Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL

Draft Maribyrnong Libraries Plan 2026-30

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these lands. We recognise and respect the contributions of all First Nations people who live, work, study and play within the City of Maribyrnong.

We pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders, past and present, and honour their continued connection to Country and its rich cultural heritage.

We celebrate their unique cultural and spiritual relationships with the land, sky, water and sea, and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' extraordinary history as artists, storytellers and custodians of the oldest continuous living culture in the world.

Introduction

At the heart of every thriving community lies a place where curiosity is welcomed, knowledge is shared and every individual is empowered to grow. Libraries are more than books – they are places that reflect the hopes, stories and aspirations of the community they serve.

This plan sets out our commitment for the next four years to develop and deliver libraries that support a creative and connected Maribyrnong community.

Our context

Maribyrnong Libraries provide safe and welcoming spaces that build community capacity by helping people improve their knowledge and skills, and by providing access to information and resources. The collection makes more than 160,000 items accessible to the community and we deliver programs for adults, young adults and families, offering opportunities to learn, create and connect. Services are delivered across five branches as well as online and out in the community. Library membership is available to anyone who lives, works, studies or plays within the municipality.

Over the period of this library plan, Maribyrnong's population is forecast to grow by 22% to 114,870. Footscray, in particular, is estimated to grow by 49% by 2031. Demand for library services is also growing. Visitation has increased by 44% over the past two years. Our five branches now host 415,000 visits annually. We currently have 38,268 members – a 41% increase over the past two years.

Collection usage continues to increase as well, and – as more visitors are using personal devices to access the library's free wi-fi – the need for programs to support digital literacy is growing. As state and federal governments move away from in-person assistance and continue transitioning to digital-only access, the cost of helping those with low digital literacy is shifted onto local library services.

Libraries are competing for attention as community expectations for immersive experiences expand. Our programs are impactful, with 95% of participants reporting they have gained knowledge or skills, developed confidence or feel more connected to their community through taking part in library programs. Innovative initiatives increasingly contribute to sustainability outcomes through programs that emphasise upcycling and recycling. These efforts are further supported by the expansion of Libraries of Things, which promotes environmental stewardship through resource sharing, while providing practical support to community members facing cost-of-living challenges.

There is increasing pressure for libraries to provide more community-centric services, greater support to combat loneliness, and continued focus on supporting health and wellbeing outcomes. More than half of our survey respondents rated activities that build social connection and provide access to inclusive, multicultural and First Nations programs very important. Respondents also valued the importance of access to technology and equipment to make and create.

One in three people who don't use libraries cited lack of time as the most common barrier to use and 43% of non-users stated that they didn't know about a library service or were unsure what the library offered. As non-users are more likely to be digitally literate people between the age of 30 and 49, there is a real opportunity to connect with this audience online. The introduction of more targeted programming and framing of library services as quick, anywhere-anytime services may attract non-users and allow us to share other library services with them.

Our team

Maribyrnong Libraries is supported by a dedicated team of more than 70 staff, bringing expertise in library and information management, customer service, collection development, marketing, programming and digital services. United by a strong commitment to access, inclusion and community, our team works to provide safe spaces, trusted information and meaningful connections to services.

Over the period of this plan, we will prioritise sustained investment in our staff ensuring that all staff have developed cultural, digital literacy and reader development competencies. We will build expertise in creativity and creative technologies, with a focus on their role in wellbeing, as well as emerging fields such as AI. To remain responsive to rapid social and technological change, we will strengthen co-design capabilities and work closely with our community to shape and evolve our services.

We will be proactive and collaborative, tailoring our offerings from self-service and skill development to comprehensive assistance for those with the greatest need.

We will continue to diversify backgrounds and perspectives in our team, and build staff confidence in developing and delivering programs and services. We will reward curiosity, remove barriers to learning, and provide new ways for staff to engage.

Our plan

Our plan sets out three goals designed to deliver libraries for a creative, connected community:

- Become a place where all community members feel like they belong
- Be a trusted partner, connecting our community to information, resources and each other
- Create compelling experiences that inspire creativity, learning and discovery

We want to move our libraries beyond inclusion policies and targeted programming to a service that works alongside community to develop programs, spaces and services where everyone feels like they belong. We want to leverage our role as a connector and facilitator, not only connecting the community to information and resources, but to a network of services, enabling every member to contribute and thrive. We strive to create enlivening and enriching experiences online or in person. We want every visit to be memorable.

Libraries are celebrated worldwide as a trusted and vital public resource. Embracing this responsibility, we commit through this plan to maximise our impact. Each year, we will prioritise our activities to focus on cultivating belonging, strengthening community ties and sparking inspiration for all.

Our plan on a page

Vision

Maribyrnong 2040

A sustainable, vibrant city where history is acknowledged, differences are respected, and diverse communities are supported to connect and thrive.

Creative Maribyrnong 2030

Our city is a thriving arts hub where creativity flourishes and culture enriches the lives of all.

Maribyrnong Libraries 2030

Libraries for a creative and connected community.

Values

Respect

We treat all people with dignity, empathy, and courtesy. We value diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences. We create safe, welcoming spaces where everyone is and feels heard, included, and valued.

Courage

We embrace challenges with honesty and transparency. We are willing to ask difficult questions, implement change and take initiative to meet our community's evolving needs.

Integrity

We act ethically and responsibly, regardless of circumstance. We honour our commitments to our community by ensuring our words and actions align.

Goals

Become a place where all community members feel like they belong

Be a trusted partner, connecting our community to information, resources and each other

Create compelling experiences that inspire creativity, learning and discovery

Headline indicator

More people, from all backgrounds, are members of our library service

More people are connected with resources, programs and services

More visitors describe the library as a place of inspiration

Annual planning and performance framework

Annual action plans

Project plans

Individual work plans

Monthly performance dashboard, quarterly Council Plan reports, individual performance reviews

Goal: Become a place where all community members feel like they belong

Our destination

Everyone feels welcome, valued and included in our libraries. Our spaces are accessible and inviting, our collections reflect the diversity of our community, and our programs celebrate and connect people from all backgrounds. Every aspect of our service is shaped by the lived experiences of people of all ages, cultures, abilities, genders and identities.

Why it's important

When our community members feel like they belong, they are more likely to visit, take part in programs, and see the library as a safe and supportive place to learn, share and grow.

What we will do

By 2030 we will:

- Introduce a cultural competency framework to support staff to deliver respectful, high-quality, culturally appropriate services
- Finalise our Creative Infrastructure Plan including options for the expansion or relocation of the current Maribyrnong branch
- Co-design more programs with community
- Undertake a community-led evaluation of our collection
- Be a place for cultural exchange grounded in respect and recognition of First Nations Treaty processes

Headline indicator: More people, from all backgrounds, are members of our library service

How we will know we're successful

We will know we're achieving this goal when more people from all walks of life are not just using our libraries, but helping to shape them – when our spaces, programs and collections reflect the lived experiences and aspirations of the full community.

This includes:

- Increased diversity of library users across age, culture, ability, gender and identity
- Higher participation from historically under-represented groups in programs and events
- Stronger community partnerships with cultural, youth, disability and LGBTQIA+ organisations
- User feedback showing that people feel welcomed, safe and respected (via surveys, interviews or comment cards)
- Programs consistently including First Nations voices, culturally and linguistically diverse facilitators and accessible formats
- Staff feeling empowered to advocate for inclusion and innovation, and being supported to do so

Goal: Be a trusted partner, connecting our community to information, resources and each other

Our destination

Through access to trusted information and meaningful networks, our libraries help people build the skills and confidence they need to fully participate in community life.

Whether someone is looking for work, learning something new, starting a business or simply seeking connection, our libraries offer the support and resources to help them take their next step.

Our staff are trusted guides – helping people navigate change, discover opportunities and grow in ways that matter to them.

Why it's important

When people feel supported by the library, they're more likely to get involved and feel like they're part of the community.

What we will do

By 2030 we will:

- Strengthen partnerships with key community services
- Build staff competency in digital and media literacy
- Create a user-driven, tiered service that offers self-service, develops customer capability and directs staff support to those who want it and need it most
- Introduce a new model for one-to-one help
- Explore new ways to make our collections and services easier to access via technology and new locations
- Relocate the current Yarraville branch to a larger, purpose-built library within the Bradmill precinct

Headline indicator: More people are connected with resources, programs and services

How we will know we're successful

We will know we're succeeding when people not only use our libraries, but grow through them – when they leave more confident, better informed and more connected than when they arrived.

This includes:

- Visitors reporting increased confidence or capability as a result of library programs and services
- Repeat engagement – people coming back, attending multiple sessions or continuing their learning through the library
- Stories and case studies about library visitors gaining employment, launching small businesses and engaging with government services with the support of library programs and services
- Staff feeling confident and supported in their roles as guides and facilitators
- Increased referrals to community partners and services

Goal: Create compelling experiences that inspire creativity, learning and discovery

Our destination

Our libraries inspire curiosity, creativity and new ideas by offering stories and experiences that spark the imagination. Our spaces are designed to create moments of wonder and encourage exploration – from a beautiful book display to catch the eye, to an interactive exhibit or a quiet corner that invites reflection.

We invite creativity through makerspaces, digital labs and programs that support experimentation, play and expression. Our diverse collections are curated and displayed to encourage serendipity – helping people stumble upon new interests, perspectives and possibilities. Beyond books, our Library of Things lets people borrow equipment, instruments, games and gadgets – expanding access to creativity, sustainability and everyday problem-solving. The library is a place where you can find exactly what you're looking for, right next to the very thing you've always wanted, but didn't even know existed.

And at the heart of it all, our staff delight in the delighted. They are the facilitators of discovery, helping people of all ages and backgrounds ignite their curiosity, follow their passions and bring their ideas to life.

Why it's important

When people feel inspired, they are more likely to explore, learn and take positive action in their lives and community.

What we will do

By 2030 we will:

- Finalise the design for Creative West, including a new state-of-the-art library, performance venue and space for creativity and collaboration
- Introduce makerspaces or creative programs in all branches
- Grow our Library of Things with a focus on sustainability and creativity
- Regularly program immersive and surprising experiences
- Provide opportunities for staff to implement their ideas for sharing with visitors everything the library has to offer

Headline indicator: More visitors describe the library as a place of inspiration

How we will know we're successful

We will know we're achieving this goal when our libraries feel alive with curiosity – when people are not just using our spaces and collections, but exploring, experimenting and creating with them; when a visit to the library leads to unexpected finds and new ideas.

This includes:

- Increased use of makerspaces, digital labs and creative tools
- Increased participation in creative programs and workshops
- Diverse collections being borrowed and explored
- Anecdotes or testimonials about people discovering new interests, trying something for the first time or developing a creative project sparked by something at the library
- Staff are seen as welcoming, enthusiastic and knowledgeable guides - not guardians, who help people uncover new resources or try new things
- Community members contributing to creative offerings: sharing zines, hosting workshops, exhibiting work or recommending items for the collection