

3.4 Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025 for Community Consultation

Abstract

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025 (the draft Plan) (refer **Attachment 1 – Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025**) for the purposes of community consultation.

The proposed vision of the Boroondara Library Service is:

An inspirational library service where the community is central
and everyone feels welcome.

There are six Strategic Objectives within the draft Plan, as follows:

1. Community Engagement and Participation
2. Collections
3. Buildings, Facilities and Spaces
4. Innovation and Technology
5. Local and Family History
6. Programs, Events and Services

Over the next five years, work will be undertaken in line with these six Strategic Objectives, in order to deliver on the proposed Boroondara Library Service vision. The work completed in the next five years will also support delivery of Strategy 1.4 Provide, facilitate and advocate for life-long learning opportunities for people of all ages as documented in the Community Plan 2017-27.

The purpose of this draft Plan is to provide a strategic framework to take the Boroondara Library Service forward. The draft Plan builds on Council's past commitment to position library services in the community as a centre of reading, discovery and lifelong learning, and facilitates a future that responds to any short or long term impacts on Council's library services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A detailed action plan will be developed and added to the draft Plan once the Strategic Objectives have been endorsed by the community consultation.

Officers' recommendation

That the Services Special Committee resolve to endorse:

1. The draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025 (refer Attachment 1 – Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025) for the purposes of community consultation.
2. Following community consultation, officers will bring the Plan including feedback received from the consultation and an accompanying action plan, to Council for formal adoption.

Responsible director: **Carolyn McClean**
 Community Development

1. Purpose

The draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025 (the draft Plan) is being presented to Council for endorsement to proceed to community consultation.

2. Policy implications and relevance to community plan and council plan

The draft Plan is aligned with the Boroondara Community Plan 2007-2017 under Priority Theme 1: Your Community, Services and Facilities.

The draft Plan delivers directly under:

- Strategic Objective 1: Community Services and Facilities are high quality, inclusive and meet a variety of needs now and into the future, and
 - Strategy 1.4: Provide, facilitate and advocate for life-long learning opportunities for people of all ages.
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The draft Plan will supersede the previous Plan adopted by Council on 10 December 2015.

3. Background

The draft Plan will supersede the previous Plan adopted by Council on 10 December 2015. All actions within the previous Plan have been implemented. Of particular note was the redevelopment of the Balwyn Library and the introduction of the Greythorn Library Lounge in North Balwyn.

- The Balwyn Library redevelopment was completed in March 2018 and the project received a commendation under the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Design Awards. In the newly redeveloped space, there is a larger study area, five technology enabled study rooms and a first floor open study space to accommodate high school students attending nearby high schools. The Chinese collection caters to the 13% of Balwyn residents who are born in China and the wide aisles and welcoming casual seating allows for complete access by group visits from the nearby aged care facilities and disability services. In 2018/19, the Balwyn Library served 212,784 visitors.
- The Greythorn Community Hub was opened in September 2018 and won the 2020 Award for Excellence in the 'Community Assets and Infrastructure Initiatives (projects over \$2 million)' category at the Local Government Professionals (LGPro) Awards. The award recognises council initiatives which maximise benefits to the community and showcase partnerships in the development and management of new community assets. The Greythorn Community Hub provides the local community with a one-stop destination to access valuable services, programs and activities. It is home to a library lounge, neighbourhood house, maternal and child health service and childcare centre. In 2018/19, the Greythorn Library Lounge served 37,767 visitors.

During 2018/19, the Boroondara Library Service welcomed 1.2 million visitors through its five libraries and the library lounge. The number of physical visits (ie. people through the door) per capita for Boroondara Library branches (6.4 visits per capita) was significantly higher than for all 23 library services in the Greater Melbourne region (4.5 visits per capita). Furthermore, the physical visitation rate has grown over the past 4 years from 6.2 to 6.4 visits per capita. This compares to a physical visitation rate for Greater Melbourne libraries declining over the past 4 years from 4.8 to 4.5 visits per capita.

Boroondara's active library membership in 2018/19 was nearly 45,000 members which was 25% of Boroondara's population. This was significantly higher than the 15% active membership of the population across all libraries in the Greater Melbourne area. Furthermore, the active membership percentage has increased significantly over the past 4 years from 23% to 25%, whilst it has declined marginally across the Greater Melbourne region (16% to 15%). The growth in the membership percentage is significant and demonstrates the value of Boroondara's public libraries, even in the modern digital era. It makes a strong statement that the community value having a public library.

Boroondara Library Service also had a very high level of loans of both physical books and e-books with physical lending being nearly twice the metropolitan average in 2018/19. E-book lending was slightly higher than the metropolitan average and continues to grow strongly.

4. Outline of key issues/options

Information, Knowledge and Literacy

The role of public libraries has always focused on education, knowledge, access to information and literacy. Historically, the library's role has concentrated on the physical book collections, with operations structured around the core activity of lending. In more recent times, library service models retain this lending function as a core activity and have also provided programs, activities and engagement which promote lifelong learning and build community connection.

The Digital Era and e-books

The digital information era is broadening the way people choose to access information and resources for business, learning and leisure. While, the increasing popularity of e-books is rapidly changing people's reading patterns and preferences, e-books haven't replaced physical books, rather the total information intake by the community has vastly increased, with many people in Boroondara reading more in aggregate including a mix of physical and digital media. Audiobooks have also grown rapidly as a medium of choice in recent years and physical books still remain a relevant part of a public library service offering. Libraries will need to continue to respond to changes in the way community members wish to access information and content according to user preferences.

The Creative, Active Library including Co-located Uses

Libraries of the future will continue to provide creative, active spaces, along with quieter spaces for more passive pursuits such as reading and quiet study. Although both of these elements will remain an essential part of the library offering, they will need to be provided in separate zones. Active spaces provide opportunities for people to develop and express their ideas and creativity, often in collaboration with others. The creative library will be a central hub for learning and creativity, offering large, open and flexible spaces in an environment of colour, sound, ideas and creativity.

Local History Collections

The preservation and celebration of local history has long been an important and core role of public libraries. Public libraries have and will continue to play a key role in preserving local history and enabling community access to local history collections.

Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic throughout Metropolitan Melbourne in March 2020 saw many community facilities close, including Boroondara Library Service. The fluctuation of restrictions in the subsequent months allowed Library Services to reopen with a limit of 20 visitors at a time, and then close again shortly thereafter.

During these closures, the Boroondara Library Service was agile and responded by offering:

- increased access to e-collections (e-books and e-audio) and eresources (available 24/7);
- phone and email assistance during normal library opening hours;
- online and live streamed events;
- videoed storytimes;
- a new bundle and collect service - Librarian selected items based upon the reading preference of borrowers, and
- a book delivery service for Boroondara residents.

When community members were allowed to re-enter their beloved libraries, the sense of a community lounge room was gone, with health checks, social distancing, cleaning regimes and barriers in place impacting detrimentally on the usual 'vibe' of everyday interactions and connections with others.

It is unclear how long the State Government restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will continue however, it is considered likely there may be short and long term impacts on community life, including local businesses, which will affect many of the methods of delivery of Council's services. Boroondara Library Service will need to continue to change and adapt to community needs as the impacts of these changes unfold. Promotion of virtual services will be critical as these can be accessed 24/7, plus library services will need to continue to evolve our physical service offering to support the diverse needs of the community.

The COVID-19 period has again demonstrated the importance of the Library Service for the local community. The opportunities gained from moving into an entirely virtual and online service delivery model can be capitalised upon into the future and will be delivered on during the ensuing 5 years of this draft Plan. Alternative service delivery methods will continue to be delivered in line with customer expectations, acknowledging the balance required between physical and virtual service delivery.

The physical presence of a local public library remains highly desired by the Boroondara community as demonstrated by physical borrowing and visitation in excess of the metropolitan averages. Boroondara residents are typically highly educated and therefore understand the value of lifelong learning as delivered through our Library Service. Our library spaces and buildings are flexible enough to be able to respond to the social distancing requirements brought about by COVID-19. This allows for balancing between the physical and virtual service delivery to continue into the future.

Draft Plan

The draft Plan builds upon the actions completed from the previous Plan.

The scope of services provided by the Boroondara Library Service includes:

- Physical services:
 - Five library branches and a library lounge
 - Hard copy collections including books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and newspapers
 - Collaboration spaces, study spaces and community meeting rooms
 - Public access PCs and free WiFi
 - In house library programs for reader literacy and skills development, community interest and building community connection
 - Off-site programs to access and support lifelong learning, including the Home Library Services
- Virtual services:
 - Phone and on-line services and support
 - Electronic collections including e-books, e-audio, e-magazines
 - Streaming services including movies and music
 - E-resources and databases including newspapers
 - Online and videoed programs for reader, literacy and skills development, community interest and building community connection

The proposed vision of the Boroondara Library Service is:

An inspirational library service where the community is central
and everyone feels welcome.

This covers the following aspects:

- Inspirational - spaces and services that inspire you to learn, to reflect and to create,
- Community is central - places where you connect and engage with people, both face-to-face and digitally, and
- Welcome - we welcome all-comers, regardless of who you are or where you come from.

There are six Strategic Objectives within the draft Plan, as follows:

1. **Community Engagement and Participation:** This is at the core of what we do. We want people to come to our libraries to learn, share ideas and connect with other people.
2. **Collections:** Our collections – both physical and digital – are second to none. When people come to Boroondara Library Service, they have access to a high quality and contemporary offering.
3. **Buildings, facilities and spaces:** Our library buildings and spaces are a core part of our offer. We have a range of spaces with a different use and theme. There are areas for quiet, reflective reading and also more active spaces for connecting, doing things and sharing ideas.
4. **Innovation and Technology:** Technology is the modern ‘enabler’ of access to the information ‘super highway’. It opens the door to a whole world of resources for the people of Boroondara. We help people navigate their way through the use of various technology.
5. **Local and Family History:** Local and family history is all our local stories. It’s a key part of the Library’s role to be part of its preservation and also its telling.
6. **Programs, Events and Services:** The library is now an active, engaging, creative space: it’s a place where you go to learn, talk, engage, hear new ideas and do things.

Over the next five years, work will be undertaken in line with these six Strategic Objectives, in order to deliver on the proposed Boroondara Library Service vision. The work completed in the next five years will also support delivery of Strategy 1.4 Provide, facilitate and advocate for life-long learning opportunities for people of all ages as documented in the Community Plan 2017-27. Further details are contained within **Appendix 1**.

The purpose of this draft Plan is to provide a strategic framework to take the Boroondara Library Service forward. The draft Plan builds on Council’s past commitment to positioning library services in the community as a centre of reading, discovery and lifelong learning, and facilitates a future that responds to any short or long term impacts on Council’s library services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A detailed action plan will be developed and added to the draft Plan once the Strategic Objectives have been endorsed by the community consultation.

5. Consultation/communication

Development of this draft Plan has been informed by the following consultative sources:

- Feedback from the Boroondara Library Service Advisory Committee, which includes councillor and community representatives who live, work or study in Boroondara and have relevant skills and experience and a passion for library services;

- Verbatim feedback received from community members in development of the Boroondara Community Plan 2017-27 where libraries were specifically mentioned;
- Library customer satisfaction survey undertaken in April 2019 where the objective of the survey was to track the resident population's usage, perceptions and satisfaction with their public library services and compare these with results to the other participating Victorian public library services, and
- Regular, daily feedback from library users verbally in the libraries and via feedback forms, phone, email, website commentary and social media comments.

Further consultation on the draft Plan will be undertaken via an online survey of library users through the library member database and non-library users through usual Council communication channels. Educational institutions, such as kindergartens, primary and high schools will also be consulted via an online survey. Recent consultations undertaken with young, aged, vulnerable and CALD communities will be reviewed for feedback relevant to Library Services. An action plan will be developed and added to the draft Plan once the Strategic Objectives have been endorsed by the community consultation.

6. Financial and resource implications

In the 2018 Report 'Libraries Work - the socio-economic value of public libraries' (SGS Economics, State Library of Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria Network), libraries were found to contribute a total of \$328 million in economic value in Victoria. In the City of Boroondara, the economic contribution was found to be \$13.7 million (Gross Regional Product) or \$5.10 in value for every dollar invested. This is higher than the economic contribution for the Victorian average of \$4.30 and the Greater Melbourne average of \$4.50 in value for every dollar invested.

Delivery of the draft Plan will be undertaken within current operating and capital works budgets. Any future library redevelopments are considered by Council annually within the development of Council's Long-Term Financial Plan.

7. Governance issues

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The officers responsible for this report have no direct or indirect interests requiring disclosure.

8. Social and environmental issues

Public libraries are often referred to as the last place anyone can go where there's no expectation of a transaction. The physical space creates the opportunity to make an environment for people to come into and feel at home and comfortable - the community lounge room. Boroondara Library Service welcomes everyone into the buildings and provides a space where anyone can visit to sit, reflect, rest or just to be somewhere with others.

Boroondara Library Service promotes lifelong learning and a love of reading and provides programs, activities and events that allow everyone to engage with new ideas and learn. These take the form of activities and events that relate to literature and the collection (author talks, books talks etc.) but also on broader social issues and trends that are of community interest.

The Home Library service delivers books to those who are housebound and vulnerable in our community. This service reduces social isolation by providing a friendly face through our volunteer deliveries, as well as reading material for these clients.

Mental health issues and social isolation are increasing as a result of COVID-19 and the library can play a part in addressing and assisting the community with its recovery. The Boroondara Library Service will continue to find new ways to connect with and serve these library members.

The Boroondara Library Service provides environmental benefits through the shared economy of book borrowing and thus reduces the quantity of books that need to be printed for the community to read.

Manager: Kate Brewster, Community Information & Library Services

Report officer: Kate Brewster, Manager Community Information and Libraries

Attachment 1 - Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025

Boroondara Library Service

**DRAFT BOROONDARA LIBRARY
SERVICE PLAN**

2020 to 2025

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Executive Summary

The draft Boroondara Library Service Plan (the draft Plan) 2020-2025 will supersede the previous Boroondara Library Service Plan adopted by Council on 10 December 2015. All actions within the previous Plan have been implemented. Of particular note was the redevelopment of the following libraries:

- Balwyn Library was completed in March 2018 and the project received a commendation under the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Design Awards. In 2018/19, the Balwyn Library served 212,784 visitors.
- The Greythorn Library Lounge as part of the Greythorn Community Hub was opened in September 2018. The Hub won the 2020 Award for Excellence in the 'Community Assets and Infrastructure Initiatives (projects over \$2 million)' category at the Local Government Professionals (LGPro) Awards. In 2018/19, the Lounge served 37,767 visitors.

During 2018/19, the Boroondara Library Service welcomed 1.2 million visitors through its five libraries and the library lounge. Boroondara's active library membership in 2018/19 was nearly 45,000 members which was 25% of Boroondara's population. The Boroondara Library Service also had a very high level of loans of both physical books and e-books. Refer Our Community – Demographic Profile on page 6 for more information.

The proposed vision of the Boroondara Library Service is:

An inspirational library service where the community is central
and everyone feels welcome.

There are six Strategic Objectives within the draft Plan (refer Strategic Objectives on page 19), as follows:

1. Community Engagement and Participation
2. Collections
3. Buildings, Facilities and Spaces
4. Innovation and Technology
5. Local and Family History
6. Programs, Events and Services

Under these six Strategic Objectives, priorities are identified for work to be undertaken by the library service over the next five years in order to deliver on the Boroondara Library Service vision.

This draft Plan has been developed in consultation with the following sources:

- Boroondara Library Service Advisory Committee, which includes councillor and community representatives;
- Verbatim feedback received from community members in development of the Boroondara Community Plan 2017-27 where libraries were specifically mentioned;
- Library customer satisfaction survey undertaken in April 2019;
- Regular, daily feedback from library users verbally in the libraries and via feedback forms, phone, email, website commentary and social media comments.

The purpose of this draft Plan is to provide a strategic framework to take the Boroondara Library Service forward. The draft Plan builds on Council's past commitment to positioning library services in

[Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025](#)

the community as a centre of reading, discovery and lifelong learning, and facilitates a future that responds to any short or long term impacts on Council's library services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A detailed action plan will be developed and added to the draft Plan once the Strategic Objectives have been endorsed by the community consultation.

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1. Our Vision and Purpose

1.1 Proposed Vision- Boroondara Library Service

The proposed vision of the Boroondara Library Service is:

... an inspirational library service where the community is central and everyone feels welcome.

Inspirational...

...spaces and services that inspire you to learn, to reflect and to create.

Community is central...

... places where you connect and engage with people, both face-to-face and digitally.

Welcome...

... we welcome all-comers, regardless of who you are or where you come from.

The purpose of this draft Plan is to provide a strategic framework to take the Boroondara Library Service forward. The draft Plan builds on Council's past commitment to positioning library services in the community as a centre of reading, discovery and lifelong learning.

1.2 Boroondara Community Plan – 2017-2027

The draft Plan embraces the Council's vision of:

'A vibrant and inclusive city meeting the needs and aspirations of its community.'

The Boroondara Community Plan 2017-27 sets out the 10-year vision for the City based on the values, aspirations and priorities expressed by the community. It builds on what makes Boroondara a remarkable place to live. It is the foundation for Council to work with the community towards our vision.

As Council's key strategic document, the Community Plan guides all planning, resource allocation and decision making across all services, including libraries.

1.3 Scope of Library Services

The scope of services provided by the Boroondara Library Service includes:

- Physical services:
 - Five library branches and a library lounge
 - Hard copy collections including books, magazines, DVDs, CDs and newspapers
 - Collaboration spaces, study spaces and community meeting rooms
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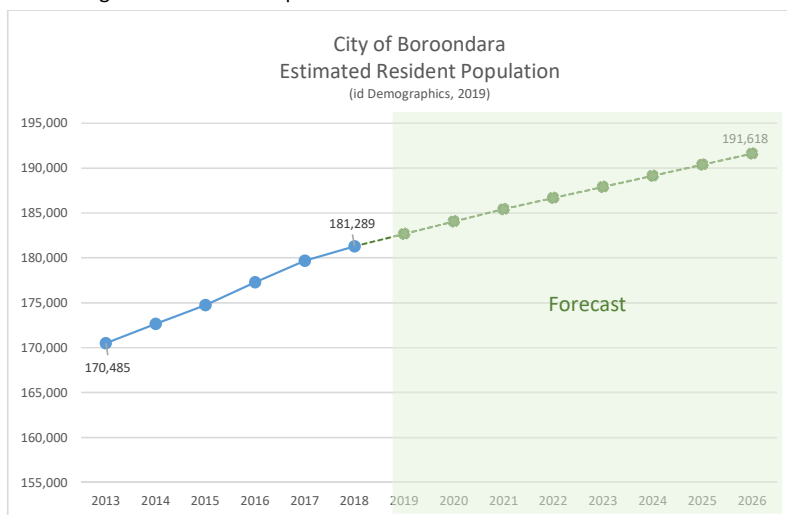
Draft Boroondara Library Service Plan 2020-2025

- E-resources and databases including newspapers
- Online and videoed programs for reader, literacy and skills development, community interest and building community connection

2. Our Community – Demographic Profile

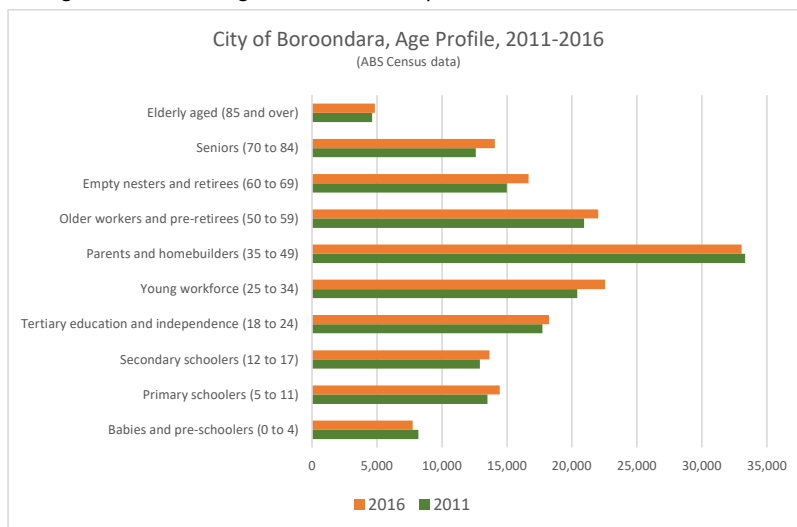
2.1 Population and Growth

The City of Boroondara has a total population of 181,289.¹ This has grown by about 11,000 people in the past 5 years. It is forecast to grow by a further 10,000 up to 2026, as shown in the chart below. This is a forecast growth rate of 0.7% per annum.



2.2 Age Profile

The following chart shows the age distribution of City of Boroondara from 2011 to 2016.

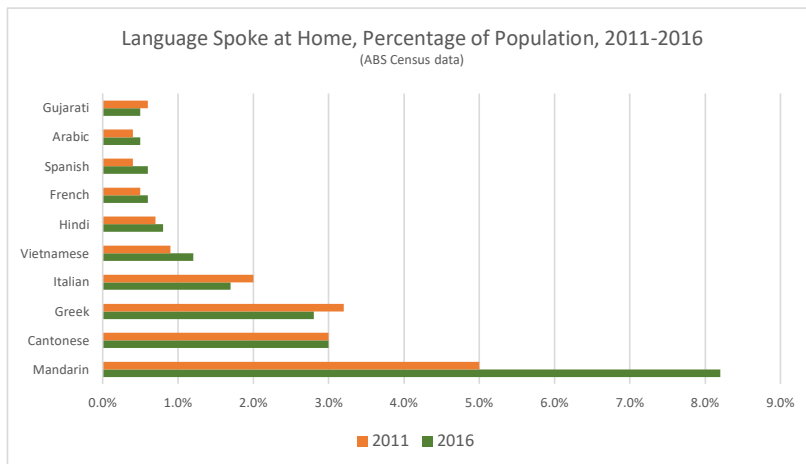


This chart shows that growth between 2011 and 2016 has occurred mainly in the empty nester/retiree and young workforce age groups.

¹ ABS Data, 2018 Estimated Resident Population

2.3 Language Spoken at Home

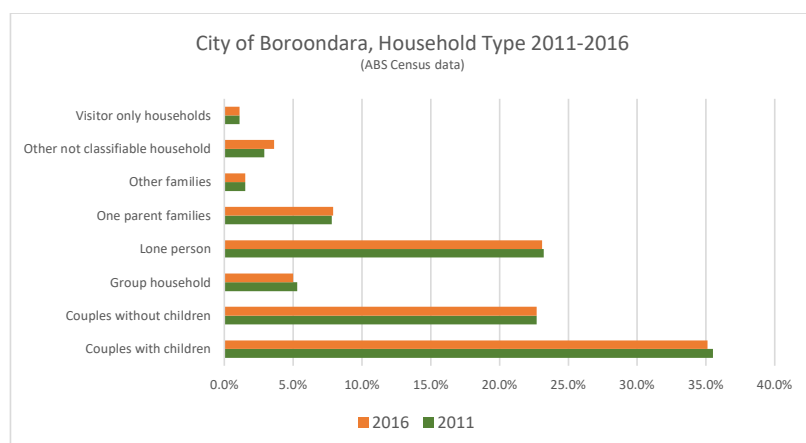
ABS Census data shows that 3 out of every 10 people in the City of Boroondara were born overseas and that 27.2% of people in the City of Boroondara speak a language other than English at home. This is comparable to the Greater Melbourne area where 32.3% speak a language other than English. The percentages of people speaking the top 10 languages (other than English) in the City of Boroondara are shown in the chart below:



This shows that between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of people speaking Mandarin grew significantly, with growth also occurring in the Vietnamese, French, Hindi and Spanish groups. The percentage of people speaking Italian and Greek, whilst remaining relatively high, declined slightly from 2011 to 2016. These trends represent the changing nature and cultural profile of the Boroondara community.

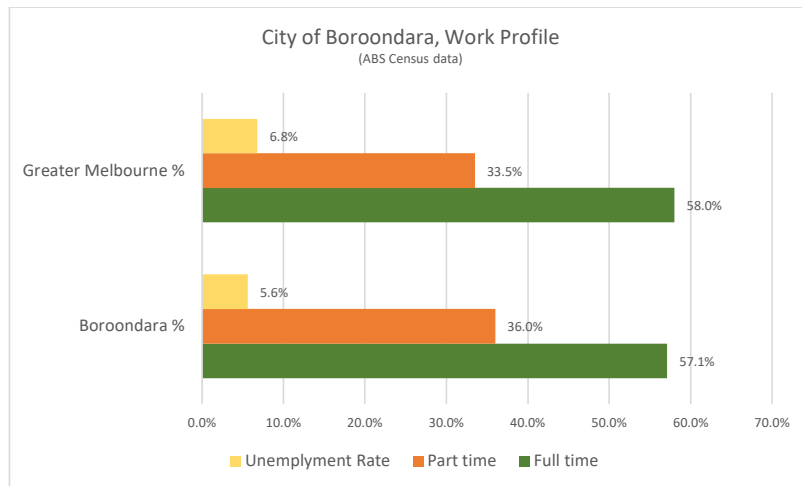
2.4 Household Type

The predominant household type in the City of Boroondara is couples with children who make up 35.1% of the population. This is comparable with Greater Melbourne with a percentage of 33.5%. The percentage of other household types are shown in the chart below:



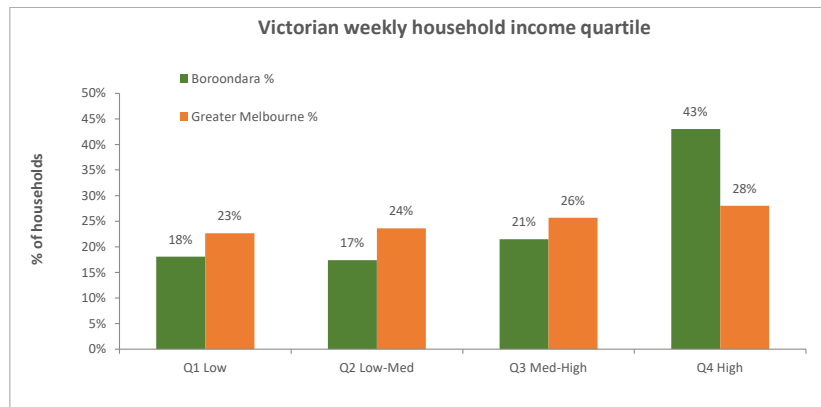
2.5 Employment

The employment profile of the City of Boroondara in the chart below shows that the City has a higher percentage of part-time workers and a slightly lower percentage of full-time workers compared to Greater Melbourne averages. It also shows that Boroondara’s unemployment rate is lower than that of Greater Melbourne:



2.6 Income Distribution

The income profile of the City of Boroondara (chart below) shows that the City of Boroondara is a relatively affluent community and socio-economic area.



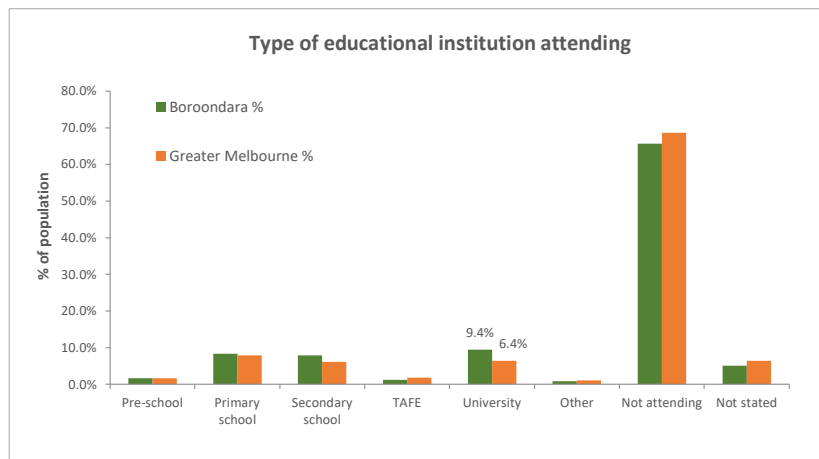
The chart shows that 43% of households in the City of Boroondara are in the highest household income quartile (for the whole State of Victoria). This is significantly higher than the 28% of households in the Greater Melbourne area in the top income quartile. Conversely, only 18% of Boroondara households are in the lowest income quartile compared to 23% for Greater Melbourne. Despite these overall characteristics, the City of Boroondara still has considerable incidence and pockets of people with a low socio-economic profile and high support needs.

2.7 Education

The City of Boroondara is a major education hub. It has 57 primary, secondary and special education schools, including 13 combined primary and secondary schools. The City is home to numerous independent schools that attract families and students into the area. Boroondara also hosts Swinburne University of Technology, Swinburne TAFE, a University of Melbourne campus, and two Universities of the Third Age. It also has ten neighbourhood and community centres where residents can complete a short course or obtain certified or pre-accredited training in a variety of subjects.

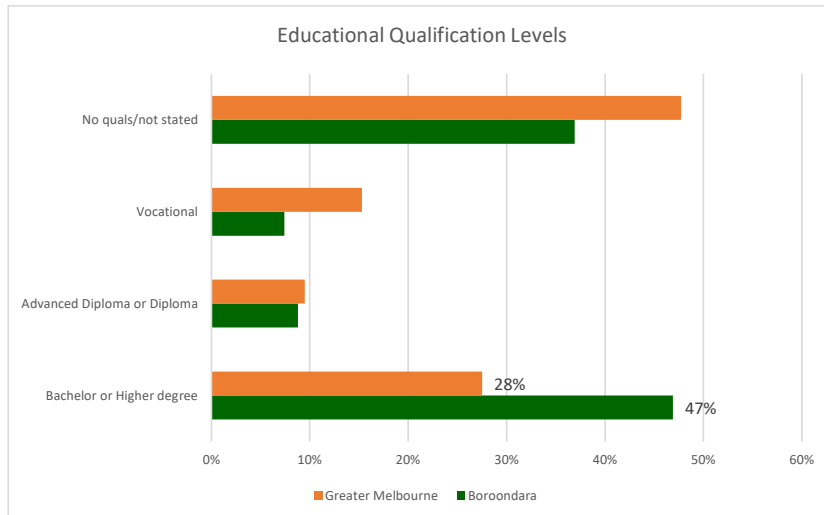
Public library collections complement the activities of the educational institutions. Boroondara Library Service promotes learning through the depth and breadth of collections, partnerships with key community groups and a range of programs and events.

The following chart shows the type of education institution attended by residents of the City of Boroondara, based on ABS Census (2016) data.



The above chart shows that the Boroondara community has a significantly higher proportion (30.3%) of residents attending some form of education institution compared to Greater Melbourne (25%). The percentage of people attending a university is also significantly higher in Boroondara (9.4%) than for Greater Melbourne (6.4%).

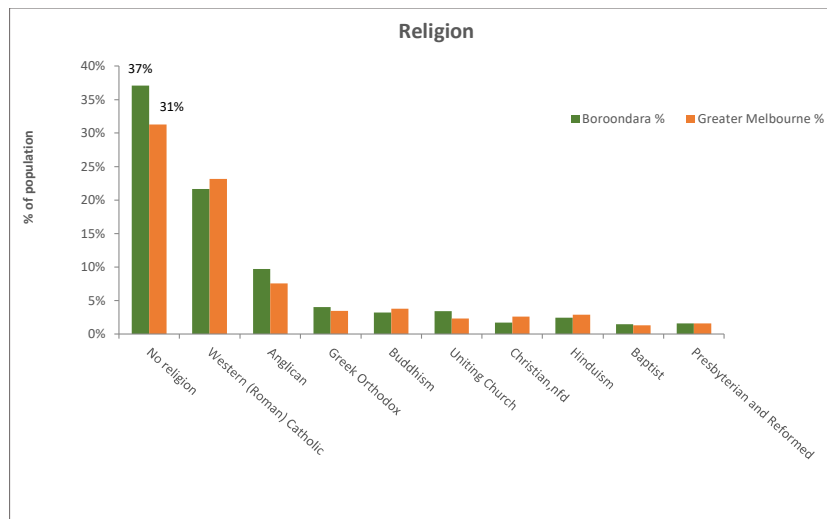
The chart below shows formal qualification levels attained by residents aged 15 years and over based on 2016 ABS Census data:



This chart shows that 47% of Boroondara residents aged 15 years and over have a Bachelor’s degree or higher level of qualification. This is significantly higher than for Greater Melbourne at 28%.

2.8 Religion

The following chart shows the religious affiliation identified by residents of the City of Boroondara, based on ABS Census (2016) data.



The above chart shows that the Boroondara community has a substantially higher proportion of people who identify as having ‘no religion’ (37%) than for Greater Melbourne region (31%).

3. The Changing Face of Public Libraries

Information, Knowledge and Literacy:

Since the early 1900's, the role of public libraries has been on education, knowledge, access to information and literacy. Historically, the library's role has focused on the physical book collections, with operations structured around the core activity of lending. In more recent times, library service models retain this lending function as a core activity. However, they have also moved more towards programs, activities and engagement, while still providing the lending aspects.

The Digital Era and e-books:

The evolution of the digital information is broadening the way people choose to access information and resources for business, learning and leisure. The advent of sophisticated internet engines has fundamentally changed the nature of research and the way people access information. Added to this is the vastly increased efficiency, availability and mobility of a range of devices that are capable of tapping into the digital world anywhere, anytime, together with the rapid pace of change in information technology.

Libraries, as a result, are experiencing a vast change in the role they play in their local community.

The advent of e-books is also rapidly changing people's reading patterns and preferences. However, e-books haven't replaced physical books – rather, total information intake by the community has vastly increased, with many people in Boroondara reading more in aggregate including a mix of physical and digital media.

Audiobooks have also grown rapidly as a medium of choice in recent years and physical books still remain a relevant part of a public library service offering.

Libraries of the future will need to offer ready access to information and content through a range of media according to user preferences. For now, this includes a balance of physical, e-book, audio and other media. But it will keep changing and libraries will need to respond to these changes.

The Creative, Active Library including Co-located Uses:

Libraries of the future will continue to provide creative, active spaces, along with quieter spaces for more passive pursuits such as reading and quiet study. Although both of these elements will remain an essential part of the library offer, they will need to be provided in separate zones. In these active spaces, people will be looking for ways to develop and express their ideas and creativity, often in collaboration with others. The creative library will be a central hub for learning and creativity offering large, open and flexible spaces in an environment of colour, sound, ideas and creativity.

Libraries are places where people celebrate community and connection through song, dance, events; generating multimedia works using the library's original collections and exhibitions of artworks and creative works.

Ancillary uses, such as cafes, arts/exhibition spaces and collaborative spaces have become a more common feature in modern libraries.

Local History Collections:

The preservation and celebration of local history has long been an important and core role of public libraries. Public libraries have and will continue to play a key role in preserving local history and enabling community access to local history collections.

The Boroondara Library Service works closely with the six historical societies in Boroondara: Balwyn Historical Society, Camberwell Historical Society, Canterbury History Group, Hawthorn Historical Society, Kew Historical Society and the Surrey Hills Historical Society, recognising the importance of their work for the benefit of the local community.

Economic Value of Public Libraries:

Recent research has shown that libraries make a significant economic contribution as well as the well-documented community and social contribution they make. In the 2018 Report 'Libraries Work- the socio-economic value of public libraries' (SGS Economics, State Library of Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria Network), libraries were found to contribute a total of \$328 million in economic value in Victoria. In the City of Boroondara, the economic contribution was found to be \$13.7 million (Gross Regional Product) or \$5.10 in value for every dollar invested. This is higher than the economic contribution for the Victorian average of \$4.30 and the Greater Melbourne average of \$4.50 in value for every dollar invested.

Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic throughout Metropolitan Melbourne in March 2020 saw many community facilities close including Boroondara Library Service. In response, the Boroondara Library Service was agile and responded by offering increased access to e-collections (e-books and e-audio) and eresources (available 24/7), phone and email assistance during normal library opening hours, online events, videoed story times and a book delivery service for Boroondara residents. Feedback from the community was an immense appreciation for the delivery of virtual and online services as well as limited physical services in a time when social connection and the preservation of good mental health had become paramount. All online services were available through a simple online membership process and the services offered were best practice when benchmarked with surrounding library services.

In line with State Government restrictions, for just under six weeks, Library Services were permitted to open their doors to 20 people at a time. Once reopened, the Boroondara Library Service offered 15 minute bookings which enabled library members to collect reserved material, access our new bundle and collect service - Librarian selected items based upon the reading preference of borrowers - as well as book browsing. Access to e-collections and eresources, phone and email assistance, online and livestreamed events and videoed story times continued, as did book deliveries for those Boroondara residents who were unable to come to our Libraries. When community members were allowed to re-enter their beloved libraries, they realised that the feeling within their community lounge room was gone, with health checks, social distancing, cleaning regimes and barriers in place impacted detrimentally on the usual 'vibe' of everyday interactions and connections with others.

It is unclear how long the COVID-19 period will continue but its affects will no doubt be long lasting. The Boroondara Library Service will continue to change and adapt to community needs as the impacts of these changes unfold. Promotion of virtual services will be critical as these can be accessed 24/7 plus continuing to evolve our physical service offering will be essential. We do know that the most vulnerable members of community may not feel comfortable to return to the libraries. Mental health issues and social isolation are increasing as a result of COVID-19 and the library can play a part in addressing and assisting the community with its recovery. The Boroondara Library Service will continue to find new ways to connect with and serve these library members. Furthermore, it is still unclear if more people will work from home but we do know that businesses are changed forever. Again, the library will continue to respond to changing local business needs.

The COVID-19 period has demonstrated the importance of the Boroondara Library Service for the local community. The opportunities gained from moving into an entirely virtual and online service delivery model can be capitalised upon into the future and will be delivered on during the ensuing 5 years of this draft Plan. In line with customer expectations, alternative service delivery methods will continue to be delivered including but not limited to: online membership, increased access to e-collections (e-books and e-audio) and eresources (available 24/7), online and livestreamed events, videoed story times, bundle and collect service and book deliveries for those Boroondara residents who are unable to come to our Libraries.

The physical presence of a local public library remains highly desired by the Boroondara community as demonstrated by physical borrowing and visitation in excess of the metropolitan averages. Boroondara residents are typically highly educated and therefore understand the value of lifelong

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learning as delivered through the Boroondara Library Service. Our library spaces and buildings are flexible enough to be able to respond to the social distancing requirements brought about by COVID-19. This allows for balancing between the physical and virtual service delivery to continue into the future.

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4. Key Measures and Statistics

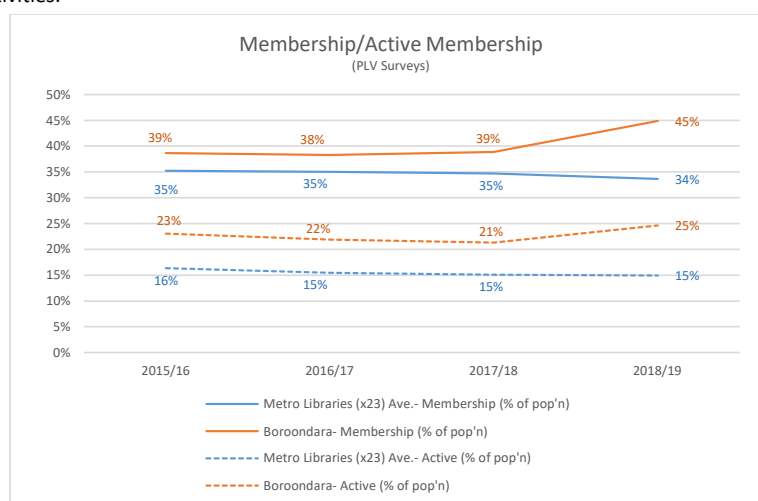
The following information is taken from annual surveys of public libraries undertaken by Public Libraries Victoria ² and from Library data sources.

4.1 Membership and Active Membership

Library membership indicates a degree of ‘ownership’ by the community or a preparedness/intent by people to engage with their library service. This is the case even where, at various life-cycle stages, people may choose to transact with and use the service (‘active membership’) to greater and lesser degrees.

The following chart shows these two key measures used for the library service, being:

- **Membership** – this indicates the preparedness to engage with the library service over the longer term; and
- **Active membership**- this indicates the level of current/recent use of/participation in library activities.



The above chart shows that the **membership percentage** of the Boroondara Library Service has increased significantly to 45% over the past 4 years. This is substantially higher than for the Greater Melbourne region membership percentage of 34%. Further, the growth in this measure over the past 4 years (39% to 45%) is very significant. It compares to the membership percentage across the Greater Melbourne region having declined marginally from 35% to 34% over the same period.

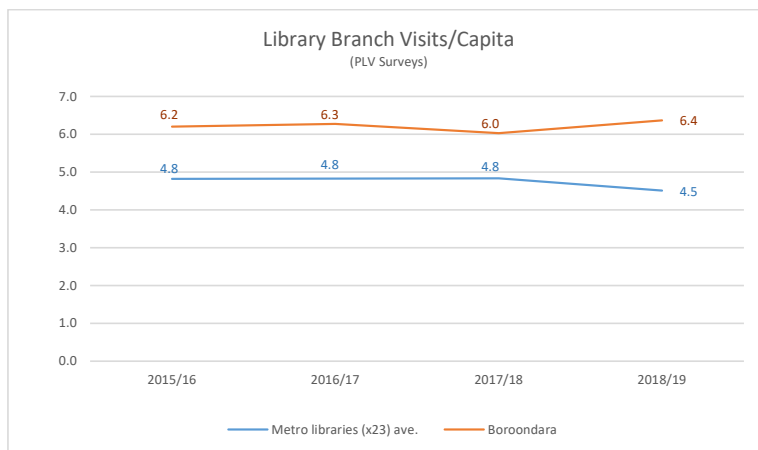
The growth in the membership percentage is significant and demonstrates the value of the Boroondara Library Service even in the modern digital era. It makes a strong statement that people value having a public library, even though their use of it will inevitably vary throughout their life-cycle.

Similarly, the chart above shows that Boroondara’s **active membership percentage** of 25% is significantly higher than the 15% active membership across all libraries in the Greater Melbourne area. Further, the active membership percentage has increased significantly over the past 4 years from 23% to 25%, whilst it has declined marginally across the Greater Melbourne region (16% to 15%).

² Annual Survey of Public Libraries, Public Libraries Victoria, 2015-16 to 2018-19.

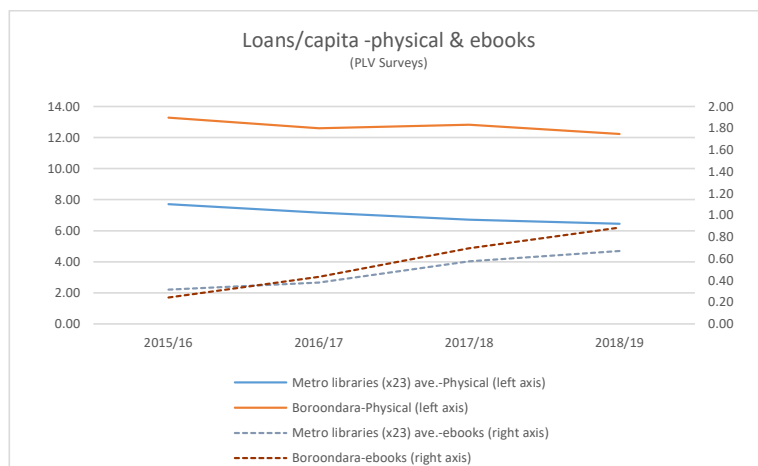
4.2 Visits and Loans

The use of the library service is generally expressed through visits to library branches, participation in programs and events and remote digital browsing and/or borrowing of collection items. The chart below shows visits to library branches for the Boroondara Library Service compared to all 23 library services in Greater Melbourne.



The chart shows the number of physical visits (ie. people through the door) per capita (6.4 visits per capita) for Boroondara Library Service branches is significantly higher than for all 23 library services in the Greater Melbourne region (4.5 visits per capita). The level of physical visitation is 42% higher in Boroondara than for the Greater Melbourne region. Further, the physical visitation rate has grown over the past 4 years from 6.2 to 6.4 visits per capita. This compares to a physical visitation rate for Greater Melbourne libraries declining over the past 4 years from 4.8 to 4.5 visits per capita.

The following chart shows loans of both physical books and e-books for Boroondara Library Service compared to all Greater Melbourne libraries.



These charts show that:

- The Boroondara community engages very strongly with its library service over the long-term. This is expressed through a high percentage of the community being members of the library and also a high percentage of the community who are active members (visits, borrowing and participating in programs).

- The Boroondara Library Service enjoys a high level of physical visitation. The total number of visits to all branches in 2018/19 was 1.2 million or 6.4 visits per person on average. This level of physical branch visitation is significantly higher than the metropolitan average of 4.5 visits per person.
- Importantly, the number of visits per capita to Boroondara Library Service has increased marginally from 6.2 to 6.4 over the past 4 years. This is also significant and compares to a marginal decline in the metropolitan average visits per capita.
- The Boroondara Library Service also has a very high level of loans of both physical books and e-books. The survey data shows that the rate of physical lending is nearly twice the metropolitan average rate of physical lending.
- E-book lending is slightly higher than the metropolitan average and still growing strongly.

The high level of use of the library service is due to a combination of factors. These include continuing to invest in and offer a variety of high quality, accessible and inviting spaces for people to come to, staff with a commitment to welcoming and engaging with the community and ongoing investment in a high quality collection of books, materials and digital resources.

Physical visitation and borrowing has typically been important in a world prior to COVID-19. It is acknowledged that measure of virtual service usage including electronic borrowing, participation and engagement will become more important into the future, to meet the diverse needs within the Boroondara community.

4.3 Community Satisfaction

The Boroondara Library Service consistently rates very highly in terms of customer satisfaction through a range of surveys and measures. These are summarised below.

*Nexus Survey- 2019*³:

The 2019 Nexus Survey covered 10 library services throughout Victoria. Key findings of the 2019 Nexus Report include:

- 47% of residents (aged 14 years +) over the total areas served have used a public library within the last 12 months. Despite immense changes in technology and on-line information accessibility in recent years, library usage amongst the general population remains fairly high.
- 43% of residents surveyed claimed to have used a public library sometime, but not in the last 12 months.
- Amongst public library users in the last 12 months:
 - 53% felt that the library provides low or no cost entertainment;
 - 46% thought it helps them to relax;
 - 38% said the library gets them out of the house;
 - 37% said the library supports their learning;
 - 29% said the library provides a place for them to study; and
 - more than 20% said the library is a recreational outlet that, helps them to be creative and engage with the community.
- Irrespective of whether or not people use a library, they consistently place a high **importance rating** on having a comprehensive public library service. Further, the survey showed that Boroondara residents placed an even higher importance rating on having a comprehensive public library service than the average for all communities surveyed (importance rating of 8.83 compared to survey average of 8.64). These survey outcomes confirm the membership and active membership data in the previous section.
- The Boroondara Library Service **customer satisfaction rating** in the 2019 survey was 8.7. This is higher than the average customer satisfaction rating by survey respondents of 8.63.
- Customers rated the **performance** of the Boroondara Library Service highly with a rating range of 7.32 to 8.69. This compares favourably to the averages performance ratings across the whole survey group.

4.4 Other Community Survey Outcomes

The following is a summary of other recent community engagement outcomes/messages⁴:

Level of use of library service:

63% of Boroondara residents, either personally or through a household member, said they had used the library service in the previous 12 months.

How important is the library service?

88% of people surveyed rated libraries as either 'extremely important', 'very important' or 'fairly important'. The importance of libraries is rated significantly higher by women and by older population groups (65 years plus).

³ Victorian Regional Library Corporations Network, Community Survey, Nexus Research Pty Ltd, 2019

⁴ Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey, DELWP, 2018.

Performance of the library service

70% of people surveyed rated the performance of libraries as either 'very good' or 'good'. Perceptions of performance appear substantially aligned with perceptions of importance.

Kew Library - 2017 Community Survey

In 2017, Council undertook a detailed community consultation process specifically in relation to library services at Kew. Key messages from this consultation process, that can be applied generally to library services, include:

- Seek opportunities to integrate internal library spaces with surrounding open spaces and uses.
- In redevelopment projects, target open, light-filled space that are welcoming to all age groups and segments within the community.
- Contemporary libraries need to be flexible spaces that are inter-related and give library users control over how they interact with the spaces within the library.
- Library spaces should encourage creativity.
- Libraries need to include active, vibrant spaces, through a range of program and activity choices, with separate quiet, reflective work, study and leisure spaces.
- Library spaces should encourage connections between people with ideas and knowledge.

It is acknowledged that much has changed since 2017 and any future redevelopment would need to consider the impacts of COVID-19 including but not limited to social distancing, cleaning regimes and barriers. What is crucial with any space planning is the flexibility of spaces to be able to adapt and respond to different needs. All of our libraries have been designed with flexibility in mind, which sets the physical spaces up well for a future post COVID-19 world.

5. Strategic Objectives

5.1 Community Engagement and Participation

This is at the core of what we do. We want people to come to our libraries to learn, share ideas and connect with other people.

Engagement and connecting people within the community, through all channels, is a core part of the library's role. The Boroondara Library Service is a critical contact point for Council and partnership with other Council services, as well as community groups and agencies are essential to leverage the high level of community engagement in our libraries. This happens both physically and virtually (digitally) and the library provides a forum/medium for making this connection. Our personal library customer service is delivered through a network of six library branches. These are located in Ashburton, Balwyn, Camberwell, Greythorn, Hawthorn and Kew. The library branches operate across 7 days per week with a total of 335 open hours. The following table provides a breakdown of key branch statistics across the six branches in 2018/19:

	Ashburton	Balwyn	Camberwell	Greythorn	Hawthorn	Kew
Loans - Physical	429,012	591,543	403,009	49,167	340,768	404,797
Visits	182,957	212,784	352,600	37,767	176,388	192,215

Boroondara Library Service has an active presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and uses these social media channels to communicate with customers, members and the community in general. These are effective promotional tool for library events, announcements and reader blogs providing recommendations on popular and interesting books.

5.2 Collections

Our collections – both physical and digital – are second to none. When people come to Boroondara Library Service, they have access to a high quality and contemporary offering.

The Boroondara community is passionate about literature – our people are prolific consumers of information in both the physical and digital formats. Our customers view the library as a resource that is readily available for them to delve into to explore, find answers or discover a great book. Boroondara Library Service has one of the largest public library collections outside of the State Library of Victoria. Our collection profile has been reviewed over the past 4 years to reflect changing customer preferences, needs and demographics. A key change has been an increase in the number of e-books and a rationalisation of physical items held. This reflects both changing consumer needs and preferences but also the availability of physical shelf space in branches for physical resources.

Changes in the collection profile over the last 4 years are shown in the table below:

Collection Category:	2015/16:	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Physical items	482,677	460,094	432,794	438,773
E-books	20,786	22,363	27,986	28,798
Total:	503,463	482,457	460,780	467,571

The COVID-19 period has seen more community members sign up online as well as increase their usage of e-collections (e-books and e-audio) and e-resources (available 24/7).

With the surge in online borrowing, the Boroondara Library Service took up e-books with concurrent loans on popular titles. This proved to be very popular with our members who no longer had to wait for a specific title to become available. As more of our library members move to e-collections, opportunities such as customer driven selection for e-books and e-audio will continue to be explored and implemented. There is an exciting opportunity ahead to seek increased usage of electronic collections and encourage those who were previously reluctant to move from hard copy books to e-books and e-audio. These members are now exploring what is digitally available and how to access these resources as a result of COVID-19.

The new bundle and collect service has proved to be very popular with our library members and book deliveries for those Boroondara residents who are unable to come to our Libraries has been essential for the more vulnerable members of our community.

Collection Development Policy:

Boroondara Library Service has developed a Collection Development Policy. This policy provides a framework and guidance to staff in the execution of all collection management decision-making. Under the policy, materials/resources considered for selection must satisfy one or more of the following general criteria of qualifications:

- Current or potential interest relevance or significance to the community;
- High standards of quality in content, expression and accuracy;
- An Australian work, written by a person born or residing in Australia, or set in Australia;
- Fills a gap in, complements, or supplements the existing collection;
- High physical and technical standard, taking into account format, durability over multiple borrowings, size, binding, audio and visual quality;
- Materials not readily available elsewhere;
- Does not duplicate material available in local educational institutions;
- Special local, social or historical significance;
- Attention and interest of critics, reviewers or public; and
- Reasonable price, appropriate to the resource and balanced against usage.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Services:

Providing a quality service to the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities of Boroondara is another core commitment of the Boroondara Library Service. All collections, including CALD collections are regularly reviewed, taking account of changes to our demographic profile and loan/usage patterns. Online resources and e-books are also reference resources in CALD languages, with current news and information immediately available.

Little Libraries

Little Libraries allow community members to share books amongst themselves. Some are already popping up in Boroondara. The Little Library is a simple book swap concept - they are filled with books so that anyone can stop by and collect a book or two. Once these books have been read they are returned for others to take and read. The installation of Little Libraries encourages an interest in reading by making books more accessible in different locations in the community. Boroondara Library Service is keen to facilitate book sharing and swapping through Little Libraries as part of Placemaking⁵ across the City.

⁵ Placemaking is a hands-on approach to creating places for the health and wellbeing of our community. It involves re-imagining spaces to create vibrant, memorable and social places where people feel a sense of belonging.

5.3 Buildings, Facilities and Spaces

Our library buildings and spaces are a core part of our offer. We have a range of spaces with a different use and theme. There are areas for quiet, reflective reading and also more active spaces for connecting, doing things and sharing ideas.

The physical places and spaces offered in our six libraries are pivotal in making a high quality service offering. The physical space creates the opportunity to make an environment for people to come into and feel at home and comfortable - the community lounge room. In a post-COVID world, spaces require social distancing, cleaning regimes and barriers for customer safety but these measures make it difficult to create a sense of comfort. However, all of our libraries have been designed with flexibility in mind, which sets the physical spaces up well for a future post COVID-19 world.

The service offered by the Library extends well beyond the literary, reading and program services for members. The Library is also a space where anyone can visit to sit, reflect, rest or just to be somewhere with others. A Library is often referred to as the last place anyone can go where there's no expectation of a transaction. Visitors can come in and be confident they will be welcomed.

Visitors can browse the collection, read newspapers and magazines, attend library programs, use quiet or collaborative study spaces or simply relax in the comfortable environment of their local library. Some visitors to the Library Service choose not to register as a member and use the libraries as an extension of their home, sometimes staying for hours to use the resources and stay warm or cool.

This means the library service needs to offer a variety of spaces of high quality/amenity within each of our libraries. There are quiet, reading and study spaces as well as separate rooms and spaces for more active and engaging parts of our programs. Increasingly, libraries are becoming spaces for people to not only engage but to express their creativity and this is leading to active working and 'creator spaces' emerging in libraries.

Balwyn Library Redevelopment:

A major redevelopment of the Balwyn Library was completed in March 2018 at a cost of \$8.9 million. The project received a commendation under the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Design Awards.

The Balwyn Library is a heavily used branch by seniors, retirees, secondary students, families and people living in single households. It is a daily point of social connection for these users in addition to free public events and an extensive home library service. Families with preschool children are serviced with weekly programs and it has an extensive and well used junior collection.

In the newly redeveloped space, there is a larger study area, five technology enabled study rooms and a first floor open study space to accommodate high school students attending nearby high schools. Young people and students appreciate the relaxed feel of the atrium and teenage areas which have multiple points for power and USB connectivity.

The Chinese collection caters to the 13% of Balwyn residents who are born in China and the wide aisles and welcoming casual seating allows for complete access by group visits from the nearby aged care facilities and disability services.

Greythorn Community Hub:

The Greythorn Community Hub was opened in September 2018 after construction at a cost of \$17.1 million. This project won the 2020 Award for Excellence in the 'Community Assets and Infrastructure Initiatives (projects over \$2 million)' category at the Local Government Professionals (LGPro) Awards. The award recognises council initiatives which maximise benefits to the community and showcase partnerships in the development and management of new community assets.

The Greythorn Community Hub provides the local community with a one-stop destination to access valuable services, programs and activities. It is home to a library lounge, neighbourhood house, maternal and child health service and childcare centre. In 2018/19, the Greythorn Library Lounge served 37,767 visitors.

Kew and Hawthorn Redevelopments (Planned):

Further, we need to plan for the upgrade and refurbishment of each of our facilities well in advance to ensure our library spaces remain of high quality, fit-for-purpose and contemporary. In future years, plans are in place for redevelopments of the Kew and Hawthorn Libraries. Indicative dates have been flagged in Council's Long Term Financial Plan for these redevelopments with Kew Library scheduled to commence in 2022/23 and conclude construction in 2025/26 and Hawthorn Library scheduled to commence in 2024/25 and conclude construction in 2026/27. It should be noted that when Council considers each annual budget, it also reviews funding available for capital projects in the Long Term Financial Plan at that time.

This extension of the library to be the 'community lounge room' or the third place, has been recognised within the Council Heatwave Plan with the libraries being a key point to display heat health messages, distribute fact sheets and act as a recommended cool place for the community.

Community Meeting Rooms

Meeting rooms are available at all library sites for groups to connect and collaborate with each other. Rooms are of different sizes to cater for both small and large groups. These rooms are particularly popular with local community groups and some small businesses. It is likely that these spaces will become more popular as the full effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is known, as many businesses may operate differently in the future. Boroondara Library Service will partner with local businesses and continue to respond to local commercial needs as they evolve.

5.4 Innovation and Technology

Technology is the modern 'enabler' of access to the information 'super highway'. It opens the door to a whole world of resources for the people of Boroondara. We help people navigate their way through the use of various technology.

The way in which the library service engages with the community has changed enormously over the past decade. The digital age means it is no longer confined to borrowing of physical items and personal visits. This has also been brought about with the proliferation of social media channels available to people but also with the 24/7 news cycle, vast improvements to search technologies and the onset of a general information 'immediacy' age.

In this context, it is critical for a major public library service, such as Boroondara Library Service, to remain at the forefront of technology, innovation and digital services.

The COVID-19 period has seen more community members sign up online as well as increase their usage of e-collections (e-books and e-audio) and e-resources (available 24/7). This period of time has demonstrated the need which technology delivers to enable the delivery of high quality online and livestreamed events and videoed story times for our local community.

5.5 Local and Family History

Local and family history is all our local stories. It's a key part of the Library's role to be part of its preservation and also its telling.

The communities throughout the City of Boroondara have a rich history. The Library plays a key part in working closely with local community-based historical societies to discover, conserve and celebrate our local stories. The library also has a key role to play in making the rich resource of our local stories more easily available and accessible to the community.

Library staff assist community members by providing expert advice when seeking to navigate the plethora of hard copy resources or on-line historical information channels. Whether researching family origins, the area where they lived or who else might have lived in a house or street, the library offers a wide range of resources to begin a voyage of discovery.

The library is also the custodian of a significant collection of photographs that depict our local history. These are accessible through the library's on-line photography collection.

An initiative being pursued by Boroondara Library Service is to establish permanent 'homes' and heritage centres for the local Boroondara historical societies.

The COVID-19 period has demonstrated the need for accessible online local and family history resources and the opportunity to bring these resources to life in the online world.

5.6 Programs, Events and Services

The library is now an active, engaging, creative space: it's a place where you go to learn, talk, engage, hear new ideas and do things.

Programs and Events:

Boroondara Library Service offers a wide range of activities, events and programs to the community. Being an active and engaging library service with things always going on in the library, this is a core part of the service offered to the community.

The types of activities and programs offered are relevant to meet the reading, learning interests and general interest needs of different community cohorts. They include regular library activities such as story times (for children of different ages), book talks and author talks, community lectures and cultural activities. Other programs foster community engagement and provide opportunities for people to connect and learn in a safe comfortable space.

The Library Service is also active in partnering with local organisations and community groups to run events and programs like the Boroondara Literary Awards with the Balwyn Rotary Club, What's Cooking Boroondara (community involvement) and the *What If...?* program with Swinburne University. The library also works closely with community and educational organisations including neighbourhood houses to deliver various other services to the community that support social inclusion, lifelong learning and a love of reading. These partnerships are highly valued by the Boroondara Library Service and will continue to be important for delivering exceptional events and programs for our community, into the future.

Having programs, activities and events reflects the fundamental idea that a library is the place where everyone can engage with new ideas and learn. These take the form of activities and events that relate to literature and the collection (author talks, books talks etc.) but also on broader social issues and trends that are of community interest.

Key programs and activities that are offered include:

- Children's story times and programs
- After school clubs
- English and other language programs
- School holiday activities and events
- Boroondara Literary Festival
- Craft activities, print-making workshops etc.

The COVID-19 period has seen more community members accessing online and live streamed events and videoed story times.

Home Library Service:

The Boroondara Library Service provides services that extend beyond its physical branches. We have a home library service that reaches out those in the community who are aged and for whatever reason lack the mobility required to visit branches.

The Home Library Service (HLS) delivers individual selections direct to the homes of customer residents via a network of 45 volunteers. In 2018/19, the HLS accounted for 33,228 loans to customers which is an average of 1,280 per fortnight to 250 clients.

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Volunteers are key to the HLS and without them, there wouldn't be the friendly, personal face to deliver the books and create a sense of connectedness. Through this service, the volunteers help reduce social isolation of the less mobile and vulnerable people in our community.

During the COVID period, book deliveries for those Boroondara residents who are unable to come to our Libraries have been essential for the more vulnerable members of our community.

6. Review of this draft Plan

The purpose of this draft Plan is to provide strategic direction and guidance and the direction for day-to-day operation of the library and delivery of services. The plan will be reviewed at a minimum, annually and updated at its conclusion in 2025.

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