



MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

2023–2030

1 JULY 2023

MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
LIBRARIES



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people, the traditional custodians of the Wiradjuri Nation. We acknowledge their Elders past, present and future. We also acknowledge people from other nations and language groups who have now made the Mid-Western Region their home, along with the descendants of the Wiradjuri Nation.

1. Introduction

Mid-Western Regional Council Library is a well-utilised and vibrant service in the Central West region of NSW. It boasts above average membership, and surveys have shown it is valued by the community. In moving forward, the Library would like to build on these advantages, and explore how it could enhance its service offer, maximise use of its collections, and be an employer of choice in the Library and Information Services (LIS) sector.

This plan outlines a vision for library services, and proposes a number of clear strategies and actions to achieve this goal. Developed in partnership with the staff of Mid-Western Regional Council Library and their communities, it reflects the specific circumstances of this region, and the opportunities for growth, while at the same time considering best practice examples which can be incorporated into or adapted for the Mid-Western Regional Council Library environment.

Snapshot:

Established	<i>Library Act</i> adopted 17 July 1950 Library service commenced 4 June 1952
Branches	Mudgee, Gulgong, Rylstone, Kandos, Mobile Library
Area	8,737sq km
Population	25,760
Membership	12,520 (48.6% of population)
Major legislation	NSW <i>Library Act</i> 1939 & <i>Library Regulation</i> 2018 NSW <i>Local Government Act</i> 1993
Library Management System (LMS)	Spydus (Civica)
Staff	8.26ft
Professional associations	NSW Public Libraries Association (NSW PLA) Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
Websites	midwestern.nsw.gov.au/Community/Libraries midwestern.spydus.com mwrclibrary.eventbrite.com
Social media	facebook.com/MudgeeLibrary
Library app	yourlibraryapp.com/Mid-WesternRegionalLibrary

2. Background

In mid-2019, the State Library of New South Wales undertook a review of Mid-Western Regional Council Library. Such reviews are in accordance with the *Library Act* 1939 and support local government in the provision of library services. In early 2021, Mid-Western Regional Council Library engaged Jan Richards Consulting to collaboratively develop a plan for the strategic direction of the library service. This plan incorporates observations and recommendations from both parties.

The following steps were also undertaken in preparing this report:

- An analysis of current membership and usage using reports from the Spydus Library Management System
- An exploration of findings from the review undertaken by the State Library of New South Wales in 2019
- A demographic survey using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Early Development Census and Australian Digital Inclusion Index
- Mapping the library against relevant Council and industry plans
- Benchmarking against similar library services
- Responding to applicable national and international trends, and

During a hands-on visit with Jan Richards Consulting over 4 days during February 2021:

- Undertaking in-depth work with library staff including a workshop and individual interviews. This was followed up with online conversations and surveys on specific subjects
- Consultation with key stakeholders including library members, Council staff and partner organisations. A series of telephone conversations were subsequently conducted with community members who were unable to meet in person
- Visits to the library branches at Mudgee, Gulgong, Rylstone and Kandos

An online survey was used as an additional tool to seek the views of the community. Information from the '*Tell us how you missed us?*' survey conducted in 2020 by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and provided via postcode was also incorporated. Other key documents were used in the development of this report and are referenced in the bibliography and, where appropriate, noted in the text.

3. Mission Statement

To contribute to the wellbeing and vibrancy of our towns, villages and rural areas through inclusive and dynamic programs, adaptable services, relevant resources and safe and welcoming spaces. We champion the importance of reading and celebrate and safeguard the rich heritage of our region.

Mid-Western Regional Council Community Plan – Towards 2040

This Strategic Plan ties in with several strategies from Mid-Western Regional Council's Community Plan:

- 1.1.1 Maintain the provision of high quality, accessible community services that meet the needs of our community.
- 1.1.3 Support networks, programs and facilities which promote health and wellbeing and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- 1.2.1 Respect and enhance the historic character of our region and heritage value of our towns and villages.
- 1.3.1 Provide infrastructure and services to cater for the current and future needs of our community.
- 1.4.1 Support programs which strengthen the relationships between the range of community groups.
- 1.4.2 Support arts and cultural development across the region.
- 1.4.3 Provide equitable access to a range of places and spaces for all in the community.
- 3.3.2 Build strong linkages with institutions providing education, training and employment pathways in the region.
- 5.3.1 Pursue excellence in service delivery.

Mid-Western Regional Council 2023-2033 Cultural Plan

This Strategic Plan also ties in with Mid-Western Regional Council's Cultural Plan:

- B. Continue to develop the role of the region's libraries as a place of curiosity, inspiration, and stimulation, providing resources across both physical and digital formats.

4. Our Vision

Supporting an informed, connected, creative, literate and healthy community.

Target Groups:

Children 0-5 and their caregivers; primary school children; young adults; students (including home-schooled); adults; seniors; housebound; rural members; the reading community; local and family history researchers; travellers and casual users; people with a disability; Indigenous community; CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse); local businesses and professionals; state-wide partners.

Collections:

Fiction; Non-Fiction; Large Print; Young Adult; Picture Books, Beginner and Easy Readers; Graphic Novels; Magazines; Newspapers; DVD's; Audiobooks; Games and Puzzles; Local and Family History; ESL/Core Literacy; Kits; Drug Info and Legal Information Access Centre Resources; eBooks; eAudiobooks; eMagazines; Online Databases

Facilities:

Lending services across four branches; interlibrary loan services; e-resource platforms, online catalogue and library app; public computer and wifi access; printing and photocopying facilities; community spaces, study spaces and rooms for hire.

Programs & Activities:

Early literacy and school holiday programs; literary events and programs; digital literacy initiatives; facilitation of in-house and community-run book groups; mobile library service and outreach activities; collection development and maintenance.

“Libraries are one of the few places you are allowed to exist without the expectation of spending money”

(Neil Gaiman, 2013)

5. Guidelines

Australia is one of the few countries to have evidence-based public library standards and guidelines at a State (*Living Learning Libraries*) and National (*ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*) level. These documents have a similar approach and have been developed cooperatively over the years, both offering unique strengths. *Living Learning Libraries* has been used for benchmarking purposes as these relate to the State Library of New South Wales review. The *ALIA Standards and Guidelines* provide a more descriptive approach, and were updated post-COVID, considering the changed environment.

NSW public libraries also recognise the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a collection of 17 independent but interconnected goals designed as a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Libraries are key institutions to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as they touch all ages, cut across jurisdictions and impact in both large and small communities. Libraries are well placed to collaborate with partners and stakeholders in business and the community, to have a wider impact in raising awareness of the goals and how the community can contribute to their actions.

This Strategic Plan will contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals:

- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Mid-Western Regional Council is designated Urban Small by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Councils in this cohort include (from smallest population) Snowy Monaro, Lithgow, Kiama, Richmond Valley, Singleton, Mid- Western, Griffith, Kempsey, Goulburn Mulwaree, Mosman, Armidale, Byron, Bega Valley, Eurobodalla, Lane Cove, Burwood, Orange, Bathurst, Ballina, Strathfield, Lismore and Wingecarribee. After extensive discussion it was agreed that only a couple of these councils were comparable in size and demographics for benchmarking purposes – Singleton and Goulburn-Mulwaree. A number of other libraries from within this cluster also provided best-practice examples more closely related to the Mid-Western Regional Council Library environment.

6. Strategic Priorities

The following four key strategic priorities have been identified to successfully position Mid-Western Regional Council Library as it heads towards 2030:

1. Our Spaces
2. Our Collections
3. Our Programs and Activities
4. Our People

This is drawn from the *Framework for Australian Public Libraries* which identifies key areas to be assessed to enhance the effective and efficient operation of public libraries.

Strategic Priority 1: Our Spaces

To provide safe, welcoming and inclusive physical and digital places and spaces that meet the identified needs of the community.

OUR SPACES: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Realign opening hours to meet community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased opening hours that are consistent with NSW State Library recommendations 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore possibilities for 24/7-member access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher rates of library membership, visits and loans 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and funding opportunities for the development of a digital hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction of a dedicated space which enhances digital literacy through the provision of 3D printing, virtual reality, robotic coding and other similar technologies, including one-on-one tech support 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake functional review of front-of-house service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redesigned service desk area, improved efficiencies to rostering system and introduction of a concierge/roving model 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage use of Library App as new self-check option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased uptake of Library App ▪ Less demand for assistance with basic loan transactions 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upgrade internal and external signage across all branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New internal and external signage, including rear signage at Mudgee branch ▪ Improved discoverability of buildings and collections ▪ Reduced navigational enquiries 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activate laneway space to become an extension of the library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Laneway area is transformed and revitalised into an outdoor library space 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate for inclusion of library locations on Mudgee Visitor Information Centre brochures and maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated tourist brochures and maps displaying library locations ▪ Increased visits from travellers 	◆		

OUR SPACES: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider engaging a library design consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of library design consultant to review facilities and make recommendations 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange replacement of carpet at Mudgee branch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of new carpet at Mudgee Library 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise available space and activate use of the collections through introduction of moveable shelving and digital screens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce additional mobile shelving units, including raising lower shelving to lift the collection away from the floor Addition of digital screen for front window 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and repurpose underutilised areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repurposed spaces in the Youth Room and Front Reading Room at Mudgee branch 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take advantage of street frontage and front window space to showcase the vital services within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved aesthetics, layout and flow of spaces that are also visually enticing to passersby 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate available options for study pods, recreational reading areas, and additional space for community groups to meet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of dedicated study and reading areas, and meeting spaces 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider relocation of staff-only areas to expand ground floor space for public use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater accessibility and use of library spaces 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore, pilot and monitor opportunities to offer library services in other community spaces and Council facilities including 'pop-ups' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of programs in a variety of locations across the LGA Increased 'pop-ups' within the community 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise the Mobile Library to include a range of learning, cultural and technology programs delivered in different locations across the LGA including community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness and engagement with library services Strengthened relationships with other service providers 			◆

Strategic Priority 2: Our Collections

To develop and manage library collections which:

- Meet the informational, educational, recreational and cultural needs of the community
- Foster a love of reading and inspire intellectual curiosity
- Support lifelong learning

To develop selection, acquisition and collection management procedures that ensure relevant library materials are available and accessible to the community in appropriate formats as soon as possible.

To facilitate access by the local community to resources held in other Australian libraries.

To collect, preserve, maintain and provide access to resources that document, illustrate and record the history and cultural heritage of the local area and development of the local community.

OUR COLLECTIONS: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for increased consortia purchasing and collection sharing with other library services in the NSW Central West Zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralised selection of resources and reduced admin processes Value for money – access to a greater range of titles for less investment Strengthened relationships with other library services 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue consolidating online platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined content, better accessibility for members, less confusion with multiple platforms offering duplicate content 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a shelf-ready collections procurement process Continue use of standing orders and profiles for selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outsourced labelling, covering and cataloguing processes Reduced processing time and quicker turnaround for items to be made available for borrowing Greater efficiencies in selection and ordering 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate James Bennett's <i>Sustainability Project</i> as a potential collection maintenance tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved weeding and disposal processes 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase community participation and engagement in the Library's collection activities Continue to promote <i>Suggest a Purchase</i> platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback from the community Increased usage of Community Collections Manager (CCM) for new title recommendations A collection curated by the community which meets specific interests and needs 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement initiatives in the Library's <i>Marketing Plan</i> to maximise use of the collections Increase stock circulation between branches and make available a greater number of popular titles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visitation and loan statistics Improved chances of serendipity for library members browsing the collection Improved equality of access to the entire collection 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce more outward facing displays to maximise impact Explore genrefication of selected collections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater visibility of collections and resources Achieving a bookshop "look and feel" across all library branches with improved discoverability, practicality and ease-of-use for library members 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add value to the collections by offering seminars, workshops and training to complement specific collection areas and build confidence in their use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased usage of collection including online resources and databases 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly review and update website, catalogue and social media content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased virtual visits and engagement An engaging and dynamic online presence that is consistently refreshed with up-to-date and timely content 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on established relationships with heritage partners to expand the local studies collection and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued growth of local studies collection Increased usage of local studies collection 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the possibility of an oral history program to capture local stories and enhance a sense of pride and place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of an oral history program 		◆	

OUR COLLECTIONS: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitise and provide online access to selected local studies materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitisation and launch of an online platform that showcases and provides enhanced accessibility to selected local studies materials 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge and honour the works of First Nations authors Showcase and celebrate the works of local writers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of programs and workshops that include and support First Nations and local writers Ongoing identification of local authors on physical titles Purchasing of titles authored by First Nations and local writers 			◆

Strategic Priority 3: Our Programs and Activities

To provide targeted and engaging activities that reflect the diversity of the community and encourage and enhance effective and productive use of the library.

OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the range and diversity of programs for adult members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A greater offering of programs for adults 	◆		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce further STEAM and maker-space type activities, as well as digital literacy programming Keep up-to-date with digital technology innovations and trends (e.g., artificial intelligence, augmented reality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased STEAM-related programs for all ages Stronger awareness of digital technologies and how they could be applied to a library environment Improved digital literacy rates 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage self-directed groups to take advantage of library spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater use of library spaces by community groups (e.g., book groups, craft groups) 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer programs that reinforce the influence of Australian literary heritage, and First Nations voices in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of programs that focus on Australian literary heritage and First Nations voices in the region 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curate programs and activities which can be replicated in all branch libraries and at off-site locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased workload and double-handling for programming Delivery of consistent and streamlined activities Increased programs in branches and off-site 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore possibility of recording selected programs for online viewing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further reach and access to programs 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the Mudgee Readers' Festival to contribute to the delivery of an exciting and encompassing program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in annual Mudgee Readers' Festival 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in relevant local, state, and national festivals, events and campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in other festivals, events and campaigns Increased networking and relationship opportunities in the literary industry 			◆

OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on partnerships and synergies with Council departments and community groups to develop programs that expand audience participation, especially with young adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved engagement by young adults with the library Increased participation in programs Enhanced cross-collaboration with Council departments and community groups 			◆

Strategic Priority 4: Our People

To ensure that the size, qualifications, capabilities and mix of the library workforce support delivery of a range of services and programs which meet the needs of the community.

OUR PEOPLE: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a restructure of the Library that aligns with the strategic direction, and if funding permits, expand staffing to meet population ratio targets within resource limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised staffing structure that is better aligned to service delivery 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update position descriptions to reflect current roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated and accurate position descriptions 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit and build staff capabilities and agility to ensure they have the necessary skills to deliver current and future services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly skilled, confident and passionate staff Programs and services delivered to a high standard and quality 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to be cross-trained in key roles in order for quality service delivery and expectations to be continued and maintained, including across all branches and the Mobile Library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uninterrupted continuity of programs and services in the event of staff absence Knowledge transfer between roles with increased training and secondment opportunities for staff 		◆	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff will continue to undertake professional development and educational activities on a formal and informal basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled staff who remain current with industry trends, developments and best-practice 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in all NSW Public Library membership initiatives to retain and build the Library's membership base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased library membership Strong partnerships with NSW public libraries and associations Consistent messaging and branding 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the community on a regular basis (as per Mid-Western Regional Council's <i>Community Engagement Strategy</i>) to understand needs and priorities and to refine service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community engagement and feedback Delivery of programs and services that match community needs 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and train volunteers to assist in the enrichment of local and family history collections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of volunteer group Continued growth of local and family history collections 		◆	

OUR PEOPLE: ACTIONS	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	SHORT TERM	LONGER TERM	ONGOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore traineeship opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment of a library trainee 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Host work placement and work experience students and provide mentoring to entice new staff into the industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing provider of work placement and work experience opportunities for students ▪ Students gaining employment in the library industry 			◆
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilise ALIA's <i>Professional Pathways</i> framework to attract new and highly skilled staff coming from non-library backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff from diverse backgrounds transitioned to the library sector 			◆

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