Community Engagement Outcomes Report

Castle Cove Library and Community Facility

March 2026

Executive summary

This report describes the engagement outcomes for Castle Cove Library and Community Facility which took place between Monday 2 March 2026 and Sunday 29 March 2026.

- This is a small library and facility located within The Residences Retirement Village. It was established in 2014 as part of an S94 Development Application consent. The retirement village is operated by Fresh Hope, a Catholic Church organisation.

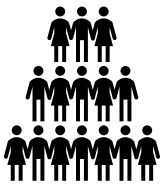
- In a recent needs analysis of community spaces, Council has identified underuse of some facilities including the Castle Cove Library and Community Facility. In addition, a significant rain event in June 2025 resulted in the temporary closure of the building, prompting further consideration of its future use.

- Due to ongoing low usage of the space, Council undertook internal investigations into the long-term viability of the space. In late 2025, an Executive decision confirmed that the site must continue to operate as a library presence and community asset.

- Following this decision, Council commenced engagement with local community stakeholders to inform future planning and activation of the space.

- Community engagement was delivered online through Council's Have Your Say Willoughby site (HYSW) from 2 March to 29 March 2026. Face-to-face engagement activities included two on street drop-ins held at Castle Cove shops on Saturday 14 March and Thursday 19 March 2026. The engagement was promoted via the Library Newsletter, the library website, letter distributed to nearby residents (within 400m) and emails to key stakeholders.

Key outcomes

 Total unique responses	134	
 Responses received	Have Your Say feedback forms completed	100
	By emails/letters	5 (3 respondents also filled in HYSW feedback form)
	At face-to-face onsite drop-in sessions	32
 Feedback received	**Top Results / Key Findings** • Strong community support for the **reopening of the library**. • High demand for **extended opening hours**, including **evenings and weekends**, to improve accessibility.	

	• Community members expressed interest in a range of **library programmes and events**, including:
	  ○ IT and digital literacy classes
	  ○ Financial literacy workshops
	  ○ Author talks and literary events
	  ○ Craft and creative activities
	  ○ Board games
	• Positive feedback on the library functioning as a **community meeting space**, with examples including:
	  ○ Progress Association meetings
	  ○ Castle Cove Community Garden committee meetings
	• **69% of comments related to "Community venue hire"** referenced **core library activities**, reinforcing the library's role as a central community service rather than for venue for hire.

Engagement promotion and communication summary

Have Your Say Willoughby online engagement project	• Total visits to the page: 1.21k • Visitors: 857
Social Media	• Library Instagram - reach to 62 people with two likes
Onsite signage	• All seven library locations • Castle Cove shops notice board
Newsletters/EDMs/Stakeholder emails	• Promoted in 2 library eDMs – 4 March - 60 clicks 18 March - 31 clicks. • Promoted in HYSW enews to approx 8k • Emails sent to key stakeholders
Letters to residents (within 400m of library)	• 727 Letter distributed to nearby residents • 221 Letters distributed to businesses

Who participated in the online engagement

 Gender	Male 20 Female 76 Prefer not to say 1 No response 3
 Age groups	12 -17 years 2 18 - 24 years 3 24 - 34 years 3 35 - 49 years 21 50 - 59 years 20 60 - 69 years 19 70 - 84 years 18 85+ years 4 No response 10
 Suburbs	Artarmon 1 Castle Cove 73 Castlecrag 1 Chatswood 3 West Chatswood 1 Middle Cove 4 North Willoughby 2 Roseville 9 Willoughby 4 Roseville Chase 3 Allambie Heights 1
Connection with Council - choose all that apply	Resident 95 Ratepayer 45 Business Owner 7 Worker 2 My child(ren) go to school here 17 Visitor 1 Nerighbouring Resident 1

Background

Castle Cove Library and Community Facility is a small community space within 'The Residences' retirement village, created in 2014 as part of S94 DA consent. The Residences is run by the Catholic Church organisation Fresh Hope.

In a recent needs analysis of community spaces, Council has identified underuse of some facilities, including this one.

A rain event in June 2025 caused temporary closure of the Castle Cove Library.
Based on low usage of the facility at the time, internal investigations were put in place regarding its future.
In late 2025, an executive decision was made that it must remain as a library presence and a community asset.

Following this decision, Council commenced engagement with local community stakeholders to inform future planning and activation of the space.

Engagement approach

A range of engagement and promotion methods were used to ensure both local residents and key stakeholders were informed and had the opportunity to participate.

Engagement Activities

- **Two face-to-face sessions** were held at the **Castle Cove shops**
- Have Your Say Willoughby online feedback form
- Engagement was promoted through **Willoughby City Libraries' Facebook page**, **Libraries website**, and **electronic direct mail (EDM)**.
- **Posters** were displayed across **all Willoughby City Library locations** and at the **Castle Cove shops**.
- A **letterbox distribution** was undertaken within a **400-metre radius** of the Castle Cove Community Library Space to directly reach nearby residents.

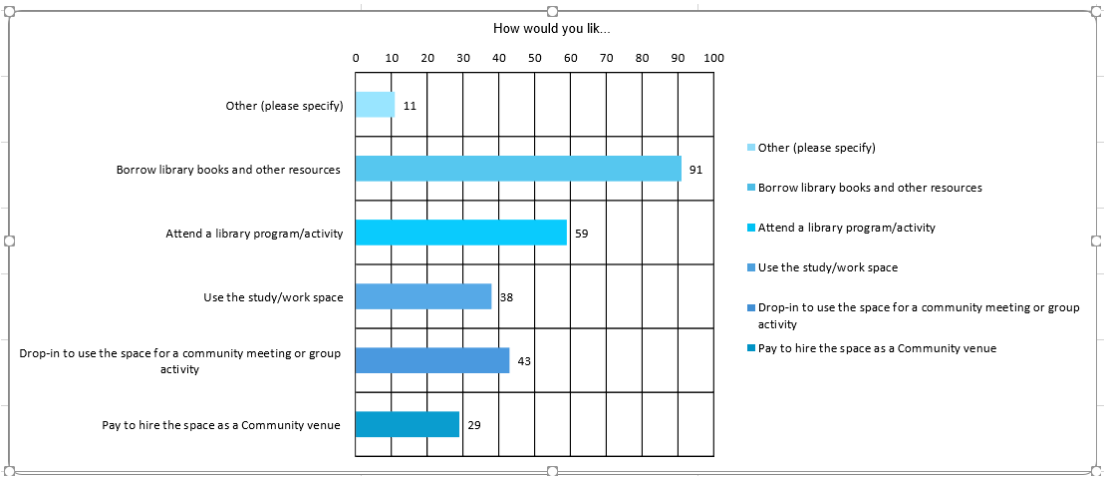
Stakeholder Notification

Written notification was provided to key local stakeholders, including:

- Castle Cove Progress Association
- Castle Cove Public School
- Explore & Develop Roseville
- The Residences (Castle Cove)

Findings – Online via Have Your Say Willoughby feedback form

Q1. How would you like to use the space? - check all that apply



Activity	Number of people who checked this option
Borrow library books and other resources	91
Attend a library program/activity	59
Use the study/work space	38
Drop-in for a community meeting or group activity	43
Pay to hire the space as a community venue	29
Other please specify	11

Q2. You responded 'Drop-in for a community meeting or group activity'. Let us know as much as you can about meeting/activity type, usual days/times, duration, frequency, attendee numbers, and equipment required.

Respondents who selected **"Drop in for a community meeting or group activity"** were prompted with a follow-up question.

Responses highlighted strong interest in traditional library programming, including:

- Storytime sessions
- Book clubs
- Language classes
- Craft activities
- Author talks and events
- Digital literacy programs
- Financial literacy sessions
- Seminars on topics of community interest, with examples such as International Women's Day events

In addition, many community members expressed a desire for Progress Association meetings to return to the library, noting that it had previously served as a convenient and effective meeting place. Respondents also suggested the library as a suitable location for other community groups, such as a local gardening club.

Q3. You responded, 'Community venue hire'. Let us know as much as you can about activity type, days, times, duration, frequency, numbers and equipment required.

To better understand what respondents meant by community venue hire, those who selected this option were prompted with a follow-up question:

It is notable that a high proportion of respondents who selected “Pay to hire as a community venue” also selected most or all of the other available options

Further analysis of these open-ended responses indicates that, while some respondents identified **private hire uses** such as small parties or exercise classes, many of the suggested activities align closely with core library functions.

These included:

- Book clubs and reading groups
- Board games
- Informal community or interest-based meetings
- Displays of local art or community exhibitions
- Small-scale, informal social or learning activities

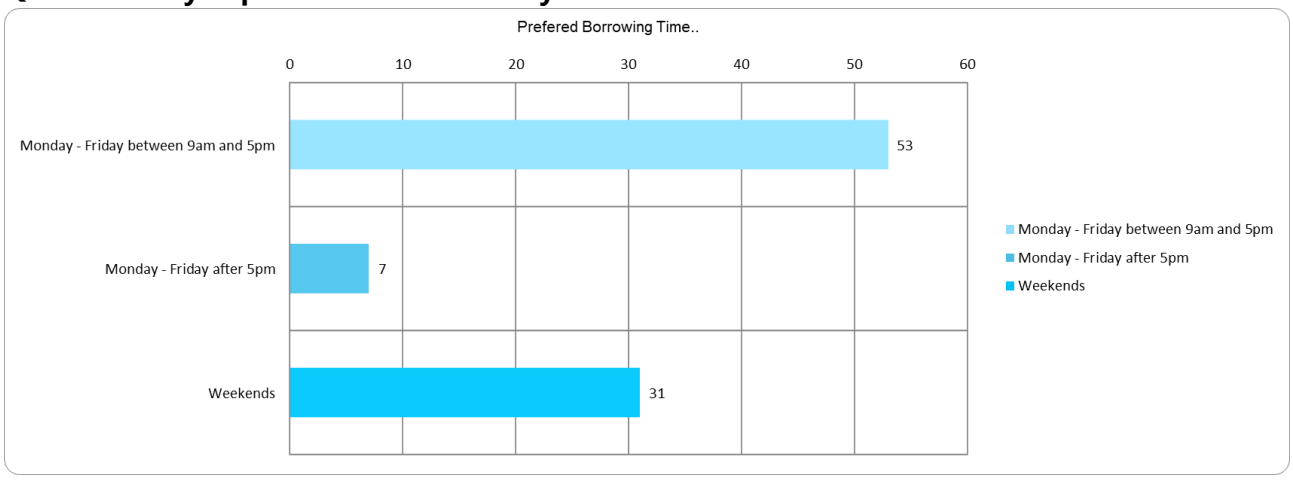
Preferred times and days of use

The following questions explored respondents’ preferred times/day of use and were designed to identify whether preferences differed depending on how the library space was being used. Specifically, responses were analysed across three activities:

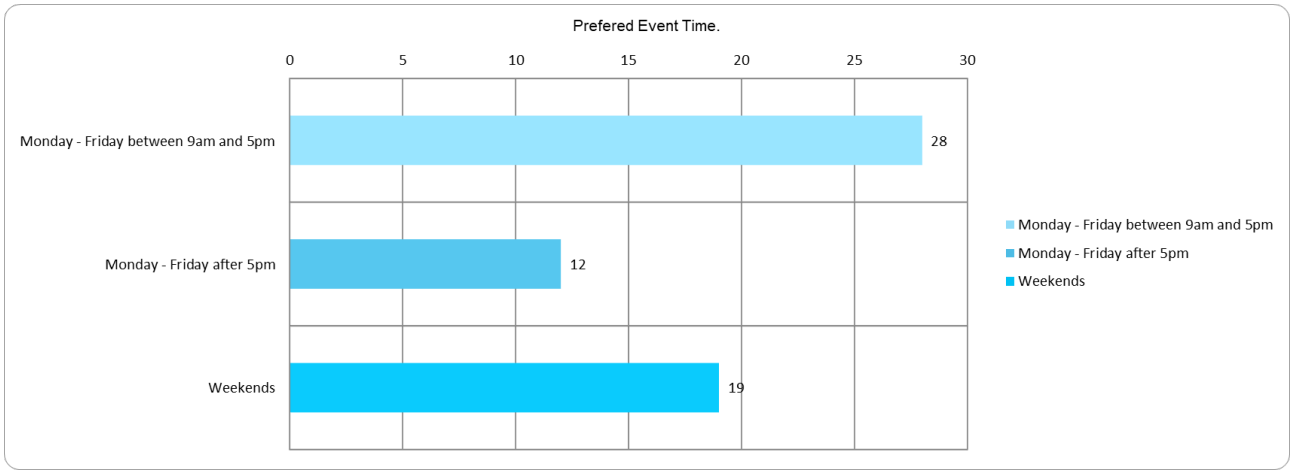
- Borrowing library items
- Attending events or programmes
- Using the library as a work or study space

For each question, respondents were limited to selecting **one option only**, to identify their primary preferred time of use.

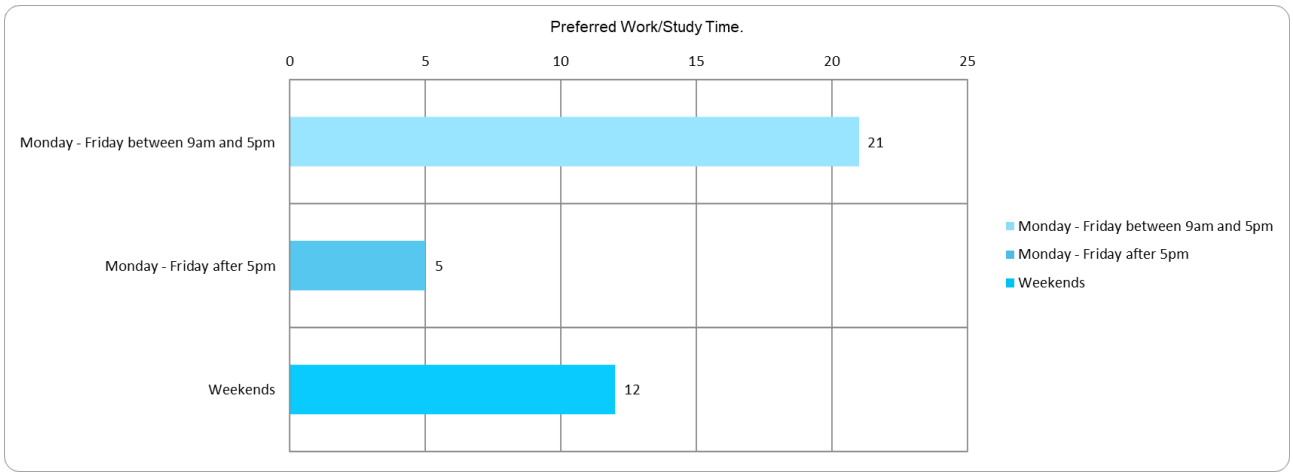
Q4. When do you prefer to borrow library items?



Q5. When do you usually prefer to attend a library program or activity?



Q6. When do you usually prefer to work or study?



Feedback received via email

Five emails were received. Feedback covered the following topics:

- General support for the library as a very local community space for borrowing library resources, study, research and meetings.
- Support for increased days and hours of operation
- Support for exercise classes to be returned to the facility
- Support for the supply of reading and study resources for local children was also mentioned
- Requirement for access and inclusion issues to be taken into account
- Query about the overhead projector
- Request for information about the engagement to be more prominent on library website

Three email respondents also filled in the feedback form on Have Your Say Willoughby.
Two emails were from the same person.

Feedback from face-to-face engagements

Members of the public were asked for their general comments on the future of the community space. A total of 32 responses were collected:

- 19 on Thursday 19 March 2026
- 13 on Saturday 14 March 2026

General feedback:

- Community members value engagement with librarians
- There's broad support for the idea of a re-imagined library and the need for a community space in Castle Cove as some community members prefer not to travel outside Castle Cove
- Some residents have lived in the area for 5 years without visiting the library and expressed trust in Council/library decision-making
- Concern about possibility of noise after 8pm, from a resident of The Residence
- Comment that the cost to hire the community space is too high for non-profit community groups

Suggested services and programs:

- JP service
- Service NSW workshops
- IT programs
- Craft programs
- English conversation groups
- Storytime/story play
- Toy library
- Pop up art galley
- Pilates and yoga
- Sustainability programs (e.g. clothing initiatives)
- Writing competitions
- Community calendar of events
- music events, including sing-alongs

Comments about access and opening hours

- Request for both staffed and unstaffed access including allowing community to access during unstaffed periods once they have been verified/approved as library members
- Additional staffed opening hours, including opening earlier in the morning (8 - 9am), to better fit community needs
- Re-instate Book Club after-hours access and after-hours returns chute

Next Steps

Community consultation has confirmed that the facility is a highly valued resource. Feedback indicated strong interest in accessing the space beyond standard business hours, including for borrowing library items, attending events, informal group gatherings and activities, and work or study purposes.

This feedback will assist Council in determining future operations, including venue hire arrangements, library opening hours, and potential expanded access options.

Fresh Hope has identified the causes of the water damage, and repair works are currently underway. A storm event will be required to test the effectiveness of these repairs once completed. Following successful testing and formal sign-off, the building will be handed back to Council.

In parallel, a new library design has been commissioned, and Willoughby City Library is preparing to proceed with ordering furnishings and shelving. The Library and Venues team are also investigating access and safety solutions to support extended use of the facility across both the library and the hireable space.

Public opening and promotional activities will commence once Fresh Hope has confirmed that all repair works are complete and the building is fit for occupation.

Council will notify the community when the Facility is ready to reopen. Updates will be provided via Council and Library websites.