

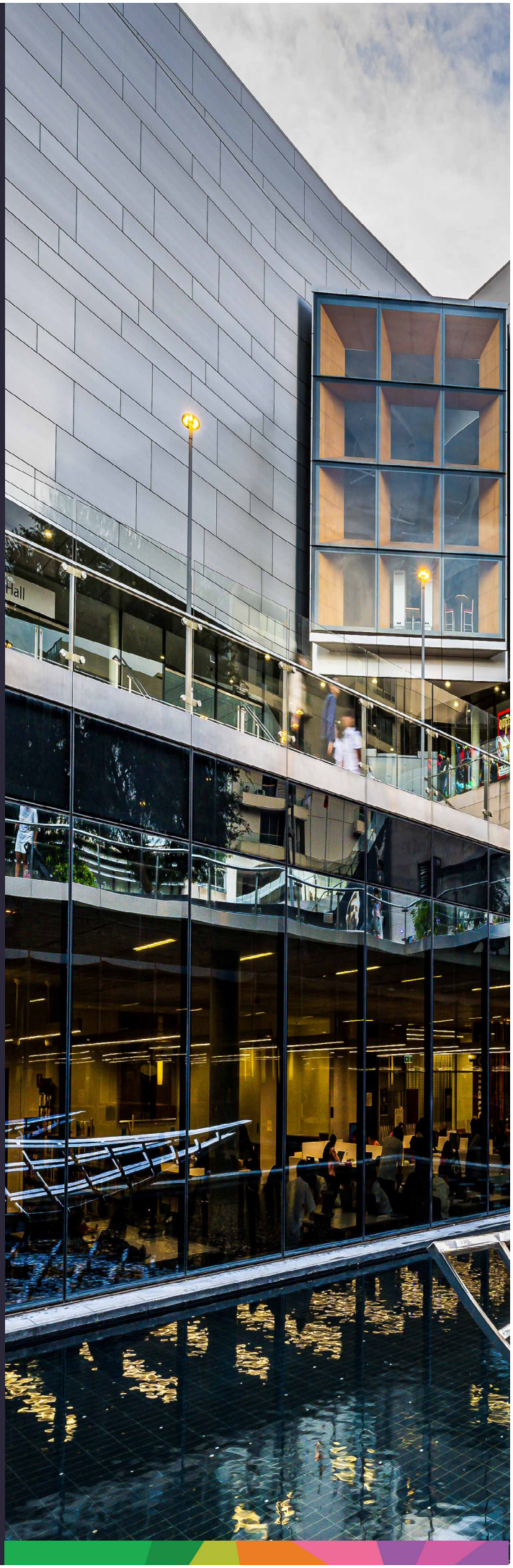
Willoughby City Library Strategy 2024 - 2028

WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL

WILLOUGHBY CITY LIBRARY

Acknowledgement of Country

Willoughby City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we stand, the Gamaragal people. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



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Executive summary

Willoughby City Library Strategy 2024 – 2028 outlines the areas of focus for Willoughby City Library over the next four years, taking into account community aspirations, demographic changes and the financial context.

The Strategy is organised into four themes:



1. Looking forward

Focussing on continuous improvement, increasing utilisation of our services and assets, responding to changing community needs and sustainably investing in our infrastructure

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2. Connecting with our community

Focussing on ensuring our spaces are welcoming hubs, collaborating and working in partnerships, improving awareness of library services across our community

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3. Learning and creating with our community

Focussing on literacy across the lifespan, celebrating literature and writing, shared learning and the creativity of our community

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4. Willoughby stories - our diverse community, past and present

Focussing on the development, awareness and accessibility of our local studies collections including in diversity and range



Willoughby City at a glance

From the 2021 Census:

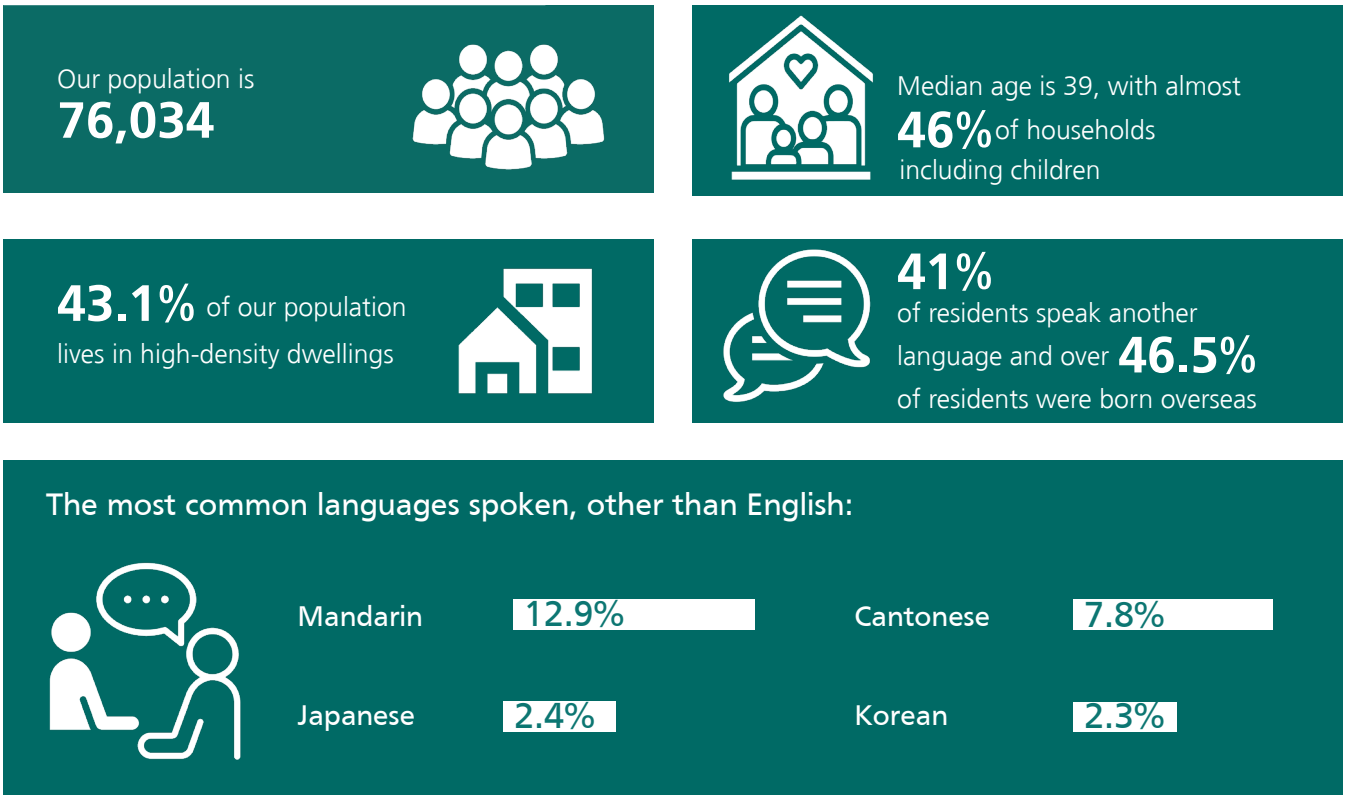


Figure 1. Willoughby City at a glance.

This strategy is...

Based upon community aspirations

This strategy is based on community aspirations as outlined in Willoughby's Community Strategic Plan – Our Future Willoughby 2032.
The library contributes significantly to a connected, inclusive and resilient Willoughby, adds to the liveability of our area, is effective and accountable to our community and stakeholders.

Informed by community feedback

Over 1,500 community members contributed to the Willoughby City Library Annual Customer Surveys in 2022 and 2023 - a rich source of community knowledge and feedback which has been incorporated into this strategy.
Participants of library programs also contributed to feedback on library programming and guided the development of new learning and creative opportunities. This feedback was a valuable guide in developing this strategy.

Guided by industry best practice

Our services are guided by and benchmarked against standards and guidelines, advice and best practice from the State Library of NSW and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).
The NSW Public Library Statistics 2022-23 show Willoughby performs very well in membership levels, including members from outside the local area, in the number of visits, loans per capita, and collections in other languages. They also show that our opening hours sit close to the average across NSW public libraries.





This strategy considers...

Financial sustainability

The challenges of the current economic climate impact on the library. These challenges, and Council's response, are addressed in Council's Long Term Financial Plan 2024 – 2034.
This strategy recognises the need for the library to deliver services effectively and look for ways we can increase value to the community.

Demographic changes

Willoughby's population is expected to grow to 92,000 by 2036. This growth will be concentrated within the Chatswood CBD and St Leonards, with the development of high-density dwellings within these precincts. As this population grows, so will the demand for library services and spaces. There is an opportunity to meet this demand through additional opening hours and improvements at Chatswood Library. To meet this demand however, additional funding will be required.

The age profile and type of households are also predicted to change, with increases in those aged over 65 years and in the teenager/young adult cohort (15 – 29 years old) and a rise in lone person households.

The branch libraries

The branch libraries provide valuable connection and amenity to their local communities, but their use is limited by their location and size.
The number of branches adds to resourcing requirements and limits opening hours.
Opportunities to change how library services are delivered via the branch libraries will be actively explored over the life of this strategy to ensure library services meet contemporary needs.
Work will be done to see what other potential uses can be undertaken in the branch libraries so that the assets are more fully utilised.

Spaces for work and study

Increasingly, part-time, out-of-home, out-of-office work patterns are the norm, and many people visit the library to work in a quiet, communal space. According to community feedback, this is the major reason 17 – 24 year olds visited Chatswood Library and the strategy considers how else to meet this need.

Chatswood Library is the library of choice for a significant number of local and not-so-local HSC students every year. The library meets the demand through providing additional exclusive opening times for HSC students and ensuring quiet spaces are available during peak study periods.

Unstaffed access to library spaces

Public libraries are looking at ways the community can enjoy library services outside of opening hours. Willoughby's library buildings and locations limit the potential for safe unstaffed opening, but the library will continue to explore options to increase the use of library services and the utilisation of library buildings.

Links to State strategies

The value of libraries as significant public facilities is made clear in the NSW Public Spaces Charter. The principles and values within the Charter align with traditional library strengths to provide welcoming spaces where the community can freely participate in cultural and civic life.
The development of the NSW Arts Culture and Creative Industries Policy highlights the value of culture and creativity in our community, and links closely to the library's role as a place for the creation and appreciation of culture.

'Book locker at a location where more people could use it, say Chatswood Interchange.'

Outreach services

The library delivers outreach services including the home library service and the book locker service in Naremburn. Lockers are being increasingly used to allow the community to borrow and return library books in convenient locations, such local shopping areas, and the library will investigate other opportunities to deliver this service.
Opportunities for other library outreach activities such as storytimes, digital literacy and book clubs will all be explored.



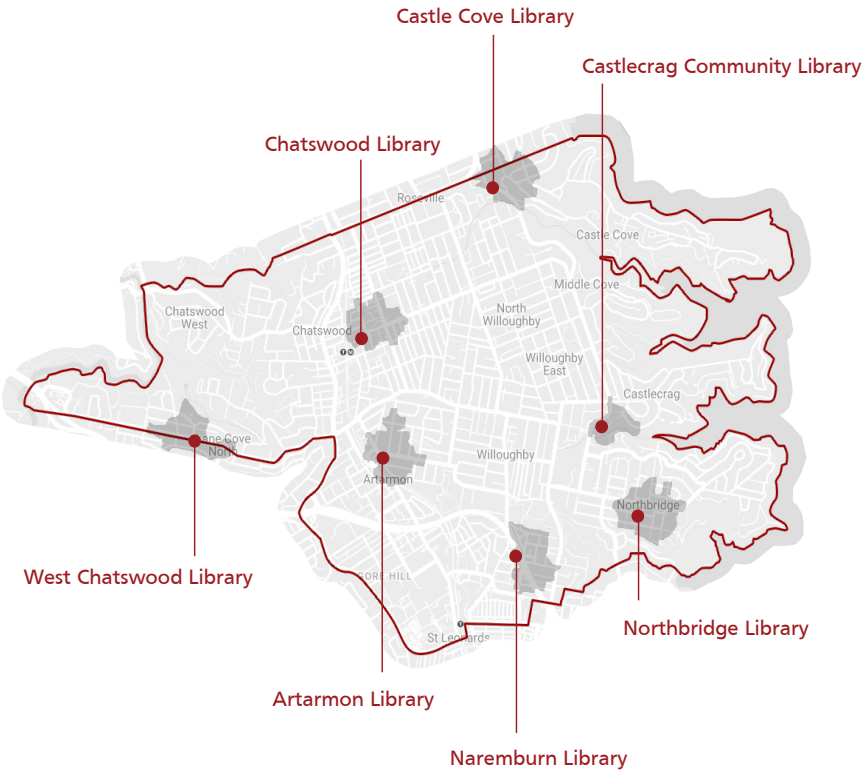


Willoughby City Library - a snapshot

Willoughby City Library delivers services from six libraries, one community library, from a smart locker, via the home library service and online. The central library at The Concourse in Chatswood is one of the largest public libraries within NSW, and there are five branch libraries in Artarmon, Castle Cove, Naremburn, Northbridge and West Chatswood. Castlecrag Community library is volunteer-run with support from the central library.

The location of these seven libraries including a 'five-minute' walking distance to each, can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Central, branch and community libraries within the Willoughby LGA.



Visitation across the library network, particularly Chatswood Library, continues to grow as the community (both local and from outside the area) is attracted by the programs, collections and the amenity of the space.

The library provides dedicated HSC programming, works in partnership with local schools to deliver award-winning inter-generational programs and supports diverse communities (including neurodiverse, culturally diverse and LGBTQA+) through programming and resources. The library is a place to learn about new technologies, and tinker with circuit boards, learn about IoT and generative AI. It is a place to gather and play chess, research family and local history or even quietly read a book. It includes spaces for hire, including a quiet pod for individual meetings.

Figure 3. Willoughby City Library in 2022 - 2023.



In 2022-23...

7 Willoughby City Library locations, open **132** hours per week

over **680,000** visits with **95%** of these to Chatswood Library

60,000 library members

32,000 (53%)
of library members living outside of Willoughby LGA, the highest proportion in NSW

almost
600,000
loans and renewals

7,671
books, magazines and DVDs delivered to Home Library Service members by our outreach team

72 full time, part time and casual library staff worked the equivalent of **37.82** full time staff

plus volunteers contributed **733** hours to library services

over **16,000**
community members attended **1,342** programs

132 Local Studies research inquiries

Chatswood Library

Chatswood Library, spacious and light-filled, is well-loved and used by the local community and visitors to the Chatswood CBD. Located within the Concourse precinct, it adds significantly to the value of this public space, and is an important contributor to cultural life. Often busy with students and families, it is a vibrant and active place for study, reading and connecting.

'I love the library, it is a very good space to study as a year 12 student. There are a multitude of helpful services I love to use!'

'As I live in Newtown, I only come rarely to the Library, in order to borrow books I cant find in my local libraries (and I have cards for four other local library networks, which I check first). But the Library has an excellent collection, this is why I am prepared to make the trek to Chatswood to get books I want or need, if I cant find them elsewhere.'



Willoughby City Council

Willoughby's branch libraries

Willoughby's branch libraries provide valuable services and community connection to their local areas. Not only are they places to browse, borrow and return books, they also provide services and activities for their local communities. Residents visit their branch library for storytimes, to study, for English conversation groups, book clubs and JP services.

However, Willoughby's branch libraries do not meet industry guidelines for optimal location, and the large number of branch libraries contributes to high running costs, which then limits how library services can be delivered.



Location

Ideally, libraries are in high-traffic areas, such as main streets and shopping areas with easy transport connections and proximity to schools. Willoughby's branch libraries do not meet this ideal, and are all located some distance from Willoughby's local centres. The hyperlocal location of the branch libraries contributes to their relatively low use.

Number of branch libraries

The number of Willoughby's branch libraries is high in comparison to other local areas. Figure 4 shows the number of libraries in Willoughby and neighbouring areas highlighting that Willoughby has more libraries than most of our neighbours.

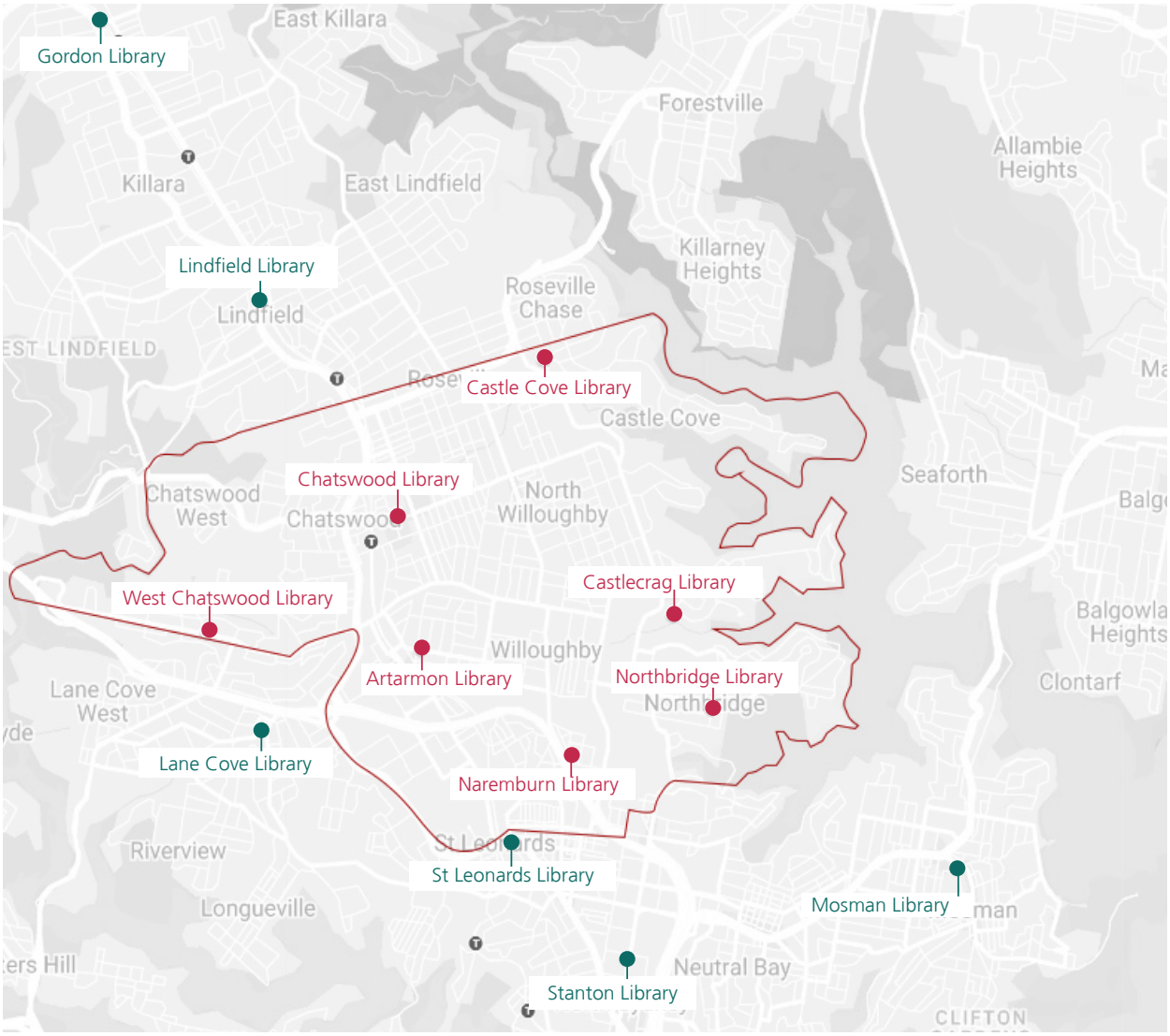
Local area	Willoughby	Hornsby	Ku-ring-gai	Lane Cove	North Sydney	Northern Beaches	Ryde
No. of libraries (central and branch)	**6**	4	4	3	1	6	5

Figure 4. The number of libraries in Willoughby and neighbouring areas.

Another way to compare is by number of residents per library. Willoughby has one library for every 12,000 residents, which is more than all other neighbouring areas.

The relatively high number of Willoughby's libraries is also seen in Figure 5 below, which shows the distribution of public libraries in the Lower North Shore.

Figure 5. Public libraries in the Lower North Shore.



Opening hours

Opening hours vary between the branch libraries and feedback indicates community preference for increased opening hours at all locations. However, the option of additional staffed opening hours is difficult to justify due to the low visitation.

Opening 24/7 or unstaffed access

Unstaffed access allows library members to use library facilities outside of opening or staffed hours. The location of most Willoughby's branch libraries, with limited foot traffic and poor street visibility, limits safe access to these buildings outside of staffed hours, but the library will continue to review this option to deliver library services.

Comparing Chatswood and branch libraries - the proportional use and budgets

Figure 6 below highlights the proportional use and budgets of Chatswood and branch libraries in 2022/23. The budget for Chatswood Library includes the cost of supporting the whole library service. The budget and the number of loans and visits vary widely for each branch library but are combined for ease of comparison.

Figure 6. Proportional use and budgets of Chatswood and branch libraries in 2022/23.



Castlecrag Community Library

Council supports Castlecrag Community Library through providing and maintaining a Council-owned property, and through direct funding for new books and operational expenses.
The library also provides support to the volunteers who run the library, including courier services and professional advice.



Learning and creating at the library

The community can connect, learn and create through library programs. The library is home to a large range of programs, for all ages, including coding, knitting, Dungeons & Dragons and storytelling.
These are run by library staff, by community volunteers, and in partnership with other organisations including government agencies, local schools and TAFE.

The Creator Space at Chatswood Library is a generous space for programs and activities, and the community meets here for activities including creative tech meetups, talks on generative AI, privacy and identity, writing workshops, coding and robotics groups, book clubs, art and craft groups.

'Continue to provide the range of both online and face to face events, interactive activities, book clubs and much more.'



Collections

Collections remain the heart of the library and library members have an extensive choice of books, movies and magazines to read, watch and listen, to borrow, stream and download. In 2022/23, around 15% of loans were in digital format and this proportion is expected to increase.

Most of the library's collections are in English, but there are also significant collections in Chinese, Japanese and Korean, reflecting the needs and ancestry of our local community. Staff also regularly hear from library borrowers who travel to Chatswood to borrow books in their language.

'I love the displays of new books and quick reads and often find a brand new book that I've just read a review of there. I often rave about the library to friends and neighbours, and reckon I receive a large portion of the value of my annual rates from the Library Service. Keep up the good work!'

Community feedback shows how important the collections are, with around 25% of survey respondents providing suggestions and comments regarding the collections at Willoughby.

'I love the 'fast reads'! Great idea. Being able to borrow dvds still is good too as not everyone can afford to pay for a dozen different streaming services.'





Willoughby City Council

Local studies – a place for Willoughby's stories

The library's local studies collections are the place to discover Willoughby's history, and the library's local studies service collects, curates and makes Willoughby's stories accessible to the community. Our community's stories can illuminate local indigenous heritage, improve understanding of our recent and not-so-recent history, and reflect the rich diversity of our area.



Valued public facilities, activating public spaces

Libraries are valued public facilities, accessible by everyone within our community free of charge.

Not only does the library contribute to the value of our community's public spaces, the library also contributes to the amenity and activation of Willoughby's public spaces through, for example, linking cultural sites via the Willoughby Walks app or outreach storytimes at local parks and street fairs.



Library in the cultural landscape

In addition to our extensive collections, the library also actively supports the creation and appreciation of literature, reading and writing. We partner with the Sydney Writers Festival, nurture local writing groups and have an established program of author talks.
Local poet, Francis Webb, is celebrated with annual readings at Chatswood Library.
Vibrant writers' groups, creative writing workshops and book clubs help create a readers/writers ecosystem at the library.





Literacy for life

The library supports the community to develop literacy skills throughout their life from early reading skills through to navigating our digital world. A range of programs supports the development of skills from pre-literacy through early literacy and helps children prepare for school.
The library also supports literacy through activities such as the Summer Reading Club and Children's Book Week.

Additionally the library has a strong focus on the community's development of digital literacy, with a range of regular classes, workshops and staff support to ensure the community can navigate the changing tech world.




LIBRARY
KIDS
忍者キッズ
ストーリータイム
Put a Spot Over Here
Put a spot over here
And a spot over there
Put a spot on your ear
And a spot on your hair
And a lot of little spots in the air
Everywhere
It's a spotty kind of day
Continue with:
Stripe, squiggle, zig zag

Libraries for social connection and resilience

The role of libraries in fostering social connection and individual wellbeing is well-documented. Library spaces, run by skilled and supported staff, have the capacity to connect communities, providing welcoming hubs for all members of the community.

Programs and activities that support connection and wellbeing include English conversation classes, book clubs, craft groups and sharing community information such as Beat the Heat information. Services such as the Home Library Service also provide valuable connection for those who are housebound.



'I use the Home Library service for my disabled child since 2021. ... Willoughby City Council did an excellent job of getting the books for my child and delivering them to our home every month. I am so happy that we are able to maintain our access to the community services despite of the disability. Thank you very much.'



Themes, actions and measures



1. Looking forward

Focussing on continuous improvement, increasing utilisation of our services and assets, responding to changing community needs and and sustainably investing in our infrastructure



2. Connecting with our community

Focussing on ensuring our spaces are welcoming hubs, collaborating and working in partnerships, improving awareness of library services across our community



3. Learning and creating with our community

Focussing on literacy across the lifespan, celebrating literature and writing, shared learning and the creativity of our community



4. Willoughby stories - our diverse community, past and present

Focussing on the development, awareness and accessibility of our local studies collections including in diversity and range



Theme 1: Looking forward

Focussing on continuous improvement, increasing utilisation of our services and assets, responding to changing community needs and and sustainably investing in our infrastructure

Considering...

Increased dwellings within the Chatswood CBD, and the extension of the Sydney Metro will increase demand for library services within Chatswood

Community feedback shows concern around crowding, cleanliness and noise at Chatswood Library due to the number of visitors at the library

The locations of Willoughby's branch libraries do not meet industry best practice

Most branch libraries are undersized for their population catchment

Safe unstaffed access is limited at most branch libraries due to their location and building design

Actions and measures

Actions	Measured by
Develop a Library Infrastructure Plan	Completion of a Library Infrastructure Plan
Expand our partnerships to deliver library services	An increase in the number and range of partnerships
Continue to adjust our services and collections to meet our community needs	Service review completed and recommendations commenced Membership and visitation increased
Increase weekend opening hours at Chatswood Library	The number of opening hours
Explore 24/7 access to library services	Exploration of 24/7 access complete



Theme 2: Connecting with our community

Focussing on ensuring our spaces are welcoming hubs, collaborating and working in partnerships, improving awareness of library services across our community

Considering...

Willoughby Council's Wellbeing Survey (2023) found that some measures of connectedness are rebounding, such as volunteering and getting involved with a social group

However, some in the community want to be even more connected with almost 1/3 of respondents wanting greater engagement with the community

The demographic changes, especially the rise in lone households, increased diversity and the increase in those aged over 65 may contribute to feelings of social isolation

Feedback from library surveys indicated difficulty navigating the library's website and catalogue, limiting online connection with the library community

Actions and measures

Actions	Measured by
Enhance the focus on customer experience	Annual satisfaction rating above 90%
Increase staff confidence and skills in managing behaviours associated with vulnerable populations	Number of staff attending training sessions
Review the potential for outreach activities and services to better reach our diverse and isolated communities	Increase the number of outreach activities
Review the library website to improve the accessibility and value of the information to the community	Review of library website completed Increase in visits to library website



Theme 3: Learning and creating with our community

Focussing on literacy across the lifespan, celebrating literature and writing, shared learning and the creativity of our community

Considering...

The library will focus on the ongoing development of early literacy initiatives, supporting the development of NSW industry standards

There is greater scope for community driven creative activities within the Creator Space
The library will continue to work with local partners to support creativity and culture

There are opportunities based on creative writing and literature, fostering communities of readers, and providing opportunities for local creative expression

There is a need to support our community understand and engage with emerging technologies

Actions and measures

Actions	Measured by
Increase use of the Creator Space, seeking funding or collaborative opportunities to support cultural initiatives	Usage, funding and collaboration levels increased
Explore the interest and opportunity to establish an annual writers festival	Writers festival pilot delivered
Match early literacy activities to community needs, and in line with industry guidelines and initiatives	Early literacy programs delivered in line with Willoughby's community profile Programs meet State Library and NSW Public Libraries Association guidelines and measures
Further develop digital literacy programming to support understanding of current and emerging technologies and support learning outcomes	Number and range of digital literacy programs Number of attendees at digital literacy programs
Explore potential for Willoughby to become a UNESCO Learning City	Exploration complete
Collaborate with local creative groups and individuals to increase display opportunities at the library	Increased range and number of collaborations and displays

Theme 4: Willoughby stories - our diverse community, past and present

Focussing on the development, awareness and accessibility of our local studies collections including in diversity and range

Considering...

The local studies collections do not reflect Willoughby's diverse populations

The local studies collections are limited in timeframes, and format

Local studies collections are difficult for our community to access, and are poorly understood

There is an opportunity to improve understanding of Willoughby's indigenous heritage

Actions and measures

Actions	Measured by
Partner with First Nations organisations to share understanding of local indigenous heritage	Number and range of programs and initiatives
Improve representation of Willoughby's diverse community within the library's local studies collection through active promotion and engagement with community partners	Expanded and diversified local studies materials collected and available
Create a digitisation plan for local studies collections	Increased range and number of local studies items available online
Increase understanding of and engagement with local studies	Develop a promotional plan for local studies New local studies programming developed


WILLOUGHBY CITY
LIBRARY
CREATE
Be Connected
Every Australian online
Your guide
to getting online

Resourcing and timeframes

Council will resource this strategy through operational budgets and project funding. Actions that are not funded will require additional funding to be allocated via Council's usual budget process. External funding and in-kind partnerships will also be required to undertake some actions.

Funding sources include the NSW Government and partnerships will be developed with a range of stakeholders. Timeframes for delivering initiatives will vary over the life of this strategy, and the community will be kept informed through library and Council's communication channels.

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