



GLEN EIRA  
CITY COUNCIL

# Glen Eira Libraries Strategy 2017–2019

## Glen Eira City Council

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Brighton East  
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Caulfield  
Elsterwick  
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# Introduction

Glen Eira City Council's four libraries are a valued and heavily utilised community service. In the 2015/16 financial year, more than 1.35 million loans were made, more than 700,000 visits took place and just under 60,000 participants attended a *StoryTime* or *BabyTime* session.

Over the past decade, Australia has experienced considerable demographic and technological shifts and significant social change that has affected the way we live, work, study and play.

Glen Eira has both an ageing population and many young families. Today's youth are born into a digital environment where they integrate technology seamlessly into their lives. They access information, learn and communicate in ways that older generations may not, preferring to utilise the internet rather than a catalogue and communicate via social media.

This changing landscape has had a substantial impact on libraries, both in Australia and worldwide. The best libraries have shown that by responding intelligently and flexibly to change, they can support better outcomes for their communities. Libraries have different roles and purposes for those who interact with them. Some seek quiet study spaces, others social interaction, but increasingly, the library is becoming critical as a community space that offers a third and safe option away from work and home.

Over the next three years, Glen Eira Libraries will provide the local community with relevant physical and digital collections; deliver engaging educational and cultural programs; reinvigorate and creatively use library spaces; and ensure all residents have access to our services by breaking down barriers to participation currently in place. In addition, this *Strategy* will put a framework in place that will ensure first-class library facilities for the Glen Eira community both now and into the future.

## 02 Benchmarking

There are 47 libraries that form the Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN).

Each year, the PLVN benchmarks each library on a range of key criteria. Whilst Glen Eira ranked highly in key areas such as loans, visits, member numbers and collection items, the 2015–16 survey showed two items of interest:

- Glen Eira ranks just 33 out of 47 when it comes to library hours per week offered to the community. Therefore, need to ensure the hours we offer meet the needs of residents and consider whether changes per branch are appropriate.
- We are the fifth highest ranking library when it comes to program attendance — demonstrating the extraordinary appetite that exists in the community for programming and events. This is a clear growth area and will continue to be supported.



## 03 Consultation

A community consultation process was conducted early to mid-2016 to inform the development of this *Strategy*. Three focus group sessions were held between 17 and 21 May 2016 with more than 50 citizens attending.

An online and hard copy survey was also conducted in April/May via Council's website (both the main consultation area and under 'Libraries') as well as within the library branches and 734 contributions were made.

The key findings and observations from the consultation process included:

People visit public libraries for a multitude of reasons but a key issue that came up, was the welcoming and comfortable physical nature of libraries.

Other reasons included:

- learning and literacy was expressed as the highest objective;
- the library is a free and universal service offering opportunities for participation;
- a relaxed and comfortable environment;
- accessing books and the physical collection;
- the availability of targeted programs and activities; and
- the ability to access and learn about emerging technologies.

The key expectations for the library service into the medium-term included:

- a shift in demographics will require libraries to be adaptable and flexible;
- the need for cross-generational programs and activities;
- greater expectation of integration with programs and activities;
- flexibility in programming and opening hours to meet new demands;
- increased investment in technology; and
- providing additional study and worker spaces.

The vision for the libraries in five years' time appears to be 'more of the same', plus:

- increased funding for expanded programs;
- longer opening hours and greater flexibility in how libraries are used as community hubs;
- a focus on community development and social inclusion;
- maintenance of the physical collection; and
- investment in new technology and building digital literacy.

The consultation process identified that additional space might be used for:

- quiet study for individuals and groups;
- comfortable chairs for relaxed reading;
- 'co-worker' spaces to support local economic development;
- additional community rooms and (small and large group spaces);
- creating soundproof spaces to decrease potential conflict; and
- building digital literacy across all sectors of the community.

Space restrictions make the request for additional rooms and quiet areas difficult to accommodate in some branches, although this will be looked at as part of this *Strategy*.

A draft strategy was subsequently completed and circulated for feedback in December 2016.

Customers were invited to complete a touchscreen survey within each branch, whilst other members of the community were invited to comment via Council's *Have Your Say* website. This was promoted via social media, Council's website and the libraries' e-newsletter. The *Strategy* was downloaded 108 times. Staff were consulted during their monthly branch meetings and also via an online survey.

The results of this consultation showed overwhelming support for the five themes of the *Strategy* and the direction of Glen Eira Libraries in general. Several amendments were made to the actions listed based on the community's input.

## 04 Themes

The *Strategy* will focus on five key themes:



# 01



## Libraries as community hubs

A modern public library is welcoming, well resourced, vibrant and community focused — a place where people can meet, collaborate, socialise and create. The modern library caters for multiple generations: those wishing to use their own devices; those looking to read papers or magazines; those wishing to access public computers; and those who want to tell stories and sing songs. This shift in purpose is challenging for libraries designed originally as repositories of books and places to research and read.

### Strategies:

1.1 Review space allocation in each library and develop a progressive program of internal redesign to achieve greater flexibility, better reflect community interests and attract higher levels of participation.

1.2 Promote the role of the library as a gathering space for residents to pursue and share literary and creative interests and activities.

1.3 Ensure the library is seen as a safe place for residents and one they can go to when seeking information and support.

# 02



## Libraries as places of learning

Literacy enables individuals to better understand and negotiate the world in which they live and to take advantage of and contribute to society. Australians require far more sophisticated literacy skills than those that have been required in previous eras. Low levels of literacy, on the other hand, have cumulative, negative effects.

National and international research continuously reinforces that how we engage with our young children has a fundamental impact on their lifelong learning and their ability to participate in society. In order for children to develop healthy dispositions toward reading and literacy, experiences in the early years must engage children actively in the process of learning.

At the other end, education doesn't finish when people leave school, it is a lifelong endeavour. Notwithstanding technological change, libraries play a key role in providing critical infrastructure for this pursuit and support lifelong learning and participation.

### Strategies:

2.1 Work with other Council services to effectively target library programs and services to children and youth.

2.2 Take on a leadership role in promoting childhood literacy initiatives to the community.

2.3 Tailor resources and programs to meet the learning and literacy needs of communities.

2.4 Review and develop our collections, resources and programs to ensure they reflect and meet the current needs of our community.

2.5 Encourage and support participation in library activities across all age groups.

2.6 Increase access to both technological equipment and technological learning.

2.7 Build partnerships with priority community groups and educational institutions to raise awareness and enable collaboration.

# 03



## The digital library

Glen Eira is a technologically literate community. Many homes have wi-fi access, smartphones and use of social media is commonplace. Staying up-to-date in this regard poses a major challenge for libraries and librarians. While books and other physical collection items will remain important, libraries have an essential role to play in supporting equitable access to digital knowledge. Programs that support community learning, provision of opportunities for technological creativity and staff who are comfortable in these realms, will be essential moving forward.

### Strategies:

- 3.1 Provide a digital offering that gives library members access to the full range of library services without having to enter a branch.
- 3.2 Ensure provision of digital technology within branches remains up-to-date and meets the expectations and needs of the community.
- 3.3 Equip libraries and connect library users with the skills they need for smart, safe and responsible use of technology.

# 04



## The customer experience

Glen Eira Libraries must be relevant, valued by the community and customer-centric.

Library customers must be regularly consulted on the type of services most valuable to them. The community must be seen as the major stakeholder when considering all library activity. Library staff must adapt to changes as the libraries evolve. The modern library requires staff to possess high levels of technological and digital knowledge, the ability to lead and facilitate programs and the skills to establish partnerships with commercial and community organisations.

Good customer service skills are imperative and library members have the right to expect that any person they approach within a library, will be fully equipped to assist them with their query or endeavour.

The best libraries demonstrate that by responding intelligently and flexibly to change they can support better outcomes for their communities.

### Strategies:

- 4.1 Offer a flexible and inclusive culture that attracts and retains people with the right skills and attitudes to deliver public library products and services into the future.
- 4.2 Develop staff to serve as brand ambassadors for the libraries.
- 4.3 Implement a formal process of customer consultation and feedback.
- 4.4 Develop a comprehensive customer service program including mystery shopping and regular training directed at product and service knowledge.
- 4.5 Ensure branches operate on days and hours that best serve the community.
- 4.6 Review all libraries policies and procedures to ensure we are not over-restrictive in our acceptance of members and our approach to issues.

# 05



## The library brand

Libraries in 2016 are no longer quiet spaces where people are unable to express themselves. All members of the community must feel welcomed and excited about utilising Glen Eira's libraries — whether it's to attend a program, read a magazine online or on a couch, or learn a new skill. Part of the challenge is changing the perception many have of the library being a service either for the young or old, but not for the in between.

To appeal to all age groups, the library brand must be vibrant, visually striking and engaging. We cannot rely on members of the community to stumble across a branch or website, we must take the library services to them — both via pop-up libraries and attendance at events, as well as via the provision of high class, contemporary print and online publications.

It is not about adding words to libraries to convey a new service — it is about changing the perception of what a library is, for now and into the future.

### Strategies:

- 5.1 Consider re-naming Glen Eira Libraries and Learning Centres to 'Glen Eira Libraries'.
- 5.2 Strengthen the libraries' presence within Glen Eira.
- 5.3 Review all marketing collateral and undertake a full brand refresh.
- 5.4 Create a contemporary, exciting and user-friendly online presence.
- 5.5 Ensure any interior spaces reflect the brand and values identified.





# Action plan



Theme one — Libraries as community hubs			
Strategy	Action	Measure	Timeframe
I.1 Review space allocation in each library and develop a progressive program of internal redesign to achieve greater flexibility, better reflect community interests and attract higher levels of participation.	Commission a general audit of library spaces at all branches and reinvigorate accordingly by adjusting floor plans, displays, furniture and signage.	A detailed plan will be created and then implemented throughout the year.	Mid-2017
	Ensure each branch layout can facilitate workshops and events.	Greater options provided for workshops and events.	Mid-2017
	Consider more innovative options for providing quiet spaces within each branch, for instance, providing noise reducing headphones or having designated quiet times, such as in exam periods. Where possible create study spaces well away from children's areas.	Decisions made regarding provision of quiet space communicated to customers.	Mid-2017
I.2 Promote the role of the library as a gathering space for residents to pursue and share literary and creative interests and activities.	Encourage and support community use of libraries as meeting places for formal and informal activities.	Increased usage by community groups.	Ongoing
	Work with community organisations to arrange appropriate joint programming opportunities.	At least one joint programming initiative to occur each quarter.	Ongoing
I.3 Ensure the library is seen as a safe place for residents and one they can go to when seeking information and support.	Work with other Council departments such as Family and Children's Services and Community Development and Care to ensure the libraries are always in possession of the latest materials relating to social issues, for instance, family violence and mental health issues.	Up-to-date materials displayed at all times.	Ongoing
	Ensure that staff are trained to handle queries from customers relating to social issues or concerns.	This training to be included in two training days annually.	Ongoing
	Build strong relationships with Vic Police to ensure assistance is provided when requested.	Vic Police invited to attend at least one training day per year.	Ongoing

Theme two — Libraries as places of learning			
Strategy	Action	Measure	Timeframe
2.1 Work with other Council services to effectively target library programs and services to children and youth.	Promote all children's programming and services heavily via Council's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service.	Regular catch-ups with MCH initiated. Increased visitation by MCH clientele.	Ongoing
	Provide a breast-feeding friendly space for new mother's groups to meet once their initial guided visits have concluded.	Spaces to be implemented and promoted in each branch.	End-2017
	Evaluate loan and visitation data to ascertain whether a young adult section in each branch would be utilised and implement if positive.	Report provided.	End-2017
	As part of the fees and charges review, consider removing the reservation fee on all children's and young adult items to encourage greater borrowing by parents and young adults.	Fee removed if deemed viable. Increased borrowing of children's and young adult items.	End-2017
	Work with Council's Youth Services to ensure youth-orientated programming is present in all library publications and adapt spaces as necessary to meet the Youth Department's requirements. Also ensure libraries are promoted in Youth Services' communications.	Regular catch-ups implemented. At least two collaborations with Youth Services presented each year. Increased usage by youth market.	Ongoing

2.2 Take on a leadership role in promoting childhood literacy initiatives to the community.	Participate in statewide public library initiatives in partnership with the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network.	Participate in at least two initiatives per year (if offered).	Ongoing
	Expand the children's areas within all four branches and create play/craft areas as well as spaces to read and browse.  Create programming spaces within each branch to enable school holiday activities and other programming as appropriate.	Increased utilisation by children and young families.  Increased number of active library members.  Increased attendance at programs.	End-2018
	Create proper display areas in all children's areas to ensure information regarding literacy; appropriate book choice; maternal and child health; and programming is prominent and accessible.	Display areas to be briefed as part of layout audit.	End-2018
	Create a specific children's membership option, including a children's card and welcome pack.	New pack developed and promoted.	End-2017
2.3 Tailor resources and programs to meet the learning and literacy needs of communities.	Undertake a user and non-user survey.	Surveys undertaken.	Annually
	Undertake information sessions with Council staff to highlight available library services for the community.	Annual sessions held.	Annually
	Improve literacy service offering in collaboration with the State Library of Victoria.	Participation in literacy-related initiatives.	Ongoing
2.4 Review and develop our collections, resources and programs to ensure they reflect and meet the current needs of our community.	Conduct a review to ascertain the market for providing greater LOTE physical and digital materials for adults and including bilingual material for young children from main community language groups.	Review completed.	End-2017

2.5 Encourage and support participation in library activities across all age groups.	Implement a new bookings system to make booking into programs and events simpler via an online cancellation and waiting list system.	New bookings system operational.	End-2017
	Create and provide simple 'how to' guides for library customers relating to all areas of library utilisation.	Guides in circulation.	End-2017
	Review programming based on customer feedback and profiling.	Programs added or removed according to customer feedback and changing market needs.	Ongoing
2.6 Increase access to both technological equipment and technological learning.	Improve wi-fi service and remove requirement for customers to log-on.	Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of wi-fi.	Ongoing
	Offer paperless guest option for using IT equipment, printers and photocopiers.	Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of services.	Mid-2017
2.7 Build partnerships with priority community groups and educational institutions to raise awareness and enable collaboration.	Develop a communications strategy for targeting community groups.	Increased collaborations with community groups.	Ongoing
	Develop an outreach program involving maternal and child health, kindergartens and primary schools.	Increased visitation by young people and families. Increased active memberships.	Mid-2018

Theme three — The digital library			
Strategy	Action	Measure	Timeframe
3.1 Provide a digital service that gives library members access to the full range of library services without having to enter a branch.	Investigate whether identification requirements can be met digitally to allow a 100 per cent online membership option.	Fully digital membership offering implemented.	Mid-2017
	Introduce a Glen Eira Libraries app that allows library members to access the full range of libraries products and services via their smartphones as well as borrow in-branch without a physical library card.	App launched.	Early-2017
	Ensure all fees, reservations charges, etc. can be paid online or via the app.	Work undertaken to ensure full digital offering.	End-2018
3.2 Ensure provision of digital technology within branches remains up-to-date and meets the expectations and needs of the community.	Participate in library industry networks and initiatives to ensure our awareness of library trends; and assess their applicability and appropriateness for implementation.	Successful delivery of new service models, digital services and exhibitions.	Ongoing
	Further develop programming to build digital literacy amongst the library customer base.	Digital literacy programming offering expanded.	Ongoing
	Invest in interactive technology that will enhance customer experience such as touch screen catalogues for outside each branch where appropriate.	Technology purchased and implemented.	End-2018
3.3 Equip libraries and connect library users with the skills they need for smart, safe and responsible use of technology.	Undertake and receive accreditation as an e-smart library.	Accreditation achieved.	End-2017

Theme four — The customer experience			
Strategy	Action	Measure	Timeframe
4.1 Offer a flexible and inclusive culture that attracts and retains people with the right skills and attitudes to deliver public library products and services into the future.	Ensure staff have access to relevant and useful training, both informally and formally.	Improved skill set amongst staff. Improved staff satisfaction.	Ongoing
	Continue to invest in technology that removes excessive manual handling where appropriate.	Staff are retained. Staff health and safety.	Ongoing
	Review rostering arrangements to ensure staff communication is facilitated.	Increased staff satisfaction. Increased customer satisfaction.	Ongoing
	Develop and implement ongoing professional development for staff to ensure their skills, knowledge and capability meets the current and future needs of the library service.	Increased staff satisfaction. Increased customer satisfaction.	Ongoing
	Strengthen leadership capability and foster creativity and engagement with library services.	Increased staff satisfaction Increased customer satisfaction. High quality staff attracted and maintained.	Ongoing
4.2 Develop staff to serve as brand ambassadors for the libraries.	Ensure staff are fully trained to communicate and promote all services.	Increased customer satisfaction.	Ongoing
4.3 Implement a formal process of customer consultation and feedback.	Hold an annual customer satisfaction survey and implement findings as appropriate.	Survey held and results acted upon.	Annually
	Implement feedback system for all programs and events (quarterly exit surveys for <i>BabyTime</i> and <i>StoryTime</i> ).	Increased customer satisfaction. Increased program attendance.	Early-2017
	Annually review all products and services and remove those that are not being utilised.	Increased customer satisfaction. Increased visitation.	Ongoing

	Ensure the annual collection purchasing plan takes community and customer profiles into consideration.	Increased physical and online loans. Increased customer satisfaction. Increased number of active library members.	Ongoing
	Regularly seek out new products and services that meet customer requirements, particularly in relation to neglected target markets.	Increased usage of products and services. Increased customer satisfaction. Increased membership. Increased visitation.	Ongoing
4.4 Develop a comprehensive customer service program including mystery shopping and regular training directed at product and service knowledge.	Implement a new customer service framework that will enable staff to continue providing a customer-focused library service.	Quarterly reports provided. Increased customer satisfaction. Increased membership and visitation.	Early-2017
	Ensure all staff are fully trained and equipped to handle customer enquiries, including those relating to products, services and technology.	Increased customer satisfaction. Increased membership and visitation.	Ongoing
4.5 Ensure branches operate on days and hours that best serve the community.	Review opening hours and days at all branches to ensure customer needs are being met and make changes as necessary.	Increased customer satisfaction. Increased visitation and loans.	End-2017
4.6 Review all libraries' policies and procedures to ensure we are not over-restrictive in our acceptance of members and our approach to issues.	Review all fees and charges associated with membership to ensure they are not prohibiting usage.	Increased membership, loans and visitation. Increased customer satisfaction.	End-2017
	Review membership options and consider implementation of a temporary option with less stringent identification requirements.	Increased loans. Increased customer satisfaction. Increased membership.	Mid-2017

Theme five — The library brand			
Strategy	Action	Measure	Timeframe
5.1 Consider renaming Glen Eira Libraries and Learning Centres to 'Glen Eira Libraries'.	Evaluate whether a name change would better convey the product offering to multiple target markets.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation.	Start-2017
	If the name change proceeds, replace brand in all current incarnations and work with a design professional to roll-out a new identity.	Increased utilisation of libraries.	Mid-2017
5.2 Strengthen the libraries' presence within Glen Eira.	Take Glen Eira Libraries into the community by attendance at off-site events, such as immunisation and <i>Party in the Park</i> . Showcase print and online collections as well as other services.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of the libraries' services.	Ongoing
	Establish a series of free pop-up libraries in Council facilities/open space areas utilising good-quality deleted collection items and encourage community members to supplement these with their own used items.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of libraries' services.	End-2018
5.3 Review all marketing collateral and undertake a full brand refresh.	Refresh all signage and promotional materials with a contemporary, eye-catching brand that communicates Glen Eira Libraries as places of innovation, creativity, learning and entertainment.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of libraries' services.	End-2017
	Create a marketing and promotional schedule for the library service, including a brochure that focusses on all of the products and services offered. Consider billboard and large scale poster campaigns as well as an annual campaign on Facebook and other digital platforms available. Create striking, exciting posters for display in each library and other Council facilities that clearly articulate the range of services that the libraries provide.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of libraries' services.	Ongoing

5.4 Create a contemporary, exciting and user-friendly online presence.	Revamp the libraries' website and social media presence.	Increased customer awareness. Increased visitation. Increased utilisation of libraries' services. Increased program attendance.	End-2019
5.5 Ensure any interior spaces reflect the brand and values identified.	Audit all furniture and signage and amend as appropriate.	Increased visitation. Increased customer satisfaction.	End-2017
	Cleanliness and presentation of spaces is to a high standard at all times.	Increased visitation. Increased customer satisfaction.	Ongoing





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