

Special Reports of the Director of Service Delivery
Monday 22 July 2024

24SP049	Adoption 2024 – 2028 Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan
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Key focus area	2. Lifestyle and wellbeing
Objective	2.1 Our community has access to adaptable and inclusive community, health and wellbeing services
File	F2023/02389 - D11349393
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Executive summary

At the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 22 April 2024, Council resolved to publicly exhibit the Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028.

The public exhibition took place between Tuesday, 23 April 2024, and Tuesday, 21 May 2024.

Staff decided to extend the public exhibition of the plan until 21 June 2024 to provide stakeholders with additional time to participate in the consultation process.

The submissions and feedback have been collated and are available in Attachment 2.

This report details the submissions received during the extended exhibition. It proposes minor changes to the plan, based on external submissions and an internal review.

Recommendation

Council:

- A. acknowledges the submissions and responses received through the public exhibition of the Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 (attachment 2) and
- B. Adopts the Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 (attachment 1)
- C. Notifies those who made a submission during public exhibition of Council's decision.

Context

The plan replaces and updates the Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Business Plan 2019-2024 and formalises Council's commitment to support the important role of literacy and libraries in the city.

There have been many achievements and positive outcomes since 2019, yet the successes were not without their challenges. Decreasing attendance and loans, combined with changes in perceived value and relevance, were compounded by the unexpected COVID-19 global pandemic. Temporary closures and the influence on public movement further impacted traditional visitation, program participation, and loan targets, which have been slow to return.

The development of this updated plan for the next four years seeks to update actions and importantly, establish additional initiatives that build on the completed achievements, adapt to the new challenges, and impacts on the industry, and continue to sustainably diversify the service to appeal further to members and non-members alike.

Discussion

The extended public exhibition took place between 23 April 2024, and 21 June 2024, during which time Council received seven written submissions through the public exhibition portal and three feedback items via email and face-to-face. All submissions received an individual reply. The submissions have been collated and are available in Attachment 2.

Key themes arising from the public exhibition included:

- Consideration of the diversity of general services available at public libraries
- Changes in traditional library services and provision of additional cultural and artistic activities
- Encouragement regarding inclusivity and diversity themes
- Support for various activities represented in the plan's actions
- Comment on collection-related statistics in comparison to NSW

Based on external feedback and internal review, the following changes have been made to the plan:

- minor changes for clarity and readability
- additional internal staff responsibilities for strategy actions have been captured where responsibilities are shared
- additional action to regularly review collection usage patterns and update selection profiles.

Community engagement and internal consultation

Throughout the public exhibition period, Council facilitated public and industry awareness and engagement through the Lake Mac Libraries member database, the Galleries, Libraries, Archive and Museum sector (GLAM) contact database, and members of the wider community who have been consulted or are significant regional stakeholders.

In addition, the plan was available through Council's media and communication channel, Shape Lake Mac and accessible to the approximate 60,000 visitors who visited Lake Mac Libraries over the period. Council also facilitated four face-to-face drop-in sessions at branches with library leadership.

During the public exhibition, the project page on Council's online engagement portal, Shape Lake Mac, received 1341 visits, and 289 engaged visitors. The Plan was downloaded 752 times. Seven responses were received via Shape Lake Mac.

Engagement activities were promoted through online and traditional print media, including the following channels:

- Council’s website under public notices
- Media release – from which four articles were produced in Newcastle Live, Newcastle Herald, Port Macquarie News and Newcastle Weekly.
- E-newsletters:
 - Your City to 20,485 people and Shape Lake Mac to 6202 people.
 - Libraries e-newsletter inclusion: 46,590 recipients, 44 clicks
- Printed copies on exhibition in each cultural facility

Public exhibition extension promotion from 21 May – 21 June 2024

- Lake Mac Libraries e-newsletter - Sent to 46,951 subscribers, 93 people clicked
- Social post scheduled for Library strategy via Lake Mac Libraries channel - 1516 people reached, 79 engagements
- Social media published on Council channels
 - Overall impressions – 8962
 - Overall engagements – 188 (2% rate)
 - Video plays – 5625

Council received seven formal submissions, two email responses from the sector, and one general feedback from a library member during the exhibition period. These submissions and public engagement outcomes are summarised in Attachment 2.

Assessment of options

It is recommended that Council adopts the Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 as outlined in Attachment 1 of this report. In developing the plan, Council staff have ensured that the strategies are realistic and achievable within existing resources.

All public exhibition submissions and feedback received were reviewed. Since the conclusion of the public exhibition process, one minor related amendment has been made, and it is considered that re-exhibition of the plan is not required.

Council may elect to not adopt the revised plan, and re-exhibit the plan including the minor amendments or to make further changes. This option is not recommended as limited community feedback suggests re-exhibition is unlikely to result in any further changes. The strategic action plan provides the framework for the next four years, ensuring decisions and future directions for the service are informed and endorsed.

Next steps

If Council approves the plan, copies will be available at local libraries, the Council Administration Building, and online.

- Council staff will notify those who made a submission during public exhibition of Council’s decision.
- The action plan timeline will be included in yearly operational plans and implemented.
- Staff will report on the actions of the plan as part of the key performance indicators in monthly reports and through Council’s quarterly reporting cycle.
- Council will report on the plan elements in the Annual Report.

- The plan will be reviewed and updated in 2028.

Key considerations

Economic

Implementation of the recommendations will increase opportunities for Lake Mac Libraries to be entrepreneurial and inclusive of businesses such as cafes, fab labs and textile labs, programming and as a meeting place. The introduction of after-hours programs, events, kiosks and other initiatives will engage local creatives and support local writers.

Environment

The plan identifies strategies and actions that promote and facilitate sustainability through the development of zero landfill goals. This commitment towards zero landfill by 2028 across all branches from our oldest facility to the newly constructed Windale Hub, bilyabayi represents sector best practice and will position Lake Mac Libraries as the leading library service for sustainable practice.

Community

Focusing on practical improvements and community needs, the new or revised strategic actions aim to enhance community engagement, leverage technology for improved access, and refine our operations for efficiency.

Grounded in a commitment to providing valuable services and resources, these efforts aim to ensure that Lake Mac Libraries remains a relevant and essential institution in the lives of our community members.

Civic leadership

The plan supports sustainable governance by providing a clear direction for future investment in library infrastructure and programming over the next four years. It aligns with and builds upon identified opportunities in Council's existing suite of community and cultural strategies.

Financial

The plan's actions and strategies focus on aligning Council's priorities using the existing capacity of staff and resources. All but two actions in the plan are reliant on grants to realise. Actions that are unsuccessful in obtaining resources from external grants and other revenue streams will be reviewed and alternative actions will be developed.

Where Council's funds are required to implement actions within the plan, these funds will be allocated from existing budgets or through the NSW State Priority Library Grant Program.

Infrastructure

The strategies and actions outlined within the plan are within current capital programs.

Where funds are required to implement asset upgrade, construction or replacement, these funds will be allocated from the NSW State Library Local Priority Grant Program.

Actions that do have future infrastructure implications will be developed through extensive community and staff consultation including undertaking feasibility studies, cost-benefit analysis, impact studies and include a comprehensive resourcing and post-construction operational framework.

Compliance

None

Legislative and policy considerations

Arts Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027

NSW Library Act 1939

Attachments

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|----|--|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028
- FINAL | Under separate
cover | D11609108 |
| 2. | Summary of Submissions - Draft Library strategic
Action Plan - May 2024 | | D11512452 |

Attachment 2: Summary of Public Exhibition submissions received for the draft Lake Mac Libraries Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028

Submission	Summary of submission	Comments/ Council response
Cardiff South, NSW	Council should use its libraries as a place where community can access its services so people do not have to travel to Council's administration building at Speers Point.	<p>Guided by the 2020-2023 Customer Experience Strategy and the 2019-2024 Libraries Strategic Business Plan, Council previously piloted initiatives at Morisset and Swansea Libraries to explore the need for additional Council services at libraries, especially those far from the Admin building at Speers Point. From December 2021 to January 2023, these initiatives provided customer support and facilitated common non-library transactions. The pilots were also extended to improve assessment and awareness. Transaction data indicated very low public interest, recommending that online resources be prioritised for community needs. Kitchen caddies for green waste were introduced as an additional service across all libraries, proving popular and complementing the city's successful green compost bag service. Lake Mac Libraries has not received any requests from the community on this topic since these extended pilots.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
Manager Library Services – Bathurst Regional Council (Email to Staff)	Positive feedback was provided regarding including diverse representations in the imagery and actions, reparative cataloguing, and acknowledging local demographics. There was a mention of potential formatting and content errors.	<p>The content and formatting issues were corrected where required. Encouraging comments were noted regarding the plan's inclusive and diverse imagery and content.</p> <p>Outcome: minor formatting change – Action 6, pg 29</p>
Wangi Wangi, NSW, (Library Face to Face drop-in session)	Opposed to libraries shifting focus to more creative activities and negatively impacting traditional library services.	<p>Libraries will continue to broaden its appeal to attract and retain new members. This includes providing exhibition spaces for local artists, school holiday art programs, Fab Lab and Textile Lab initiatives.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
Valentine, NSW	Need for individual silent rooms and quiet spaces to work.	<p>The draft Action Plan provides actions that aim to expand our varied and alternative uses within our facilities to support students and professionals.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>

Toronto, NSW	Consider stalls or market days, cafe style workspaces where people can go to the library like an office as well as partnering with a little coffee cart out front.	<p>The draft Action Plan provides actions that aim to expand our varied and alternative uses within our facilities to support students and professionals. Charlestown Library has a coffee machine and Windale will also have a coffee operator with many of our other branches near cafes. We encourage members to have a coffee in the library.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
Morisset Park NSW	As physical books become less important to library users, the digital library should expand to include music, newspapers, and digital movies. Also consider borrowing things like speciality (sic) cake tins, and appliances like bread makers, donut makers etc.	<p>Lake Mac Libraries' e-resources include platforms that provide Music and TV shows, ebooks, comics, audiobooks, repair and workshop manuals, and children's storytelling. These are continually monitored for relevance and suitability for our members.</p> <p>The draft Action Plan includes a 'library of things' as an action to deliver across multiple libraries.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
West Wallsend NSW	<p>Oppose the notion of the potential closure of public libraries, particularly due to urban growth and local needs.</p> <p>Seeking improved program awareness with pamphlets, ads, and notable events to increase funding and support.</p> <p>Provided suggestions regarding the enhancement of modern services and allowing businesses to use resources for community engagement and revenue.</p>	<p>The draft plan includes a proactive approach to the Cardiff Library. We have marked it for review of its lease renewal when the lease period ends, ensuring value for the community. This review would consider various factors, including visitation, usage times, and alternatives. If closure were recommended, it would be done through the usual consultation processes with councillors and the community. It's also worth noting that we have recently expanded accessibility with self-access services at Cardiff Library, increasing access to members by over 95%.</p> <p>Population density is just one factor in determining the use of a public library. Demographics, lifestyles, and changing societal habits, trends, and technology are also significantly contributing to changes in the use of public libraries. We are adapting to these changes to better serve our community.</p> <p>Activities in our libraries can be found on our event listing page at the Lake Mac Libraries website and social media accounts (What's On - Lake Mac Libraries)</p> <p>Sugar Valley Library Museum (SVLM) has many dedicated car parking spaces next to the facility and a bus stop right next to it. SVLM provides a new and growing</p>

		<p>collection as well as study spaces, printing and scanning, Wi-Fi and a dedicated children's area in line with other Lake Mac Libraries</p> <p>Lego-related programming is undertaken in our libraries. 3D printing, laser etching, and Arduino use are available through the region's only Fab Lab, currently at Swansea. It is planned to move to Windale Hub when that new facility opens this year. Lake Mac Libraries has provided 3D printing services for many years and has seen a decline in the small-scale general use of these. Businesses are most welcome to use any of the services provided by the Lake Mac Libraries, and we see this in action across the use of our spaces and resources.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
<p>Morisset Park NSW</p>	<p>Recommended greater investment in Morisset Library due to the growing population, such as a toy library, more child-focused activities, school holiday programs, local history features, school art exhibitions, and free/subsidised meeting room bookings. Additionally, expedite the Morisset Community Hub development.”</p>	<p>The draft includes an action to develop a 'library of things' at select branches. This will incorporate the investigation of toy library-related options. Lake Mac Libraries are currently examining alternative models for traditional child-focused branch programming to provide an equitable and greater selection of times with existing resources. I expect we will see a trial of this in the coming months.</p> <p>School holiday programs are well attended and information on dates and times available on Lake Mac Libraries website. In addition progress of Morisset Hub is available and updated on council's website and board games in their collection, and available for loan</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
<p>Kahibah, NSW</p>	<p>Supported the council's library development plans, emphasising the importance of physical books, especially for children. Encouraged extended opening hours for full-time workers.</p> <p>Suggested improving Charlestown Library's visibility and aesthetics. Increase evening classes and events and enhance marketing and ensure accessibility across all libraries</p>	<p>Our physical collection remains as crucial as ever, and with continued advances in effective collection management, we are seeing more significant interaction and use of this part of the collection. The draft strategy includes deepening our collection in areas where it may have been lacking and strengthening our readers' advisory to increase further awareness of what our collection offers.</p> <p>Accessibility to our library spaces after hours continues to increase, with four libraries (Cardiff, Speers Point, Sugar Valley Library Museum, Wangi Creative Hub)</p>

		<p>currently offering self-access services between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., 7 days a week. Many of the remaining Lake Mac Libraries branches will feature this service over the next 18 months</p> <p>The draft plan also incorporates investigating after-hours entertainment at Charlestown Library and updating library entryways and service points with contemporary treatments. This is mentioned in relation to Charlestown also.</p> <p>Outcome: No changes to the draft document</p>
<p>State Library</p>	<p>Appreciated many aspects of the draft plan, such as dual naming, cultural and community outcomes, and general presentation. Commented that the plan is extensive with a strong focus on branding, marketing, and programming; recommended adding a strategic goal centred on core library services, including collections and information services. Recommended to consider including a goal to meet or exceed the median standards for NSW public libraries as outlined in Living Learning Libraries: Standards and Guidelines. Acknowledged Post-COVID, libraries are seeing a resurgence, making this an ideal time to launch a new strategy.</p>	<p>Lake Mac Libraries service compared with NSW libraries data collated by the State Library continues to meet or exceed in aspects of core services and performance standards.</p> <p>Some areas of statewide service measurement Lake Mac Libraries is excelling in include circulation, per capita qualified staff member, per capita opening hours, acquisitions, collection size and stock turnover and healthier than average expenditure per capita.</p> <p>Action 99 and 130 explicitly refer to growing the collection and reference services</p> <p>Lake Mac Libraries service has evolved over time to serve a unique geography and community and this strategy seeks to address the evident and active issues impacting the awareness and relevance to this community, particularly the next generation of library goers.</p> <p>To this end, the city has built two new, larger libraries in replacement of long outdated smaller ones and built them under a co-location model to maximise value to the community they are located in. These have aligned with the State Libraries co-location and converged use approach as supported through its People Places planning guidelines.</p> <p>Outcome: Added additional action on page 52 Strategic Goal 10 'Action 126 - 'Regular review of collection usage patterns and updating selection profiles.'</p>