and access services entirely online
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the very high demand for public access internet PC's it is likely that many current users would be excluded under this approach It is almost certain that overtime this approach will become increasingly important Planning should be undertaken in conjunction with Council's IT team and State Library of Victoria to determine the hardware requirements and support which is likely to be available and when in order to establish a timeframe for implementation
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Priority: Medium-Term Action (Years 3-5)



4.4.2 Library Specific Actions

The following table sets out library by library recommended actions, timing and priorities as well as potential partners that could be engaged to support delivery.

Table 4.2. Library by Library Recommended Actions

Library	Comments
<i>Seymour</i>	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Seymour community faces a series of challenges including high levels of socio-economic disadvantage • There is a requirement for basic literacy and lending services • Many residents rely on the library for access to computers and the internet as well as training in their basic use • Seymour is the most traditional of the libraries with a strong lending focus • The library is space constrained with some usage conflicts
Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision is for the Seymour Library to become part of a “Leisure and History Hub” • This could be developed to create a healthy lifestyles precinct incorporating mental (learning, personal development) and physical (wellbeing and exercise) aspects • In the short to medium term the focus should be on skills development (literacy and digital services) while maintaining the traditional lending service
Short-Term Actions (Years 1-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more flexible spaces by improving storage (e.g. roll-away shelves) • Where possible, increase access to wifi connectivity and formalised training • Formalise relationship with learning partners (see below) • Work with partners to identify opportunities to increase availability of age appropriate language and literacy programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reading clubs – Learn to read – Children’s activities – Book group for teens • Investigate potential outdoor hazards, and if required instigate systems and procedures to mitigate hazards. • Revitalize outside space to accommodate more activities (e.g. children’s activities)
Medium-Term Actions (Years 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review take up of literacy programs • Identify activities which build upon the literacy programs to further develop skills, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creative writing clubs – Author presentations – Writing competitions and events – Book week and associated creative festival • Programs should be run in conjunction with partners to avoid duplication, increase awareness and share funding burden • Review appropriateness of technology access (likely to diminish as costs of access continue to fall and skills are disseminated through the community)
Long-Term Actions (Years 6-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure library is considered in strategic planning for the future development of the area and the nearby sports facility

Library	Comments
<i>Seymour</i>	
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other learning and community groups in the Seymour area including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Schools – TAFE – U3A – Retirement groups – Unemployment agencies – Other community services. • Seek input on the types of programs and resources required to meet the needs of the community
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Priority: High with very high return on investment from small increase in literacy and skills • Highest Priority Action: Develop partnerships to inform literacy program



Table 4.2. Library by Library Recommended Actions

Library	Comments
<i>Broadford</i>	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadford is the library with the lowest number of loans made, and loans per hour open Whilst traditional lending is important, users are also accessing other services especially accessing computers
Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located in the centre of the Shire and is collocated with the Shire offices and a range of other community and health organisations, therefore this library makes the ideal centre point for community and connectivity activities Broadford should become the “Community and Connectivity” library, connecting users through provision of new and emerging technologies The current library is already space constrained and is likely to remain so until a decision is made about the future redevelopment of the adjoining Council offices
Short-Term Actions (Years 1-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where more flexible storage options allow, install more desk spaces (for computers or seating areas) Increase the number of available computers with internet connection Ensure desks have power point connections
Medium-Term Actions (Years 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide couches for a ‘living room feel’ and install more general seating and meeting tables for group activities Assess opportunities to increase provision of digital connectivity
Long-Term Actions (Years 6-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review opportunities to extend the library and services recognising this will be determined by the timing and outcome of any future decision on adjacent Council accommodation
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As connectivity opportunities arise, consider partnership opportunities with the formal education sector which would allow residents to access courses without the need to physically attend lectures Assess opportunities to provide a recording studio or similar
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Priority: Low , library is well used and highly constrained Limited value in investing given uncertainty over long-term future of Council administration and implications for the library Highest Priority Action: Seek opportunities to increase available floor space for internet access pc’s and study areas

Library	Comments
<i>Kilmore</i>	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most highly used library, it is centrally located within the Shire Location and building structure has development potential with plenty of activity areas and usable spaces The library also includes the John Taylor room (former shire chambers) and outdoor spaces both of which are rarely used
Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic focus is on how the Kilmore library can better activate the available spaces and continue to support the broader library network The strategic focus of this library will be To Connect and Support Mitchell’s library service and act as the established knowledge hub and program delivery centre, all key initiatives and library support will stem from the Kilmore Library
Short-Term Actions (Years 1-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a detailed review of the current collection and identify any underutilised resources. Revise collection as appropriate Review of library service hours Revitalise the John Taylor Room as a technology training space Revitalise meeting room spaces (towards the back of the library) through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of connective teleconferencing technologies and computers Increasing promotion for use of these spaces Engaging with local community partners to offer spaces for meetings Identify opportunities to transfer tasks and or equipment from other libraries to free up space
Medium-Term Actions (Years 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host regular and/or annual events and activities that focus on creativity, arts and culture, including literary festivals and arts exhibitions Council and library staff to explore potential landscape designs and potential for outdoor areas at the Kilmore library to improve overall visual appeal of the area Council and library staff to consider fencing off some of the outdoor area and minor works to incorporate a children’s outdoor area for ‘play and reading’ activities. Appropriate risk analysis and approval of this type of space would need to be undertaken to determine if this would be appropriate. Designate an area for a community gardening club with an associated work/reading area. Continued delivery of a number of technology focused programs and courses to the community and staff These courses will be extended as required (dependent upon demand)
Long-Term Actions (Years 6-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued delivery of a number of technology focused programs and courses to the community and staff These courses will be extended as required (dependent upon demand)
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with schools, TAFE, U3A to identify collection needs and any areas for diversification of the available resources to meet changing community needs
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Priority: Low, library is well used, has adequate space and provides good support to other locations Highest Priority Action: Agree appropriate use for John Taylor Room

Table 4.2. Library by Library Recommended Actions

Library	Comments
<i>Wallan</i>	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leased site within the Wellington Square Shopping Centre in Wallan Most southern library in the Shire and central to forecast population growth areas Estimated to be the closest physical library to over 37% of the population in the Mitchell Shire Library is already experiencing significant space pressure from competing uses Limited alternative forms of entertainment nearby, particularly for younger people
Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the young demographic in the region and limited alternative provision it is recommended the Wallan Library becomes the “Youth and Learning Excellence” library in the Mitchell Shire The strategic focus for the Wallan Library will be to provide the necessary space and services and infrastructure to respond to the rapid population growth Creation of an engaging and interactive space that is focused on engaging youth in lifelong learning activities Ensure that resources are up-to-date and relevant Opportunity to become the regional youth activity and creative centre
Short-Term Actions (Years 1-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open up the floor space by employing smarter shelving options and/ or reducing the physical collection, whilst retaining the majority of the youth focused resources Provide couches for a ‘living room feel’ and install more general seating for people to sit and read Outreach Librarian to liaise with relevant youth organisations and the Council community officer to determine key youth activities and relevant youth resources to be extended through the Wallan library Engage with schools to identify opportunities to support learning through aligned children and youth collections/activities
Medium-Term Actions (Years 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a ‘youth dedicated zone’ Provide a range of creative technologies that are targeted at engaging youth in learning activities. Technologies (delivered and supported by Council IT department) could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computers Games DVD’s/TV’s Music and creative equipment (e.g. film editing) Xbox/Wii/ PlayStation Other
Long-Term Actions (Years 6-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be determined by long-term future of the library Largely contingent on the pattern and speed of development around the Beveridge area Irrespective of the future library strategy, it should be included in relevant Council plans that a youth centred community hub is critical to this area

Library	Comments
<i>Wallan</i>	
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop linkages with key youth services providers, including education institutions and community partners Leverage their skills to deliver relevant and engaging youth activities through the library
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Priority: High, there are a series of opportunities to better engage the local youth, to build strong relationships with local schools and act as a key information source for ongoing learning and training after school Highest Priority Action: Create a youth space



Table 4.2. Library by Library Recommended Actions

Library	Comments
<i>Beveridge</i>	
Strategic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forecast population growth is expected to be heavily concentrated in the southern end of the Shire and the Wallan library (in its current form) will not be sufficient to cater to the needs of the growing community • In order to accommodate this additional demand a new library will be required, the 'Beveridge Library' • It is recommended that this library be located at a major activity centre development such as shopping centre or a Council services and community hub • The new library should be easily accessible by the community and collocated with other community assets • Given Council's objective of increasing economic and employment opportunity, it is recommended the library is focused on innovation, employment and business development
Short-Term Actions (Years 1-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to ensure the library is included with all planning for the future location/ site of the activity centre and include consideration of supporting infrastructure
Medium-Term Actions (Years 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As planning parameters are finalised, develop design concepts including the library space, supporting infrastructure
Long-Term Actions (Years 6-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the planned facility • Re-assess appropriateness of Kilmore providing centralised functions
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer of activity centre • Other potential users
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Priority: Low, the development process will be driven by factors external to library services, critical point is to ensure libraries are recognised in the planning process • Highest Priority Action: Ensure library services are considered within the plans for the new activity centre

4.5 Summary of Implications

The traditional model of the library as simply a book repository is no longer valid. Although, lending data shows that some libraries are still strong in terms of their turnover of books, it is also apparent other libraries are lending far less frequently with other services much more popular. In order to maximise the benefits to the community, services need to be tailored to meet these higher community value needs.

The Mitchell Shire has four very different libraries located in four very different localities of the region. Due to the geographical spread of the Shire and nature of expected population changes, each of these areas are also facing different sets of socio-economic challenges. Given the varying needs of the population and associated challenges it is not appropriate that a uniform strategic approach be adopted across the Mitchell Shire library service. Instead, it is important that specific changes to infrastructure and services are targeted for each library and tailored to community need.

The role of the library in bringing together disparate sections of the community can be important. This includes different community groups but also stakeholders from other sectors. In order to be truly integrated and relevant to the community, the library must integrate fully. Previous models have included embedding the library within major retail centres. This remains a valid approach but other opportunities are available including partnerships with commercial operators. These work best when there is a sympathetic relationship between the parties which can benefit the library, the partner and users.

Projected population changes highlight that the Mitchell Shire is expected to undergo significant levels of change over the next 20 years, with the southern parts of the region (Wallan) experiencing these changes in the short term as the population expands up the growth corridor, north from Melbourne.

As a result, the change in the provision of library services will be ongoing across the Shire to cater for the changing needs of the community. It should be recognised due to the uni-directional nature of projected growth trends (south to north), the library service demand is unlikely to be uniform, with more library resourcing likely to be required in the southern areas of the Shire in response to the concentrated population growth in these areas over the short to medium term. This does not mean that resourcing and strategy for the northern library services should be neglected but rather strategy should focus on quantity and delivery to a growth population in the south, whilst the northern library services will need to focus on quality of service delivery and community needs.

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Appendix A: Community Profile

This section explores the socio-demographic makeup of the Mitchell Shire resident population. Specifically, it considers a range of historical and forecast population, cultural diversity and social wellbeing indicators. Implications for the Mitchell Shire Learning and Library Strategy are developed from data presented within this profile.

Demographic Profile

Historic and Projected Population

The Mitchell Shire recorded an estimated resident population of 35,105 in 2011, equating to an average growth rate of 2.7% per annum over the previous five years. This average growth was above that of Victoria (1.8% p.a.) and ahead of the neighbouring municipalities with exception of Whittlesea which experienced strong population growth (4.6% p.a.) over the 2006-2011 period.

The Mitchell Shire's population growth rate is projected to increase over the next decade to an average of 4.3% per annum, with the resident population forecast to reach 53,407 by the year 2021. This rate of growth equates to an average of an additional 5,340 residents in the Mitchell Shire each year for the next 10 years, well ahead of State growth expectations (1.5% p.a.) and those of neighbouring municipalities (including Whittlesea). These results highlight that the Mitchell Shire is likely to be a key population growth area of Victoria over the next 10 years with associated impacts on demand for services and employment.

Rapid population growth of this size has significant implications for the planning and provision of population based community services, including libraries, which are usually located within key population growth nodes of regional communities. Anticipated long-term population growth is not expected to be uniform across the Local Government Area and is likely to be concentrated in the southern part of Mitchell in particular in and around Wallan, which has been brought into the Urban Growth Boundary (UBG) for Melbourne (GAA, 2013).

If these population projections are realised within the Mitchell Shire, this will impact future planning and provision for libraries which are currently located in Broadford, Kilmore, Seymour and Wallan. It is important that funding for and investment in each of these facilities is reflective of contemporary trends in best practice service provision and community demand.

Table A.1. Population, Historic and Projected

LGA	Estimated Resident Population				Average Annual Growth Rates	
	2006	2011	2016	2021	2006 - 11	2011-21
Mitchell	30,723	35,105	42,480	53,407	2.7%	4.3%
Macedon Ranges	39,383	42,883	46,948	50,854	1.7%	1.7%
Hume	152,797	174,290	192,649	218,313	2.7%	2.3%
Whittlesea	128,491	160,800	202,170	237,520	4.6%	4.0%
Victoria	5,061,266	5,537,817	5,977,685	6,404,213	1.8%	1.5%

Source: ABS (2013), City of Whittlesea (2013), Hume City Council (2013), Mitchell Shire (2013), Victoria in Future (2012)

Age Structure

The Mitchell Shire's resident population aged significantly between the 2006 and 2011 censuses, with the region's average age increasing from 34.6 years in 2006 to 36.2 years in 2011. Despite the average age of the Mitchell Shire's population being lower than the State average (37.9 years) in 2011, the Shire aged at a faster rate over the preceding five year period relative to the Victorian average.

This trend is forecast to reverse over the next decade, with the average age in the Mitchell Shire projected to decrease to 35.1 years by the year 2021, while the Victorian population's average age will continue to increase. This trend is expected to be driven by a rise in the number of younger couples and families with children locating to the Shire, taking advantage of availability and affordability of housing, the accessibility to good education infrastructure (e.g. schools), and other population services (e.g. health services and childcare) (Mitchell Shire Council, 2013). The Mitchell Shire also has an abundance of natural assets, open spaces and recreational services which are attractive to young families with children (Mitchell Shire Council, 2013).

With the increasing trend towards younger couples and families with children relocating to the area, the demand for library services and associated activities is likely to increase over the next 10 years. Over the short term, this is likely to mean an emphasis on services that focus on the needs of families, such as services for early childhood and junior (school-aged) children. There may also be a need for adult learning types of activities, particularly focused on supporting parents, grandparents, and parents returning to work from extended parental leave to support re-skilling and workforce re-entry.

Over the longer term, and in line with ageing of the natural family lifecycle, the region may see a shift in demand towards services that cater for adolescents (or 'teen's) and young adults, including library services and activities that focus on providing educational linkages and facilities that will assist in students achieving their educational goals.

The needs of the Mitchell Shire over the next 10 years will evolve and change. Future considerations for the Mitchell Shire library strategy therefore need to change to cater for this demographic change and to promote community lifelong learning and maximise participation and engagement with community assets.

Table A.2 Age Structure, Historic and Projected

Age Group	Mitchell			Victoria		
	2006	2011	2021	2006	2011	2021
0-14	24.0%	21.7%	24.3%	19.0%	18.3%	18.0%
15-29	19.1%	20.2%	18.5%	20.9%	21.6%	19.7%
30-44	22.9%	20.2%	22.9%	22.3%	21.5%	21.7%
45-59	19.8%	20.8%	17.5%	19.7%	19.3%	18.4%
60-79	12.1%	14.5%	14.2%	14.4%	15.4%	17.8%
80+	2.2%	2.7%	2.7%	3.7%	4.0%	4.4%
Average Age	34.6	36.2	35.1	37.4	37.8	38.1

Source: ABS (2007), ABS (2012), DOHA (2009), Mitchell Shire (2013)

Implications for the future of Library Services in the Mitchell Shire:

The Mitchell Shire's population is growing and changing. Significant population growth and trend towards a population that is getting younger will increase demand for local library services in the Mitchell Shire in the future.

The nature of demand for library services and the types of activities that occur in and around libraries is also likely to change. An increase in the number of families with children across the Shire will increase demand for the provision of family oriented types of services and activities associated with early childhood and school aged children activities within the community library context.

Over the longer term there will also be an increasing need for adolescent and young adult services, as the children of local residents transition into young adults. Library programs and revitalisation of library spaces need to be adaptable and able to respond the lifecycle and growth of the Mitchell Shire community.

Other Community Indicators

Analysis of other community indicators shows that the Mitchell Shire population is not considered to be particularly culturally diverse; however, the Shire has a higher proportion of Indigenous residents, and also has a small community of residents that speak languages other than English.

There are pockets of socio-economic disadvantage and higher levels of crime and unemployment in the Shire relative to those observed in other areas. A large proportion of residents travel outside the region for work, indicating that local work opportunities are limited. Educational attainment (both Year 12 and non-school qualifications) has traditionally been low, however, there is a trend towards higher levels of educational attainment at both the school, vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary qualification levels. This is a trend that should be supported as it is key to improved socio-economic wellbeing and the prosperity of the broader community.



Table A.3 Cultural Diversity and Education Attainment, 2006 and 2011

	Mitchell		Victoria	
<i>Cultural Diversity</i>				
Indigenous Residents	1.2%	1.2%	0.6%	0.7%
Population Born Overseas	11.4%	12.2%	25.5%	29.5%
Languages Spoken at Home Other Than English (LOTE)	5.3%	5.3%	21.5%	21.5%
<i>Highest Level of School Completed</i>				
Year 12 or equivalent	33.5%	38.6%	48.7%	54.2%
Year 11 or equivalent	20.0%	18.4%	15.3%	14.0%
Year 10 or equivalent	25.2%	23.8%	17.5%	16.1%
Year 9 or equivalent	12.0%	11.5%	8.0%	7.1%
Year 8 or Below	8.8%	7.3%	9.3%	7.5%
Did not go to school	0.6%	0.5%	1.2%	1.1%
<i>Non-School Qualifications</i>				
Postgraduate Degree	1.1%	1.3%	3.1%	4.4%
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	1.4%	1.6%	2.1%	2.4%
Bachelor Degree	6.9%	7.9%	14.5%	16.5%
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	6.4%	7.6%	8.3%	9.4%
Certificate	22.9%	25.5%	17.6%	18.3%
No Qualification	61.4%	56.0%	54.4%	49.0%
<i>Crime</i>				
Crime Victims per 100,000 Residents	358.6	363.3	309.8	307.9

Source: ABS (2007), ABS (2012)

Table A.4. Unemployment Rates

LGA	Mar-07	Mar-08	Mar-09	Mar-10	Mar-11	Mar-12	Mar-13
Mitchell	3.5%	2.9%	4.3%	5.2%	6.4%	5.8%	6.1%
Macedon Ranges	2.4%	2.6%	2.8%	2.9%	3.2%	2.5%	3.2%
Hume	6.3%	6.4%	6.1%	9.2%	9.7%	8.1%	6.2%
Whittlesea	5.0%	4.7%	4.7%	5.5%	4.9%	7.0%	7.8%
Victoria	5.0%	4.6%	4.8%	5.6%	5.2%	5.2%	5.5%

Source: DEEWR (2013)

Implications for the future of Library Services in the Mitchell Shire

The Mitchell Shire is currently characterised by higher levels of unemployment, higher levels of crime and lower levels of educational attainment for year 12 and non-school education compared to other areas of the State. The Mitchell Shire also has pockets of socio-economic disadvantage that are particularly concentrated in the Broadford and Seymour areas of the Shire.

Over the past five years, there has been an increasing trend towards a greater level of educational attainment, which is expected to continue, but still be below the state average. Continuation of this trend is imperative for the improvement of socio-economic prosperity and wellbeing of the Shire's resident population.

Having community assets, like libraries, to promote lifelong learning and improved social wellbeing outcomes, is important for communities like the Mitchell Shire. Libraries provide the forum, the means and the mechanism for engaging and propagating educational growth for residents in a community. It is important the future Learning and Library Strategy considers the types of services and activities required to provide enriching experiences that attract and engage the more disadvantaged members of the Mitchell Shire community.



Appendix B: Mitchell Shire Library Services

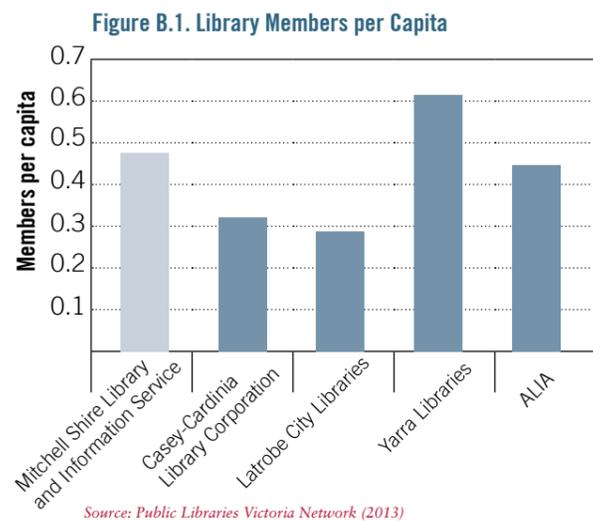
The scope and standard of public library services varies significantly between jurisdictions reflecting the relative priorities of decision makers. The following sections consider the current library service provided at Mitchell relative to selected comparator local governments and industry benchmarks. The section concludes by considering service delivery at each of the service points.

Benchmarking Library Services

The following sections compare current library services with provision at other comparable local governments. Unless otherwise stated data is for the 2012 financial year. Local governments were selected based on their proximity to the Mitchell Shire and/or because they served similar populations with similar challenges. The Australia Libraries and Information Association (ALIA) benchmarks are widely regarded as the industry standard. In comparing benchmarked outcomes it is important to recognise these are provided as an indicator of relative performance rather than as a minimum or optimum standard.

Members per Capita

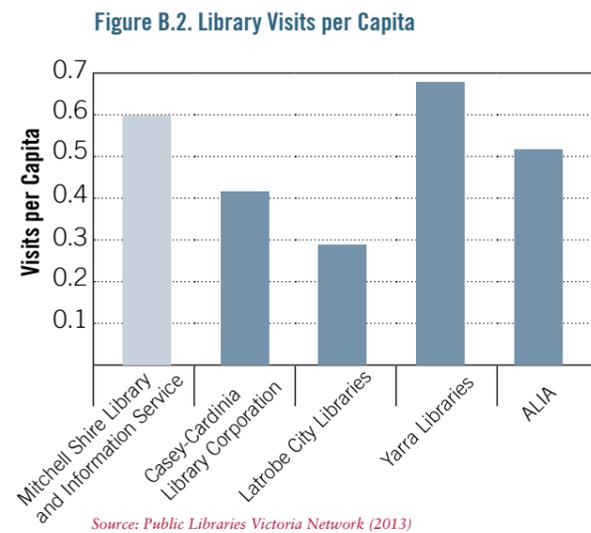
Members per capita is indicative of library services market penetration and exposure within the local community.



Mitchell library services have a greater proportion of the local government area as members (48%) than the ALIA benchmark (45%). Mitchell has the second highest ratio of members to population of the comparator LGAs, behind only Yarra Libraries (62%).

Visits per Capita

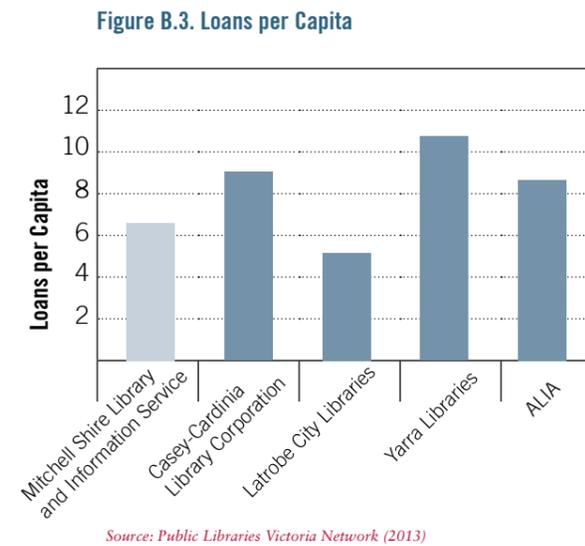
The visits per capita benchmark provides greater insight into the activation of library spaces. Visits need not result in loans, but can include people accessing a broad range of other services. This is especially true where libraries also accommodate non-library services.



Visitation is one of the most variable benchmarks, reflecting the potential for the outcomes to be influenced by other factors such as people using other services and variations in data recording collation techniques. The available data suggests that Mitchell had a greater number of visits per capita (6.1) than the ALIA benchmark (5.2). Mitchell has the second highest number of visits per capita of the comparator regions, behind only Yarra Libraries (6.7). These outcomes suggest some library services have been more successful than others in activating their public spaces.

Loans per Capita

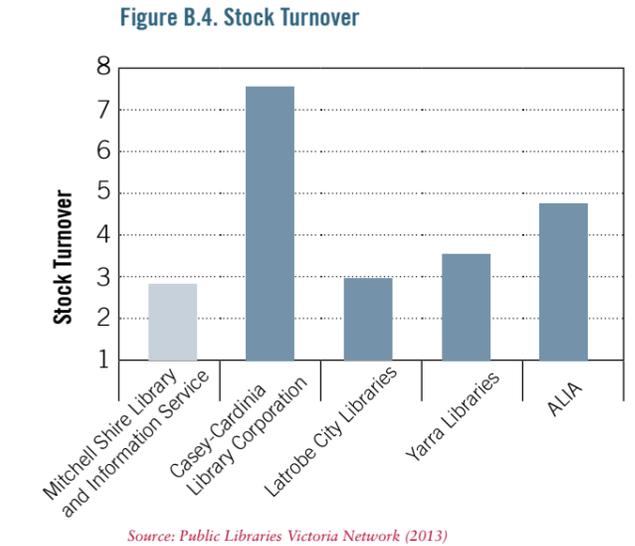
Loans per capita typically provide a more reliable measure of demand for library services than visitation with greater data reliability and the impact of non-library users removed.



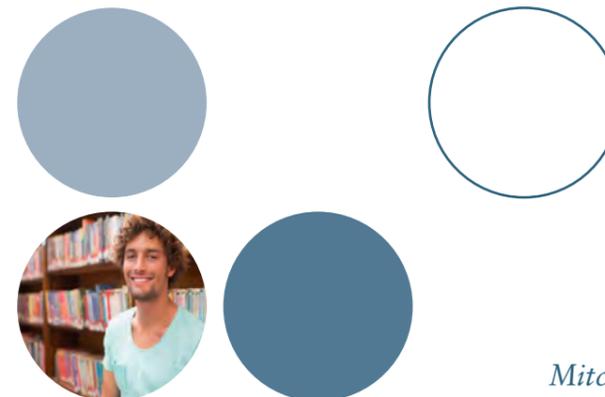
Mitchell libraries recorded the second lowest number of loans per capita (6.3) of the Victorian comparators. This result is 2.1 loans per capita lower than the ALIA benchmark and 4.1 loans per capita fewer than Yarra Libraries. Comparing loans and visitation across the comparator Councils shows that Mitchell had the lowest ratio of loans per visit (1.0). The ALIA benchmark for loans per visit was 1.6.

Stock Turnover

Stock turnover provides a measure of the average number of times each collection item is loaned per annum. While it is almost certain some items are much more heavily used than others this measure does indicate the relative demand for the collection.



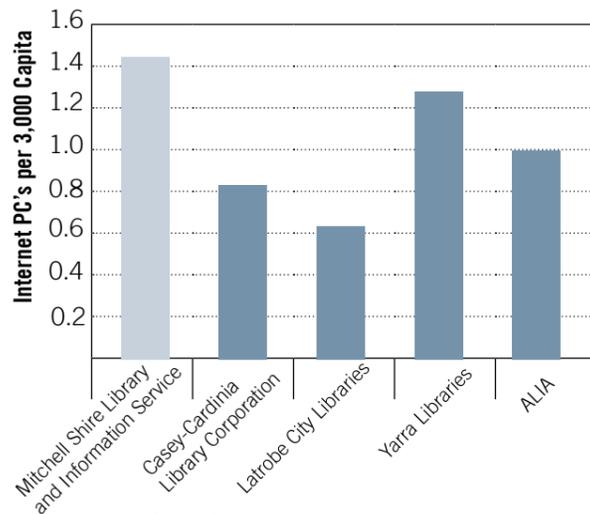
Mitchell had the lowest turnover of the Victorian comparators. On average, Mitchell's book stock is loaned 2.8 times per annum, significantly lower than the ALIA benchmark target of 4.7. Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation had the highest stock turnover rate (7.6) of the comparators. Higher stock turnover indicates a collection is more closely aligned to user needs.



Internet PCs per 3,000 Capita

It can be argued that the provision of internet access in public libraries is less important now than ten years ago as the spread of home internet connections has increased significantly over this period. Within the Mitchell Shire, the proportion of households with an internet connection rose from 60.0% in 2006 to 79.0% in 2011 (ABS, 2007 & ABS, 2012). However, for some members of society libraries are one of the few places where they can access the internet or learn how to engage with the online environment. Given the increasing transfer of public and private sector services onto web based platforms the provision of this access and training is perhaps more important than ever.

Figure B.5. Internet PC's per 3,000 Capita



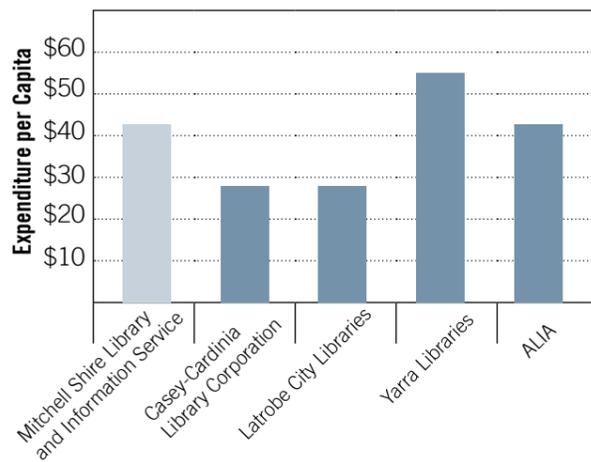
Source: Public Libraries Victoria Network (2013)

Mitchell recorded 1.5 internet PCs per 3,000 capita, the highest of all comparators and 0.5 more than the ALIA Benchmark (1.0 internet PCs per 3,000 capita).

Expenditure per Capita

Expenditure per capita measures should be treated with some caution as there are variations in reporting criteria, in particular the inclusion/ exclusion of capital (non-collection) expenditure. However, particularly when comparing within the same reporting jurisdiction (i.e. Victoria) where all responses are on the same basis it is indicative of the level of investment being made.

Figure B.6. Library Services Expenditure per Capita



Source: Public Libraries Victoria Network (2013)

Mitchell's level of expenditure was roughly in line with the ALIA benchmark. Yarra Libraries (\$54.8) recorded the highest level of expenditure per capita, more than double the level of expenditure per capita of Casey-Cardinia (\$26.0) and Latrobe (\$25.8).

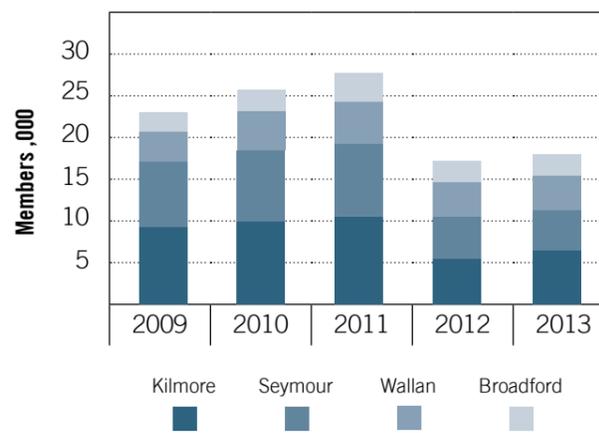
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The following sections consider the outcomes for each library against a series of performance measures.

Members

Figure B.7 shows the similarities in the offering provided across the four libraries. The figure shows that in 2012, library membership decreased by 38.4% from the previous year. This was a result of a membership 'purge' to reflect only active memberships.

Figure B.7. Members per Library, 2009-13

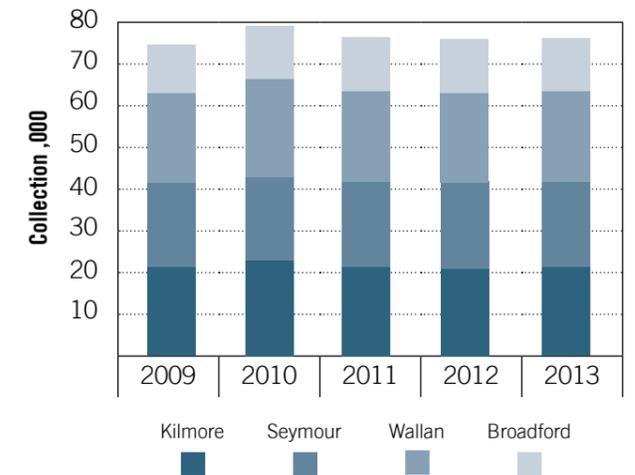


Source: Mitchell Shire Council

Collection

Figure B.8 shows the size of the respective library collections at each library within the Mitchell Shire. The Shire's total collection has remained relatively steady since 2009, with the Kilmore and Wallan libraries holding the largest library collections and Broadford the smallest.

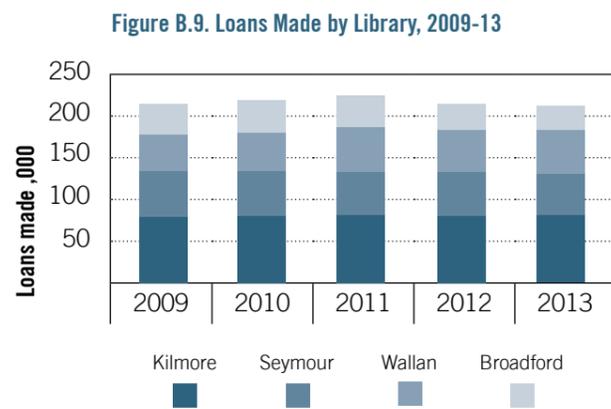
Figure B.8. Collection by Library, 2009-13



Source: Mitchell Shire Council

Loans

Figure B.9 shows the number of loans made at each library between 2009 and 2013. The number of loans has remained relatively steady throughout the Mitchell Shire since 2009. The Kilmore library (73,000 loans in 2013) accounts for the greatest number of loans out of the four libraries, while the Broadford library (35,000) accounts for the fewest.



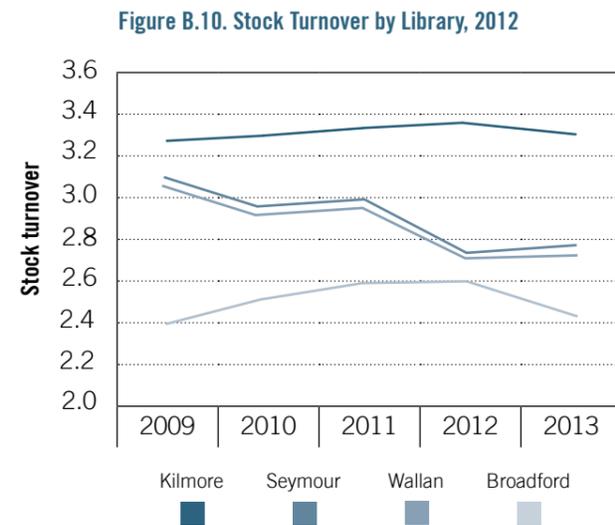
Note: No data was available for 2010. An average of the 2009 and 2011 results was used to form an estimate of the 2010 result.

Source: Mitchell Shire Council

The Seymour library has experienced an 11% decline in loans since 2009, while the other libraries have remained steady over this time.

Stock Turnover

The following figure shows the relationship between book stock and loans. On average in 2013 each stock item was loaned 2.8 times, however, as the figure shows there was significant variation between libraries.



Source: Mitchell Shire Council

Kilmore had the highest stock turnover rate with each item lent on average 3.2 times per year. All other libraries recorded average stock turnover of less than 3.0 times per year. Wallan had the lowest turnover rate with an average turnover of 2.5 per year.



Summary

The Mitchell Shire libraries had a good membership base and a recorded a large number of visits per capita in 2011-12. However, despite the large membership and visitor base, the libraries recorded one of the lowest loans per capita and stock turnover rates of all of the comparator regions. The relatively low level of loans per visit suggests visitors are already making greater use of services other than lending relative to the comparators. Mitchell recorded the largest number of Internet PC's per 3,000 capita, suggesting this could be one of the main uses for library members and visitors. Kilmore is the largest of the Shire's libraries, recording the largest collection and number of members and loans of the four libraries within the Shire. Broadford is the smallest of the libraries.



BEVERIDGE, WALLAN, UPPER
ENTY, CLONBINANE, HEATHC
UNCTION, WANDONG, BYLAND
RBES, KILMORE, KILMORE EA
TERFORD PARK, SUNDAY CRE
DRANDING, WILLOWMAVIN, HI
AMP, NULLA VALE, GLENAROU
SUGARLOAF CREEK, HILDENE
LAROOK, TRAWOOL, WHITEHE
REEK, SEYMOUR, PUCKAPUNY
IGHLANDS, TARCOMBE, NORT
THWOOD, TOOBORAC, GLENH
NHOPE EAST, MIA MIA, HEATH
TH BROADFORD, WALLAN, U

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