

CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

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## CONSULTATION REPORT FOR THE LIBRARY ACTION PLAN

November 2019

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“Reports of the death of the library are certainly exaggerated. People, including young people, continue to use and appreciate libraries. People are still investing in libraries, and they are still buying and reading books. But the libraries and their custodians are engaged in hot battles on multiple fronts, including ... the epochal clash between analogue and digital content.”<sup>1</sup>*

It is certainly true in the City of Port Phillip that libraries are alive, well-loved and strongly supported. This is the key finding from a consultation of library users over June to November 2019. Libraries continue to be instrumental in the social, educational and recreational life of local communities and remain one of the most highly valued and well used cultural facilities across Australia. Together with community centres, they support life-long learning and foster participation in artistic and cultural expression.

As there has been no major review of the library service over the last 10 years, the City of Port Phillip resolved to develop a Library Action Plan to articulate a vision and clear strategic direction to guide Council’s involvement and investment in libraries over the coming four years. The Action Plan is being developed in two phases. Phase One involved a wide range of consultation activities – with staff, library users and key interest groups. Phase Two will build on the findings of Phase One with the addition of service data benchmarking, review of local and international library trends and identification of best practice in service delivery.

This document is a report of the findings from Phase One and reports on the outcomes of all consultation activities to support development of the Action Plan. The project involved extensive consultation with Council staff and the community broadly to ensure a thorough understanding of the aspirations, needs and expectations of library users and key stakeholders. In total, the views of more than 900 people have been considered.

The consultation comprised:

- Five ‘listening posts’, one in each of the five libraries
- Workshops for Library management and staff
- A meeting with the Older Persons Consultative Committee
- A meeting with the Art & Soul Strategy Advisory Panel
- Meetings with five community organisations
- Meeting with two groups of young people plus a Youth Facebook page invitation to participate
- Interviews with CoPP specialist staff with knowledge of particular community segments
- Analysis of data from the consultation about the heritage values of St Kilda library
- A community survey completed by more than 550 library users

The consultation found that, while people love their local library, they believe investment is inadequate and many improvements are needed in all five libraries. The findings are summarised under five themes that emerged in the consultation.

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1. “The Library – Humanist Ideal, Social Glue and Now, Tourism Hotspot”, [The Conversation](#), 31 May 2019.

The five themes are:

Fabulous Spaces	> Library buildings that are a joy to visit
Responsive programming	> Programs designed by and for the community
A contemporary collection	> Catering for all tastes in Port Phillip's diverse population
Engagement & Connection	> Libraries enabling connected communities
Future oriented technology	> Port Phillip a leader in future-focused community technology

Public satisfaction with Port Phillip libraries, as measured in the broad community satisfaction survey, is high but, in this consultation, service users felt the current service is falling behind the standards being provided in other municipalities. In the views of many, some libraries need significant refurbishment; programming of literary, creative and digital events needs to grow; the collection needs to grow and better align with community interests; opportunities for community input need to be established; and digital inclusion programmes need to be introduced.

An important highlight from the consultation was that the community is very complimentary about the staff and see them as professional, helpful and friendly.

The development of an Action Plan to guide the future of libraries is therefore timely. The Port Phillip library service is unique in that every resident is within walking distance of a library. The service is highly valued by the community. The emerging role of libraries in building communities creates new opportunities. There is much energy and enthusiasm among staff to build on current strengths and create a leading-edge library service. The views of the community presented in this report provide an important foundation for the development of Council's Library Action Plan.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The City of Port Phillip (CoPP) has five library venues, a 24/7 online library and a home library service for those not able to visit a library. The geographical spread of the libraries is such that most residents are within walking distance of a library – a service configuration that is unique in Melbourne.

Libraries continue to be instrumental in the social, educational and recreational life of local communities and remain one of the most highly valued and well used cultural facilities in every municipality. Together with community centres, they support life-long learning and foster participation in artistic and cultural expression.

As there has been no major review of the library service over the last 10 years, CoPP is developing a Library Action Plan to articulate a vision and clear strategic direction to guide Council's involvement and investment in libraries over the coming four years. The Action Plan is being developed in two phases. Phase One involved a wide range of consultation activities – with staff, library users and key interest groups. Phase Two will build on the findings of Phase One with the addition of service data benchmarking, review of local and international library trends and identification of best practice in service delivery.

Quest Consulting was appointed to undertake Phase One of the project which involved extensive consultation activities between July and November 2019. This document is a report of the findings from Phase One and reports on the outcomes of all consultation activities to support development of the Action Plan.

## 2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Port Phillip is committed to being easy to work with, efficient and responsive to the needs of the community. This commitment is established in *We are Port Phillip*, the City of Port Phillip Council Plan 2017-2027. One of the five strategic directions set within the Council Plan is harnessing creativity. Council subsequently adopted *Creative and Prosperous City (Art and Soul) Strategy 2018-2022* which includes the following strategy and action for the library service:

- **Strategy:** Modernise our library services and spaces to support inclusive, creative opportunities and learning outcomes
- **Action:** Develop a Library Action Plan that contributes to a creative ecosystem and responds to current and future community needs for programming, collections and emerging technology

In addition to CoPP's strategic directions, the consultation was informed by the six outcome measures proposed by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). These six measures were developed to help libraries move from measuring outputs (e.g. number of books borrowed) to measuring outcomes – that is, from measuring 'what libraries do' to measuring 'why libraries matter'. The six outcome measures are:

- Literacy and lifelong learning
- Informed and connected citizens
- Digital inclusion
- Personal development and wellbeing
- Stronger and more creative communities
- Economic and workforce development

The most successful community libraries will support (and measure) the achievement of those six outcomes across the community.

### 3 THE LIBRARY SERVICE

The five libraries and their opening hours are shown in the table below.

Location	Open	Hours per Week
Albert Park	7 days	56
Emerald Hill	6 days	42
Middle Park	6 days	24
Port Melbourne	6 days	52
St Kilda	7 days	70
		<b>244 hours</b>

*Table 1: Showing library locations and service hours*

In addition to the physical libraries, the online service provides 24-hour access to e-books, audio books, streaming of movies and an online learning video platform covering business, software, technology and creative pursuits. The home library service is offered for those who are temporarily or permanently housebound. The library service also provides regular activities for parents with young children. Other activities such as author talks are scheduled from time to time and advertised on the library website.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

A carefully designed program of consultation was conducted with the community broadly and with Council staff to ensure a thorough understanding of the aspirations, needs and expectations of library users and key stakeholders.

The consultation comprised:

- Five ‘listening posts’, one in each of the five libraries
- Workshops for Library management and staff
- A meeting with the Older Persons Consultative Committee
- A meeting with the Art & Soul Strategy Advisory Panel
- Meetings with five community organisations
- Meeting with two groups of young people plus a Youth Facebook page invitation to participate
- Interviews with CoPP specialist staff with knowledge of particular community segments
- Analysis of data from the consultation about the heritage values of St Kilda library
- A community survey completed by more than 550 library users

In total, the views of more than 900 people have been considered.

Throughout the document, the implications for the Action Plan that arise from the consultations are noted, where relevant. At the conclusion of the document, issues for consideration in the Action Plan are suggested.

## 5 OVERALL CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

This section summarises the consultation outcomes under five thematic headings. The five themes are based on the views most frequently expressed across the full suite of consultation activities. The themes are:

<b>Fabulous Spaces</b>	> Library buildings that are a joy to visit
<b>Responsive programming</b>	> Programs designed by and for the community
<b>A contemporary collection</b>	> Catering for all tastes in Port Phillip's diverse population
<b>Engagement &amp; Connection</b>	> Libraries enabling connected communities
<b>Future oriented technology</b>	> Port Phillip a leader in future-focused community technology

Subsequent sections of this report provide more detail about the views expressed in each of the consultation activities.

### 5.1. Fabulous Spaces

#### *Library buildings that are a joy to visit*

While many participants in the consultation love their local library and love the fact that they can walk to them, they also raised many concerns about the limited maintenance and limited investment in the facilities over recent years. While concerns about each of the 5 libraries were different, there was a widely held view that beautiful libraries attract more visitors, increase community pride and contribute to stronger communities.

Improvements that consultation participants would like to see include:

- Clean, modern toilets and baby change rooms
- Brighter, lighter, more colourful spaces
- Separate areas for children so others can work or read in quiet spaces
- Small, separate areas so students can work on projects together
- More meeting spaces – for community groups and for classes and activities
- Outdoor areas at each library with suitable furniture for reading and small group meetings
- Comfortable furniture – reading chairs and lounges
- More power points for computers
- Access to tea, coffee and snacks

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

**Albert Park:** Renovate to provide internal toilets and re-locate the public toilets away from the library; provide some separation of the children's area as at Emerald Hill; consider another storey to provide meeting spaces

**Emerald Hill:** Investigate storage and access requirements for all Port Phillip historical records including those managed by community historical societies

**Middle Park:** Examine options for sale of the building and establishment of a community centre in Armstrong Street. Alternatively, renovate the community centre to create a true community hub and an attractive library lounge

**Port Melbourne:** Refurbish to provide a separate children's area and quieter reading areas

**St Kilda:** Consider re-purposing space at the rear to provide an outdoor extension of the library. Refurbish to separate noisy/quiet areas. Examine opportunities for offering new technology spaces

**All libraries:** Remove or reduce staff desks, add tea/coffee facilities, provide comfortable furniture

## **5.2. Responsive Programming**

### ***Programs designed by and for the community***

In all consultations, library patrons expressed a desire to see a variety of literary and creative programs in the libraries. Opportunities for participation contribute to creativity, innovation, community learning and social cohesion. While there are currently occasional author talks or talks on interesting topics, there is a clear community appetite for more and different programs. Involving the community in planning such programs is important to ensure they reflect local interests.

There is also a strong desire for additional programs for children. While there are currently 10 story time sessions each week, these can be crowded - illustrating the strong demand that already exists for children's programs.

Additional services that consultation participants would like to see include:

- More frequent story time & rhyme time, including during school holidays
- Multicultural story time for grandparents
- Story time at Middle Park
- Holiday programs for primary school age children
- Creative opportunities for children, including more Lego sessions
- Reading groups for young readers at all libraries
- Technology classes for older people and for people from diverse backgrounds
- More literary programs – author talks, reading groups
- Longer opening hours including evenings & weekends
- Homework clubs

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

Provision of additional programs may not require additional resources. A review of staffing could be undertaken to identify relevant skills and capabilities and to reorganise staffing to align with community aspirations for responsive programming

### 5.3. A Contemporary Collection

#### ***A loved collection that caters for all tastes in Port Phillip's diverse population***

The consultation showed that, for many people, the library is still a place to borrow books, to read books or newspapers and to meet other like-minded people. This is challenging for Port Phillip given the diversity across the community. There are older people from many backgrounds – Greek, eastern Europe, Jewish and many younger people from Asia and elsewhere. Many people want to borrow CDs or DVDs rather than books. Achieving the right balance in the collection is a challenge for library staff. Nevertheless, there was a view commonly expressed that the collection does not fully align with the needs and interests of the different communities across Port Phillip.

The consultation participants would like:

- More extensive or larger collections at three libraries – Albert Park, Emerald Hill, & Middle Park
- An increased LOTE (language other than English) collection and better alignment to LOTE population areas
- Easy access to large print books and talking books for older people
- An 'edgy' teenage collection e.g. more Manga
- More 'highbrow' papers and magazines for a middle-class community

#### ***Implications and opportunities:***

- Review the collection and rotation policies to better respond to community aspirations
- Increase the stock at Albert Park, Emerald Hill and Middle Park libraries

### 5.4. Engagement & Connection

#### ***Libraries enabling connected communities***

The Public Libraries Victoria Network stresses the important role that libraries play in connecting residents and building social capital:

*Research shows that public libraries contribute to building social capital, social harmony and cohesion; they help develop civic skills and consciousness, contributing to the maintenance of peaceful and democratic social norms.<sup>2</sup>*

The consultation showed that many residents come to the libraries to connect with others – parents connect through children's activities, young people connect through book groups, isolated people can talk to staff and feel part of something bigger.

Consultation participants would like the library service to:

- Provide opportunities to connect with other like-minded people, especially for young people, older people and people from diverse communities
- Liaise regularly with local interest groups and encourage their participation
- Provide opportunities for users to contribute ideas, to be more open to advice
- Communicate more broadly and more regularly e.g. quarterly newsletters

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<sup>2</sup> Public Libraries Victoria Network, *Creative Industries Strategy Paper*, 2015

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

Establish an outreach program to:

- Engage with local organisations and take the library out into the community
- Meet with users regularly to obtain input to library planning
- Meet with key interest groups to obtain their input to programming
- Encourage participation by under-represented groups
- Create joined-up programming with other Council services e.g. youth services, aged services and with community organisations e.g. U3A

## 5.5. Future Oriented Technology

### ***A library service recognised as a leader in future-focused technology***

Over the last 21 years, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has donated US\$1 billion to public libraries across the United States and globally, transforming them into critical community resources for today's digital world by supplying public-access computers, software, and training to their communities – a major contribution to equity and opportunity.

While most Port Phillip residents are connected at home, the consultation showed that residents are still seeking technology services in the libraries. Young people and those on low incomes may not be able to afford equipment or needed software, and older people may need training and assistance. New technology can support innovation and creativity.

Consultation participants would like:

- Better Wi-Fi
- Easy access to staff with great technology skills
- Better access to computers
- New and leading-edge technology
- Technology classes – including phones, Facebook, Skype etc
- Classes on using e-library services

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

- Create separate spaces for high-end technology in selected libraries
- Invest in leading-edge technology – film, audio, 3-D printers, gaming PCs etc
- Create partnerships with businesses and schools to establish creative tech networks that support Port Phillip as a centre of excellence in technology development

## 6 LISTENING POSTS IN THE LIBRARIES

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the views of library users, pop-up sessions inviting patrons to 'Tell me what you think' were held in each of the 5 libraries. These 'listening posts' worked extremely well with many library users keen to share their views. A summary of perceptions of the strengths of the library service together with their suggestions for improvement is set out below.

## 6.1. Albert Park Library

There were 49 participants in the pop-up listening post at Albert Park library. The consultation was scheduled during and after story time, so the library was busy with many young parents and their children. But there were also older people, students and young workers. About 1/3 of participants were male, many of whom were there with their children for story time.

The popularity of rhyme time and story time speaks for itself, with many parents saying they attend more than once a week. Most parents walk to the library and so the porch area is often crowded with prams. Strengths of the service mentioned in the consultation included the staff, the friendly atmosphere and the fact that the library is open on the weekend.

Improvement suggestions included:

- Cleaner toilets and a clean baby change area
- More and cleaner toys for children
- A better book collection and the provision of more Greek books rather than holding the Greek collection primarily at Port Melbourne
- An outdoor area
- A coffee machine

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

- *Many parents indicated they would like more story time sessions. It may be that many of these parents are otherwise quite isolated and that story time provides important opportunities for them to connect with other parents*
- *The toilets at Albert Park are public toilets outside the library. They are old and apparently the odour is often a problem – parents advised that they only use them in an emergency*

## 6.2. Emerald Hill Library

The Emerald Hill listening post was conducted in the middle of the day. This is a less popular time for library users and there were only 14 participants. Listening posts were held at different times at the different libraries to ensure that different user groups could participate. At the Emerald Hill session, there was a balanced mix of men and women, young adults, and older people. There were no parents with children or school age children as they visit at different times. Most were weekly visitors.

Many of the positive comments about this library related to the space, with participants liking the architecture, the calming atmosphere and the light. Three young men were having a meeting in the courtyard and said they liked the opportunity to meet outside the office but not at a café.

Improvement suggestions included:

- More books
- A coffee machine
- Comfortable chairs

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

- *This library benefits from having an area for children that can be partially closed off allowing others to read or work quietly if they wish*
- *The Library also has a courtyard which is apparently well-used but might benefit from more outdoor furniture*
- *The adult book collection is small*
- *A review of the space requirements for all historical records including those of the Heritage Centre and community organisations is warranted*

## **6.3. Middle Park Library**

There were 20 participants in the Middle Park listening post consultation. Not all were in the library as the consultation was scheduled to coincide with pick-up time from the pre-school next door, allowing local parents to participate. Most of the parents said they use the library on a weekly basis. There were a number of older people in the library who said they like to come in to read the papers, borrow books and to meet neighbours.

Positive comments about the library were:

- It's walking distance for parents with prams, for children after school and for older people
- Staff are very helpful
- There's a friendly atmosphere
- The new, consistent hours are much better

Improvement suggestions included:

- More space – for books
- More furniture – desks for children to do homework, comfortable chairs for reading
- More books – and some in Greek and Italian and some for teenagers
- Story time sessions (there are none at this library) and holiday programs

### ***Implications and opportunities:***

- *This library is not ideally located. Research shows that libraries near other facilities, particularly near shops and cafés, are better used. The library was originally in Armstrong Street shopping precinct – an ideal location*
- *While the library is small, it could be more attractive and could house more books with an internal re-design and refurbishment*

## **6.4. Port Melbourne Library**

There were 37 participants in the listening post at Port Melbourne library. There was a good mix comprising approximately equal number of males and females. Nearly half were older people and there was a good mix of school children, young adults (possibly students) and other adults (many with small children).

The majority said they visited weekly but, interestingly, only a small minority said they were there to borrow a book or DVD. Other reasons for visiting included work, study, 'killing time' and finding other children to play with.

When asked what they liked about the library, participants responded that it was close to home, had places to sit and work and that it was a welcoming space.

Improvement suggestions included:

- Separating the children's area so others could work/read in a quiet space
- Providing help with computers
- Having more comfortable furniture
- Providing resources in Mandarin

***Implications and opportunities:***

- *A number of older men were there, ostensibly, to read the papers but they may be visiting the library to avoid a sense of isolation. This was also observed at the other libraries so there may be opportunities to develop programs of interest to this demographic group*
- *Parents come in with young children to play in the late afternoon – the play space is important for socialisation*

## 6.5. St Kilda Library

There were 59 participants in the listening post consultation at St Kilda library. There was a roughly equal number of male and female participants, some young adults, some older people but mostly adults of working age. There were a lot of young adults in the library, but many wore headphones and appeared to be studying so they were not interrupted for interview. The majority of participants were weekly or more frequent visitors while only a small number indicated that they came once a month or less.

Almost all interviewees were very positive about this library – positive about the staff, the book collection, the computers, and the friendly, community feel. There were a number of people who valued the international collection commenting on the availability of books in Hungarian, Hebrew and Russian. Story time, rhyme time and the children's play area are also highly valued.

There were some concerns expressed including insufficient comfortable furniture for reading, too much noise from the children's area, and cleanliness of the toilets with only one change room for parents.

There were many improvement suggestions, the most frequent of which were:

- Better control of noise, possibly through separation of quiet areas
- Improved technology – better Wi-Fi, more power points and better access to computers
- More activities – author talks, story time and holiday activities
- More books

***Implications and opportunities:***

- *Patrons at this library, especially those of older age, appear to be more culturally diverse than at other libraries.*
- *There appeared to be many students in the library so better Wi-Fi access appears important*

## 7 THE VIEWS OF KEY CONSULTATION GROUPS

This section reports on the findings from the consultations conducted with staff and with community organisations. The key groups consulted are shown in the table below.

Key Consultation Groups	
▪ Parents and Children	▪ Teen Book Group
▪ Lightning Readers Group	▪ Older Persons Consultative Committee
▪ Middle Park Library Action Group	▪ Friends of Emerald Hill Library
▪ Rate Payers of Port Phillip	▪ Community Alliance of Port Phillip
▪ City of Port Phillip Management	▪ City of Port Phillip Library Staff
▪ City of Port Phillip Specialist Staff	▪ St Kilda Historical Society
▪ Art & Soul Strategy Advisory Panel	▪ Other invitees

Table 2: Showing key consultation groups

A number of other community organisations were invited to participate in the consultation but did not respond to the invitation. These included U3A, St Kilda Community Group and Park Towers Tenant Management Inc.

Subsequent sections report on the listening posts in the libraries, the separate consultation undertaken in relation to the heritage values of the St Kilda library building and the community survey.

### 7.1. Parents and Children

Parents with children are prominent among library patrons. Rhyme time for babies and story time for toddlers are very popular at the four libraries where they are scheduled. There is no rhyme time or story time at Middle Park. The distribution of children's sessions (10 per week) is shown in the table below.

Location	Baby Rhyme Time 0 – 18 months	Tiny Tots Story Time 18 months – 3 years	Pre-school Story Time 3 - 6 years
Albert Park		Two sessions	One session
Emerald Hill	One session		One session
Middle Park			
Port Melbourne		One session	
St Kilda	One session	Two sessions	One session

Table 3: Showing story time sessions for parents and children

There is also a bedtime story session held at St Kilda once a month.

Throughout the consultation, parents at all five libraries indicated they would like more frequent children's programs, but staff are of the view that there are sufficient sessions for children. There were some library patrons who felt the children's sessions were noisy and disruptive, illustrating the complexity libraries face in catering for the different needs of different user groups.

It is possible that many parents who attend the children's sessions are there in part to meet their own needs. Some of these parents may be isolated and lonely at home with young children, so rhyme time and story time are as much social programs for adults as they are early literacy programs for children.

The programs stop during school holidays although the reason for this is not clear and, such is their value, that parents requested they continue over these periods.

Other issues important to parents were the poor condition of toilets and baby change rooms, the need for better cleaning of toys, the lack of access to refreshments and the fact that no story time sessions are run at Middle Park. Parents with school age children would also like to see more holiday activities, especially for primary school children.

#### ***Implications and Opportunities:***

*The separation of play spaces, like the separate space for children at Emerald Hill, may help resolve the tension inherent in catering for children and those who want quieter spaces.*

*There is very high demand for children's programs. Consideration could be given to re-allocation of resources to better meet this demand.*

## **7.2. School Students**

There are two reading groups for school students supported by staff at St Kilda library – the Lightning Readers Group (8-12 years old) and the Teen Book Group (secondary school students). The groups meet once a month after school and about 8-10 young people normally attend each group.

The Lightning Readers Group would like the library to offer:

- An 'edgy' book and comic collection with greater variety (less romance!)
- More/different technology – e.g. 3D printers, recording equipment
- A more inviting interior of the library and more comfortable furniture
- More Lego opportunities (this activity is scheduled 9 times/year, but the waiting list is closed)
- The opportunity to meet more often

The Teen Book Group would like the library to offer:

- A better teen collection – more manga, more realistic novels, more horror and less romance
- An outside area at the library that would attract more teens
- Creative workshops, including writing workshops
- The opportunity to meet more often

#### ***Implications and Opportunities:***

*These groups for young people at St Kilda provide an important social opportunity for school-age readers to meet other like-minded young people. One participant is home-schooled, and another was sent by her mother worried that she lacks social contact. Similar groups could be offered in the other four libraries to attract young people who would benefit from the opportunity to socialise with other young people with literary interests.*

### 7.3. Older Persons Consultative Committee

The Older Persons Consultative Committee (OPCC) meets regularly, with the Mayor in attendance, and represents the interests of older residents to CoPP on council plans, strategies and services.

OPCC members advised they see libraries as essential community facilities and the consultation commenced with a discussion about the location and size of the libraries. One member pointed out that Elwood did not have its own library, but Elwood residents are close to Glen Eira's Elsternwick library. Cr. Gross explained the history of the service and why the libraries are different in size. Prior to amalgamation, Port Melbourne and St Kilda councils both had a model wherein they had one large library to serve the whole municipality. South Melbourne, however, chose to have three small neighbourhood libraries – Albert Park, Middle Park and South Melbourne.

One of the perceived strengths of the library service is its inclusive nature. People come in to socialise, keep warm and just read the papers and people experiencing homelessness use the library. The home library service is also considered important for older people.

There are, however, a number of barriers to older people getting the most out of libraries. The barriers mentioned include:

- Parking is difficult at St Kilda library and many older people can't easily use public transport or the community bus
- The talking books are on the bottom shelf – difficult for older people to access
- There is no computer training in the libraries and many older people would welcome this. Similarly, older people need help with new technology such as BorrowBox
- Libraries should be co-located with other services to make it easier for older people to access the full range of services for the community

Improvement suggestions included:

- Tea and coffee vending machines – great for people who spend a lot of time in a library
- Longer opening times, say to 10:00 p.m. This would help address social isolation
- Support for the little community book exchanges e.g. supplying them with discontinued books. There is one at Cowdery Park and at Alma Park.

#### ***Implications and Opportunities:***

*There was a lively discussion at the OPCC meeting as members are very interested in ensuring the service meets the needs of older people. An annual consultation by management with this forum would help the library service stay in touch with the needs of older people*

### 7.4. Friends of Emerald Hill Library

A meeting was held with four representatives from Friends of Emerald Hill Library. The group was formed in 2010 when some residents were concerned that branch hours were reduced, and the library stock was shrinking. The library had been relocated from the (previous) South Melbourne Town Hall in 1995. The Friends say that, concurrent with the library relocation, books from South Melbourne were relocated to Albert Park. The Friends organise author talks (23 to date) and some book groups but generally feel their contributions are not welcome. This group was critical of the library service and the way users are treated. Their concerns, which include lack of library service engagement with the community, rules within the service and reduced resources, are set out below.

## ***Engagement with the Community***

The Friends state that there are limited avenues for communication with management and that their suggestions are generally not welcomed. For example, they have suggested putting up children's drawings, putting signage on the windows, having better external signage, and changing the name to South Melbourne Library as 'Emerald Hill' is no longer widely used. The library lends bats and balls for the concrete table tennis in the park at the rear but, despite suggestions from the Friends, there is no sign advising of this in the park, so the table tennis table is under-utilised.

## ***Administrative Requirements***

The Friends are of the view that the service is no longer 'the people's library'. They state that, in America, friends' groups are common and work closely with library management, but they feel this is not welcomed at Emerald Hill. They state that staff have very defined roles and are not empowered, resulting in the Friends being required to speak to the 'right' person. Booking a room for an event is not straightforward. When organising a speaker, they are now required to use Eventbrite for bookings and they are no longer allowed to serve wine at their evening events, as they did in the past. They believe (correctly/not) that the Team Leader for Emerald Hill works out of St Kilda, except when rostered on the floor.

## ***Spaces and Resources***

The Friends think the children's area at the library is excellent and this is important as there are nine childcare services and two schools within walking distance. They also say the Wi-Fi is good. However, they are critical of the volume of adult and teenage books available. Their view is that the shelving is very spread out, so it looks like there is insufficient room for additional resources.

Friends of Emerald Hill Library provided a written submission which sets out 10 short-term and mid-term goals covering better promotion of the library, increased children's programs, increased stock and opening hours. This submission, with a map of local childcare centres attached, is shown as Appendix 1.

The Friends has its own website: <http://friendsofemeraldhilllibrary.org.au/>

### ***Implications and Opportunities:***

*Whether the concerns expressed by the Friends of Emerald Hill representatives are valid or not, their perceptions of the service are clearly negative. The library service would benefit from the development of a user-engagement strategy to support staff in building and maintaining positive relations with key user groups.*

## **7.5. Middle Park Library Action Group**

Two meetings were held with the Middle Park Library Action Group Inc. (MPLAG). This group was formed in response to a proposal in November 2017 to transform the Middle Park library into a collaborative working space with improved access to digital resources, multi-media equipment and creative software packages. Following significant community opposition, Council conducted a survey about the proposal and scheduled a public meeting. The proposal was subsequently put on hold pending development of a Library Action Plan.

The meetings with MPLAG were attended by four members of the group's leadership including Mr James Woollett, Chair of the organisation. Mr Woollett has separately submitted to management a research report he has prepared on 44 public libraries in nine inner Melbourne municipalities. The report provides information about each library's spaces, opening hours, programs and capital investment. It also provides benchmark data about the nine municipal library services including data on resourcing and expenditure. This is a major piece of work which will be of interest to all nine municipalities. Mr Woollett stated that there were 12 main learnings that are key to the success of the small libraries he visited. These were subsequently emailed to the Consultant and are included in this report as Appendix 2.

The key concerns of the group that were raised in the two meetings were:

- The condition of the facility
- Book stock and renewal
- Opening hours
- Relationships with patrons
- Lack of adult and children's activities
- Communications and promotion

These concerns are set out in more detail below.

### **The Facility**

The library takes a small amount of the space within the Middle Park Community Centre. Other services in the Centre include Maternal & Child Health, the pre-school, toilets, kitchens and upstairs, a community hall and a computer/meeting room.

Members of MPLAG were concerned about:

- The waste of space with duplicate kitchens and multiple toilets
- The low level of capital expenditure on the facility over the last several years
- The poor level of maintenance
- The closure of the entry from the street so that it is never clear whether or not the library is open

Members would like to see the centre operating as a vibrant community hub, but this would require reconfiguration and optimisation of existing spaces as well as promotion of the available facilities.

#### **Implications and Opportunities:**

*The Middle Park Community Centre is constrained by its old design and lacks a community 'feel'. Corridors, stairs and the lift well take up much of the space. The hall upstairs, while suitable for Tai Chi, is otherwise uninviting and the computer room is isolated and has old equipment and furniture. The library itself lacks sufficient desks, computers and comfortable furniture. The administration area takes up much of the space.*

*Consideration could be given to re-location or refurbishment.*

### **Book Stock & Renewal**

MPLAG is critical of the book stock at the library. The Group provided a copy of an article from the Age in 1956, when the library was opened. It stated that there were 8,000 books available whereas the group believes there are only 4,500 in the Middle Park collection now and there is no regular and frequent

rotation of books from the other libraries. Their benchmarking exercise showed that ‘the book stock of Port Phillip’s libraries is older than that of most other libraries and Port Phillip has the lowest collection of new books.’ Their data also shows that Port Phillip has reduced its overall collection by 11,000 items over the last four years.

MPLAG was also critical of the display of the collection:

*‘A more retail attitude to display is required. More colourful covers in both children’s and adult books attract readers. Shelves must look as if the library is full of books. The display should be refreshed every day.’*

### **Opening hours**

MPLAG want the library to be opened for longer hours and believe this would attract more patrons. It is understood that hours have been increased and made consistent each day in response to these concerns, but the Group is seeking a further extension – to an 8-hour per day service. They advise the library hours are not aligned with other activities at the Community Centre. For example, the library is closed during Maternal & Child Health opening hours, Tai Chi classes and other activities.

### **Relationships with Patrons**

Like the Friends of Emerald Hill Library, MPLAG would like more engagement with library staff. They advised that, at the small libraries visited in other municipalities, the staff were clearly identifiable as they wore name badges and in some cases uniforms. They also felt that staffing the Library with a dedicated librarian would make a significant difference to attendances.

In an email received subsequently from one member of MPLAG, there was a suggestion for a group activity involving patrons and librarian that had been observed elsewhere – a discussion of recently read books over a cup of tea/coffee. This suggestion highlights the desire of patrons to engage meaningfully with knowledgeable staff rather than just interact with them when they have a query.

### **Adult and Children’s Activities**

MPLAG states that the number of activities within the library has been reduced to zero. This together with the poor state of the facility, the limited opening hours and the lack of promotion makes it unsurprising that attendances are low.

The Group believes that Albert Park story times are oversubscribed, that they should be reintroduced at Middle Park and the community hall could be used for this purpose.

They also raised the possibility of Middle Park library specialising in children’s books. They mentioned Books Illustrated, a private company established in 1988 in Middle Park, which promotes Australian children’s literature, in particular picture books, and sells the work of children’s book illustrators.

The suitability of the facility for the library was discussed as the library was originally located in Armstrong Street. The group had not previously considered the possibility of an alternative location and were concerned that any move may result in a reduced service.

### **Implications and Opportunities:**

*While the idea of a specialist children’s library sounds attractive, it is unlikely to be welcomed across the municipality. Parents in the consultation were clear that they appreciate the ‘localness’ of libraries and their ability to walk with their children to the libraries. Further, Middle Park, in its current location, would not be large enough to house a significant collection of children’s literature and run children’s programs.*

### **Communication and Promotion**

The MPLAG would like to see much stronger promotion of all Port Phillip libraries. Suggestions included weekly emails, monthly letter box drops, leaflets at schools and kindergartens and, importantly, better signage. They are also of the view that the home library service needs to be better promoted, given the number of older residents in the Middle Park area.

### **7.6. Rate Payers of Port Phillip**

A meeting was held with two representatives from Ratepayers of Port Phillip (RoPP). They advised that RoPP has 700 members. Both representatives advised they are long-term residents in the municipality and have used Emerald Hill, Albert Park and St Kilda libraries.

RoPP is strongly supportive of libraries and see them as a core service of local government. They think libraries could be improved – for example, there could be more academic publications to cater for the high educational levels within the municipality:

*“If the library can pay for Vogue and gardening magazines, why not for scientific and academic publications?”*

Both representatives were familiar with the issues surrounding the Middle Park library. They are of the view that the low patronage at Middle Park is, in part, due to the hours it was open and the poor interior of the building. They are opposed to the idea of an entrepreneurial hub as this is not a core service of Council. They believe the idea was put forward without sufficient market research.

While the consultation was about libraries, the RoPP representatives took the opportunity to express a range of concerns about expenditure by Council. One concern was the Have Your Say portal which they find most unsatisfactory as it is not limited to residents and only those ‘in the know’ get to put their views forward. They also see Divercity as Council ‘spin’ and a waste of public money – it could be emailed rather than printed and delivered.

Overall, RoPP are supportive of libraries and take the view that local governments should avoid ‘scope creep’ and only provide core services.

### **7.7. Community Alliance of Port Phillip**

A meeting was held with eight representatives of the Community Alliance of Port Phillip (CAPP). This community group is highly supportive of libraries. They consider reading to be an essential component of a democratic society and believe libraries play a critical role in inspiring a love of reading. Libraries are particularly important in encouraging young people to read and can be a safe place for young people to explore their identity. They can also be a source of trusted information in an age dominated by social media and ‘fake news’.

However, CAPP has a range of concerns about the quality of the facilities and the service as set out below.

### ***The Facilities***

CAPP members state that the ambience within the libraries is poor. The desks are lined up like a school room, it can be difficult to find somewhere to sit, the lighting is often sub-optimal, and, on occasion, they are smelly. CAPP members feel that Port Phillip libraries have the capacity to be first class, but they are run down and no longer inviting.

### ***Strategic Purpose***

CAPP members believe that the library service lacks strategic purpose. They think that the students who use the library only as a study space, while entitled to be there, are an impediment to life in the library. They mostly wear headphones and do not interact with others. Similarly, homeless people are there for shelter but are provided with no services. They believe that the important purposes of libraries are being side-lined by welfare needs that should be met by other services or by larger libraries that can cater for all needs.

### ***Resources and Services***

CAPP members feel Port Phillip libraries compare poorly with those in other municipalities. The book stock does not reflect the largely middle-class population, they are not open in the evenings and there are no options for tea and coffee. They could promote Australian literature, music, culture, writing and indigenous history.

### ***Middle Park Library***

CAPP members are of the view that small libraries can work well if they are part of something bigger. Like MPLAG, their view is that the services within the Middle Park Community Centre are not integrated but operate as silos, that the rotation of staff inhibits community cohesion and that it needs to be upgraded to be successful.

In summary, CAPP would like to see additional expenditure to achieve much improved library facilities and services.

## **7.8. St Kilda Historical Society**

Six members of the St Kilda Historical Society committee were present for the consultation. The society has a mailing list of 600+ and paid-up membership of 189 people. The group previously met in the meeting room at St Kilda library, but this has been taken over for Council's ICT project and is no longer available. They advised that they now meet at the EcoCentre in 'a container' and are critical of the fact that no community facilities are open at night. They think Port Phillip has a 'huge problem with low-level community infrastructure'. They consider the historical resources they have are important for Port Phillip but require better storage and access than that provided in the small space they currently use.

The Society would love to partner with the library service and with the Heritage Centre at Emerald Hill to provide programs and research materials but have been unable to create these opportunities and feel the library is not interested in their work. Port Melbourne also has a historical society and they believe that the Heritage Centre and both societies could be working as one.

Members also commented on the library layout and services provided. One member suggested that the front entrance should be through the small square garden at the front and the current entrance should be turned into community rooms that are available for use at night. The community needs 'meeting rooms galore'. The other alternative is to build a second storey.

Generally, the Society committee was critical of service quality, the physical space and the capacity of the library service to work with community organisations.

## 7.9. City of Port Phillip Management & Library Staff

A number of meetings and/or workshops were scheduled with Council staff to garner their ideas about the future for the library service. Consultations included:

- Workshop for the library leadership team
- Workshop for all staff (32 attendees)
- Meeting with the General Manager Community Services
- Consultations with specialist staff including those responsible for multicultural services, indigenous liaison, youth, and cultural and economic development<sup>3</sup>

These consultations showed that staff see the libraries as an important democratic service, free and open to all without discrimination or judgment. There was also, however, a view that Port Phillip's library service is not 'leading edge' and not well aligned with the needs and expectations of such a diverse community. A summary of the most frequently expressed views related to:

- The poor standard of the buildings
- Limitations of the service and programs
- The lack of digital inclusion programs
- The perceived lack of connection of staff to Council

These views are set out in detail below.

### ***Buildings:***

- Library locations serve the whole municipality well
- Libraries provide a safe haven from both the heat and the cold for those who can't afford heating and air-conditioning

*However,*

- The infrastructure is ageing
- The toilets are in poor condition
- The spaces do not accommodate the diversity of programs the library is, and should be, offering

### ***Services and Programs:***

- Customer service is good
- There is strong demand for programs, especially story time

*However,*

- There is no outreach to disengaged youth, schools, community groups
- Some sections of the community are not well serviced e.g. older men
- The collection is ageing

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<sup>3</sup> Staff advised that, for a variety of reasons, consultations directly with Indigenous residents, gamers and the Multi-cultural Advisory Group could not be arranged

- Libraries could play a much larger role in helping the community, especially those who are disadvantaged, to understand their rights and engage with the democratic process

### **Digital Inclusion:**

- Libraries can be centres for digital creativity

However,

- Port Phillip provides no digital education or technology support for the digitally disadvantaged
- Opportunities cited include podcasting, music making/recording, loan of tablets, filmmaking, 3D printing, gaming activities, online creativity, virtual reality, app development etc.

### **Staffing:**

- Staff are committed, passionate, enthusiastic, empathetic and skilled
- Management is flexible in rostering and supports life goals e.g. further study

However,

- There is a sense of disconnection from Council generally, limiting staff opportunities for development
- Staff feel 'de-prioritised' by Council's senior management
- Communication within the library service needs to strengthen

The views of staff have been incorporated in the thematic summary in Section 5.

### **Implications and Opportunities:**

*Given the sense of disconnection felt by staff, the library service may benefit from the development of a staff engagement program to better connect with senior management and staff at the Town Hall*

## **7.10. Art and Soul Strategy Advisory Panel**

Towards the end of the consultation program, a meeting with the Art & Soul Strategy Advisory Panel was arranged. This component of the consultation was conducted differently to the meetings with community organisations. A presentation of interim findings was made to the group and their feedback was sought. A copy of the summary of interim findings was subsequently discussed by management with Councillors. The Advisory Panel was strongly supportive of the role of libraries in building and supporting a creative eco-system and indicated its desire to be further involved as the Action Plan was developed.

## **8 ST KILDA LIBRARY HERITAGE VALUES - 'HAVE YOUR SAY' COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

During the conduct of this project, Council also undertook a 'Have Your Say' community consultation activity in July 2019 seeking the community's views relating to the heritage values of the St Kilda library. In total, 79 comments were received regarding the building's historical significance, its architectural value and social value i.e. what the library means to the community.

Almost all the comments were very positive, with contributors viewing the library as a vital and welcoming community hub and a resource for every stage of life. The key themes identified in the comments related to the following:

### ***The Library Building, Interior and Outdoor Areas***

- The ‘brutalist’ architecture of the library is greatly admired by many, with some describing the library as “a treasure both architecturally and socially” and “a great example of organic architecture”
- A number of contributors commented that the interior of the library needs updating as it is looking and feeling tired and shabby. Some suggested also adding greenery inside the library
- There were a number of comments relating to the need for more quiet areas
- The outdoor areas (particularly at the rear of the library) need updating and were described as “messy, dirty and scary”. Suggestions for the outdoor area included better utilisation as a place that is productive and brimming with life e.g. a community garden

### ***Library Staff***

- There were many positive comments relating to the excellence of the library staff with contributors describing the staff as professional, knowledgeable, patient, kind, welcoming, inclusive and respectful. This was especially notable in light of the diverse clientele of the library. Comments included “the staff are knowledgeable, social justice minded and professional” and “the staff are patient beyond measure with everyone”

### ***Library Collection and Services***

- Many commented on the excellence of the collection (including the e-library collection) and the library service overall
- The free Wi-Fi is greatly appreciated by many
- The generous opening hours are valued by a number of participants

### ***Programs for Adults***

- Many commented on their enjoyment of the diverse range of events and talks hosted by the library with comments including “I think the Library talks are stimulating and well organised” and “I’ve been to a lot of wonderful concerts, activities and talks there”

### ***Programs and Spaces for Children***

- Events for children and story time are highly valued by many with one contributor commenting “we always found library events to be so inclusive and I believe that the children became more empathetic and accepting of diversity through their interactions with library staff”
- The children’s play area is a much-loved resource by both parents and children

## **9 SURVEY RESULTS**

A community survey was conducted online and on paper in October 2019. The purpose of the survey was to elicit community views about the library now and in future.

The survey was promoted on the library website and on the Council website, although not through ‘Have Your Say’. Hard copies were available in all the libraries for those who wished to participate in that manner. In total, 586 people participated. While the survey was intended for both library users and non-users, nearly all responses came from library users – 96% of respondents had visited a CoPP library and 94% were library members.

This section sets out the main findings from the survey. A full set of results is held by Council.

### 9.1. Preferred Library of Respondents

The chart below shows the library most frequently visited by survey respondents.

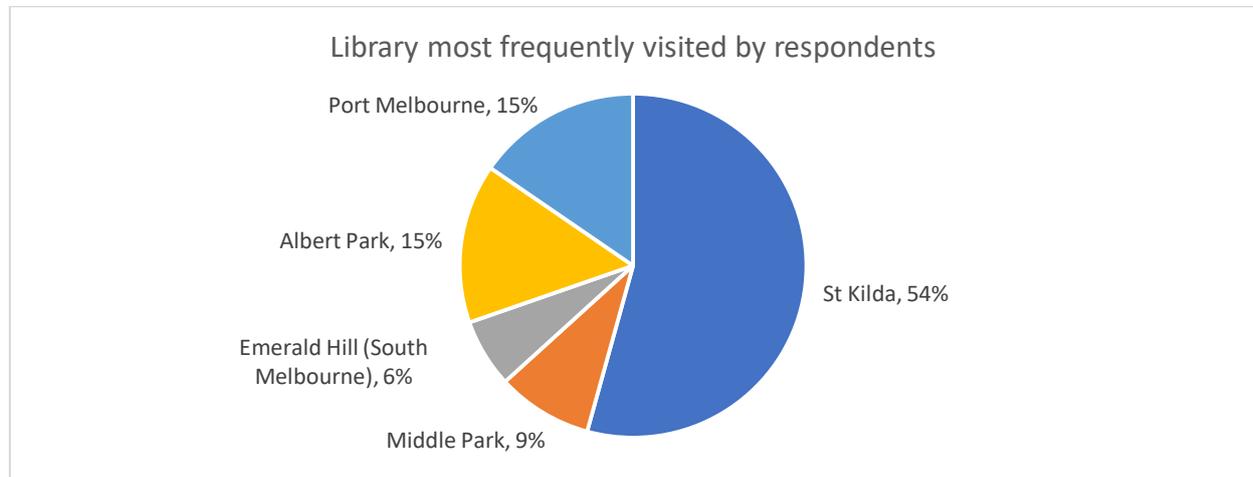


Figure 1: Showing preferred library of survey respondents

As can be seen, most respondents frequent the St Kilda library, with both Port Melbourne and Albert Park each frequented by 15% of respondents. There were a smaller number of respondents who are users of the Middle Park and Emerald Hill libraries. The majority of the surveys completed on paper came from users of the Middle Park library.

### 9.2. Frequency of Use

Respondents were asked how frequently they visited a CoPP library. The results are shown in the chart below.

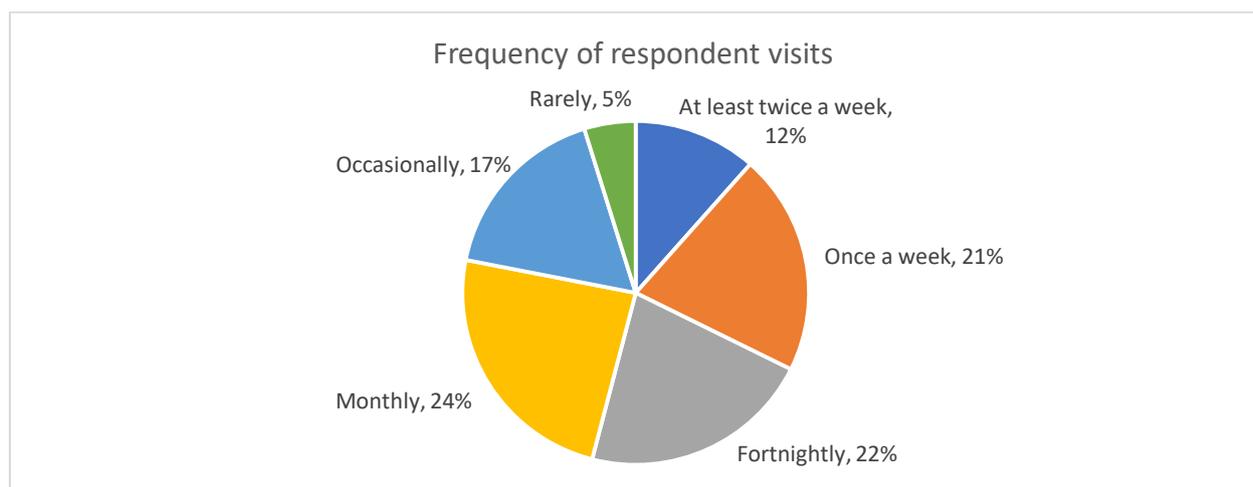


Figure 2: Showing frequency of respondent visits

The chart shows that 32% of respondents visit a library at least weekly, another 22% visit fortnightly and 24% visit monthly. In total, 78% of respondents are regular library users.

### 9.3. Purpose of Visits

Respondents were asked their main reason for visiting the library. The top five reasons given are shown in the table below.

Main reasons given for visiting a library	Proportion of respondents*
1. Borrowing books or other resources for self/other adults	82%
2. Borrowing books or other resources for children	35%
3. A place to study or work	29%
4. A place to read papers, magazines or books	28%
5. A place to feel calm and safe	25%

Table 4: Showing the top 5 reasons given for visiting a library (\*multiple responses possible)

The table shows that borrowing remains the major reason for people to visit a Port Phillip Library – 82% of respondents want to borrow books or other resources (CDs, DVDs, games, magazines etc.). A third of respondents want to borrow for resources for children. More than a quarter want to read in the library. Clearly, the traditional purpose of libraries is alive and well in Port Phillip. Nearly one third of respondents use the libraries as a place to study or work, although two-thirds of these respondents were from St Kilda. Interestingly, one quarter of respondents indicate they feel the libraries are a place to feel calm and safe – a result highlighting the important role libraries play in supporting health and wellbeing as well as community cohesion.

### 9.4. Satisfaction with Library Buildings

The survey asked respondents about their level of satisfaction with the physical aspects of the five libraries. The key results are shown in the two graphs below. ‘Very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ responses have been combined to provide an overall measure of satisfaction.

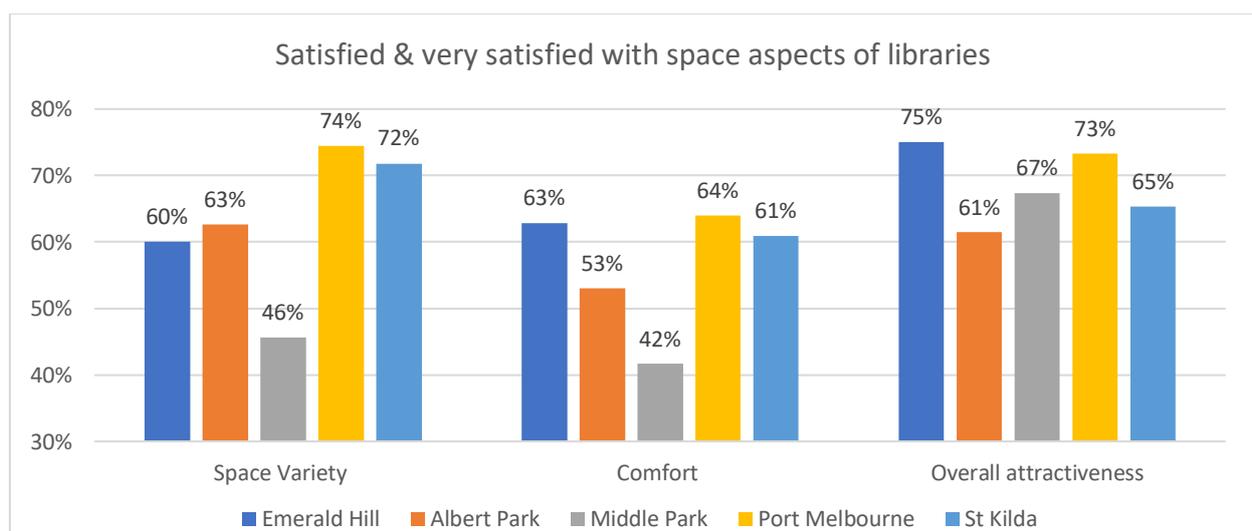


Figure 3: Showing levels of satisfaction with physical aspects of the five libraries

The chart shows satisfaction with the variety of spaces, the level of comfort and the overall attractiveness of the libraries. As can be seen in the first set of column graphs, Port Melbourne and St

Kilda patrons are more satisfied with the variety of spaces than those at the other three libraries. Less than half Middle Park patrons are satisfied with the spaces at their library.

The second set of column graphs shows satisfaction levels with library comfort. These are lower than satisfaction with the variety of spaces – approximately two-thirds of patrons are satisfied with comfort levels at Emerald Hill, Port Melbourne and St Kilda but only half the respondents at Albert Park and only 42% at Middle Park find the libraries comfortable. This finding accords with the ‘listening posts’ conducted in the libraries where patrons frequently commented on the need for more comfortable furniture, better lighting etc.

Satisfaction levels with the overall attractiveness of the libraries (the third set of column graphs) ranged between 61% at Albert Park and 75% at Emerald Hill.

The next chart shows levels of satisfaction with library cleanliness and maintenance and with the toilets at each library.

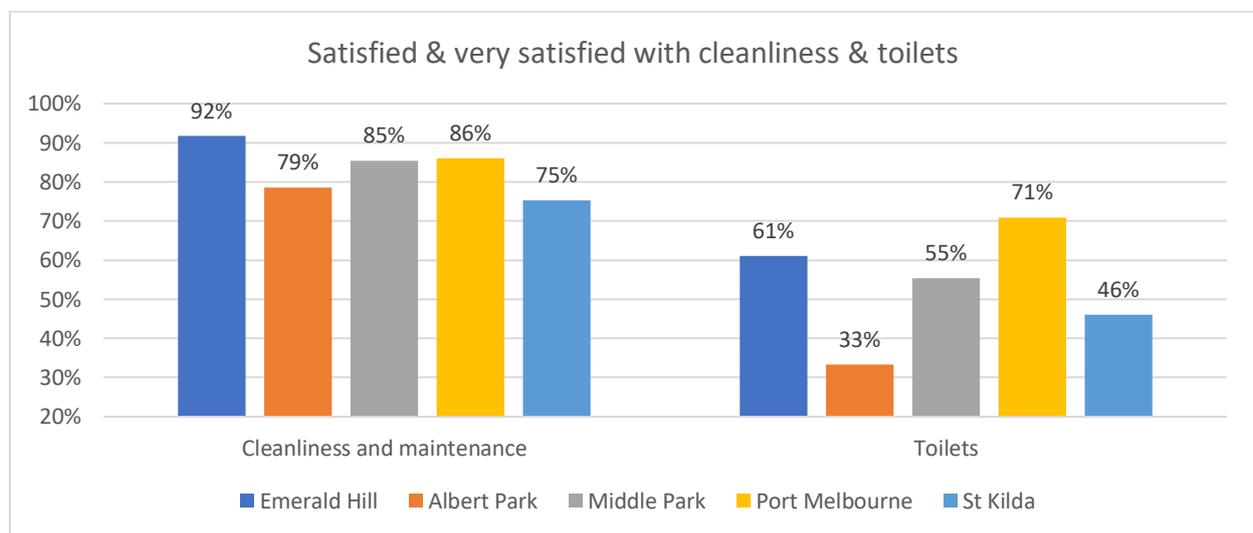


Figure 4: Showing satisfaction levels with library cleanliness and with the toilets at each library

This chart shows that most patrons are satisfied with cleanliness and maintenance at the five libraries, with satisfaction levels highest at Emerald Hill and lowest at St Kilda. However, satisfaction levels with the toilets are much lower. While more than half of respondents are satisfied at Port Melbourne, Emerald Hill and Middle Park, only 46% at St Kilda and 33% at Albert Park are satisfied with the toilets. This results also accords with the findings from the ‘listening posts’ at which many patrons at both Albert Park and St Kilda were concerned about the cleanliness and hygiene of the toilets and baby change areas and concerned about the odour from the toilets.

### 9.5. Satisfaction with Library Staff

The survey asked about levels of satisfaction with library staff. Results are shown in the chart below.

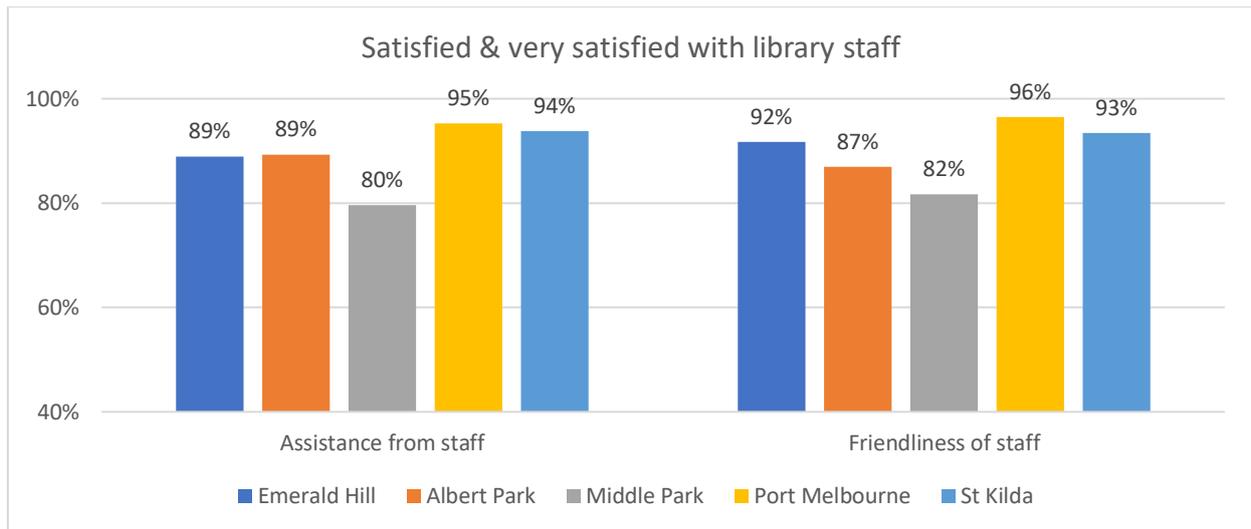


Figure 5: Showing levels of satisfaction with library staff

The chart shows that patrons are highly satisfied with library staff. Satisfaction with assistance from staff ranges from 80% at Middle Park to 95% at Port Melbourne. Satisfaction with the friendliness of staff ranges from 82% at Middle Park to 96% at Port Melbourne. Interestingly, the levels are lower at Middle Park and this may reflect more frequent rostering changes in the past. Participants in the 'listening posts' frequently highlighted a preference to see the same staff at their library on a regular basis.

Overall, however, the levels of satisfaction with library staff are very high.

### 9.6. Satisfaction with the Library Collection and the Opening Hours

The survey asked about levels of satisfaction with the physical collection (books, magazines, CDs etc) and about satisfaction with library opening hours. The results for each of the five libraries are shown in the chart below.

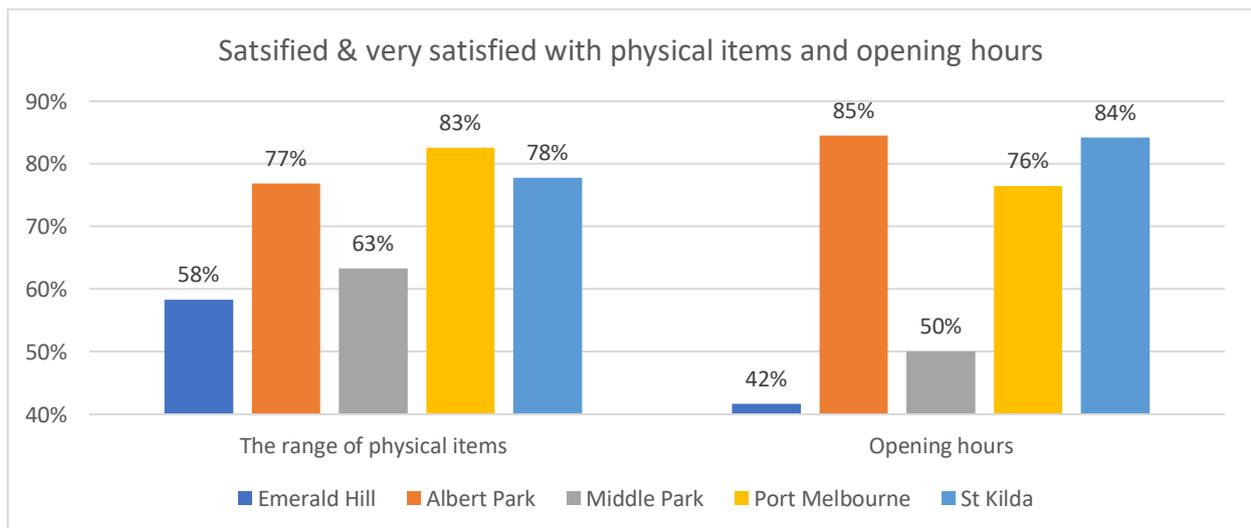


Figure 6: Showing levels of satisfaction with the library collection and opening hours at each of the five libraries

The chart shows that satisfaction with the physical collection varies significantly across the five libraries. Port Melbourne patrons are the most satisfied (83%). Both Middle Park and Emerald Hill have much lower levels of satisfaction (63% and 58% respectively). In the 'listening posts', patrons at both Emerald

Hill and Middle Park raised concerns about the number and range of books, some expressing the view that the book collection had declined over recent years.

The chart also shows that there is wide variation in levels of satisfaction with library opening hours. At Albert Park and St Kilda, more than 80% of respondents are satisfied with the opening hours. This is not surprising as these two libraries have the longest opening hours (56 hours and 70 hours respectively). Only 50% of Middle Park respondents and 42% of Emerald Hill respondents are satisfied with their library opening hours. The Emerald Hill Library is open for 42 hours and Middle Park for only 24 hours.

### 9.7. Services in Future

Respondents were asked which services they would like to see provided by the libraries in future. The results are shown in the chart below.

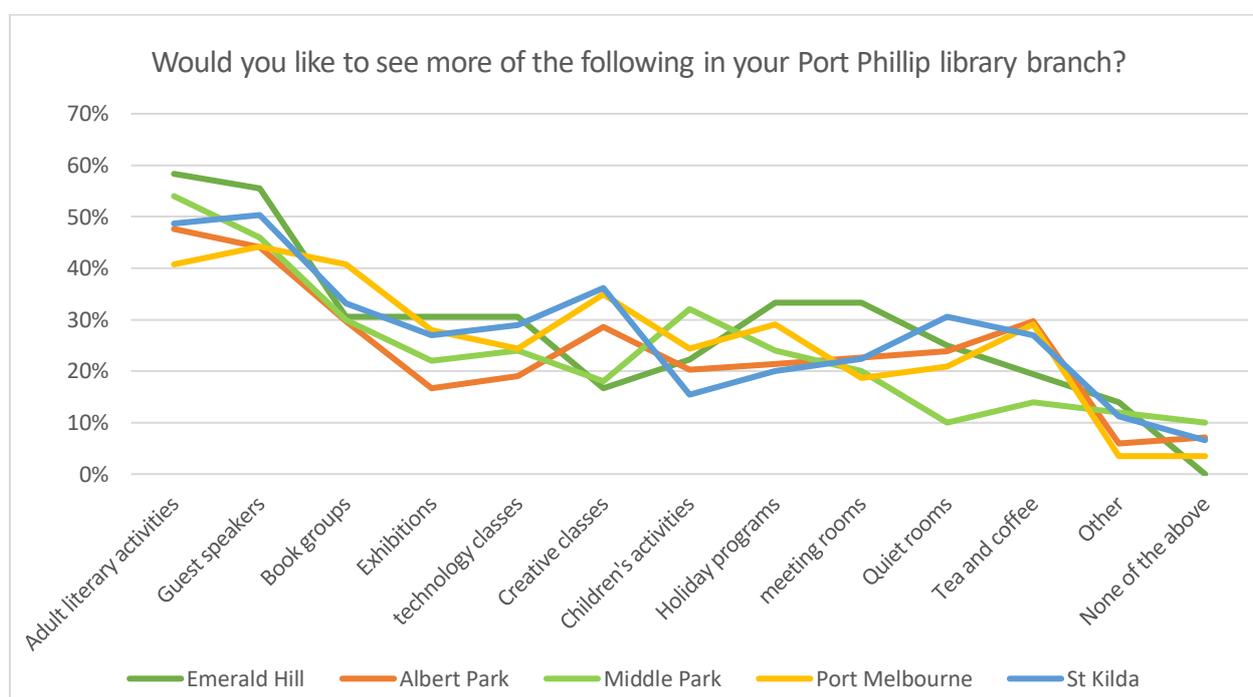


Figure 7: Showing patron interest in activities in the libraries

Interestingly, the chart shows a similar trend in responses across the five libraries. The most frequently requested activities at all libraries are adult literary events including book talks, speakers on other topics and book groups. Additional children’s activities are requested by more than 30% of respondents at both Middle Park (with no children’s activities currently) and Emerald Hill (with 2 sessions/week for children currently). At St Kilda (with 4 sessions/week currently), only 15% of respondents would like additional children’s activities. Approximately 30% of respondents at Emerald Hill and St Kilda would like to access computer/technology classes. At St Kilda, 36% would like to see creative classes available and 30% of respondents would like to see quiet areas introduced. Tea and coffee facilities are favoured by approximately 30% at St Kilda, Albert Park and Port Melbourne but demand is lower at Middle Park and Emerald Hill.

The results, while generally similar across the five libraries, do suggest some differences in needs and interests across the different communities using the different libraries. The differences highlight the importance of ensuring programs at the libraries are not ‘one size fits all’ but are tailored to the different communities in different parts of the municipality.

## 9.8. Online Services and Library Website Satisfaction

The survey asked a number of questions about online services and about technology in the libraries.

### Online services

Only 48% of respondents indicated that they use the online services. Across the five libraries, St Kilda patrons were more likely to use online services followed by Albert Park patrons. Of those who did not use online services, very few explained why they did not. Among those that did, the primary reason for not using online services was a lack of knowledge, lack of the skills and limits on borrowing time.

#### **Implications and opportunities:**

*The limited utilisation of online services suggests there may be benefit in offering classes at all libraries on how to use the full suite of the libraries' e-services*

### Seeking information about the libraries

Respondents were asked where they were most likely to look for information about the library service. Most (86%) said they were likely to use the library website – an unsurprising result given almost all respondents are regular library users. Some use the Council website and a small number said they use e-News, Facebook or Instagram.

### Satisfaction with the library website

Respondents were then asked how satisfied they were with the library website. Despite 86% saying they used the library website, only 50% responded to this question. Of those who responded, 21% were very satisfied, 42% were satisfied while 23% were neutral. The fact that only 50% answered this question suggests that, even among frequent library visitors, the website is not fully utilised.

### Technology in the libraries

The survey asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with technology in the libraries. As St Kilda patrons were the largest cohort of respondents, the graph below shows their levels of satisfaction with different technology services.

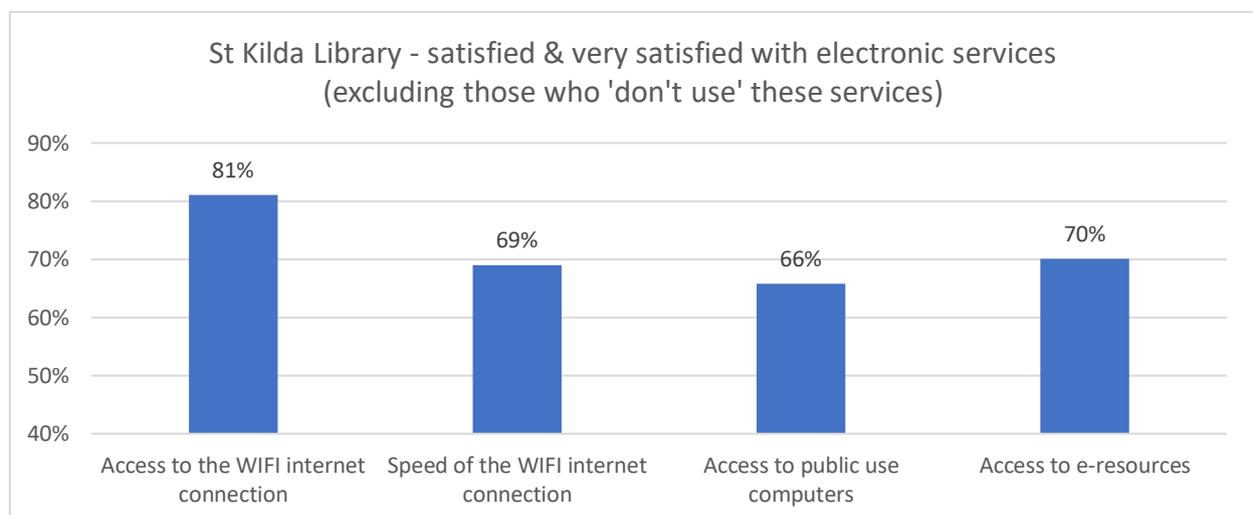


Figure 8: Showing levels of satisfaction with technology in the St Kilda library

The chart shows that 81% of patrons are satisfied with access to Wi-Fi but only 69% are satisfied with the speed of the service. This result mirrors feedback in the 'listening posts' where many patrons raised concerns about the speed of the internet in the libraries.

Two-thirds of users were satisfied with access to computers at the library but one third were not. Again, this mirrors comments from the listening posts where some patrons felt that the time limitations on use of the computers were problematic, particularly where the purpose of use was study for an assignment or preparing a job application.

### 9.9. Home Library Services

Ten percent of respondents use the home library service. The majority of these are from Albert Park and St Kilda. As the survey was promoted primarily within the libraries and on the library website, it is likely that most home library users were unaware they had an opportunity to respond.

#### **Implications and opportunities:**

*As the home library caters for particularly vulnerable residents, consideration could be given to a targeted consultation, preferably by phone, to assess the extent to which the service meets the needs of people who are housebound*

### 9.10. Support for the Concept of a Community Hub or Entrepreneurial Centre

Respondents were asked if they supported co-locating libraries with other services to create community hubs. Responses are shown in the chart below.

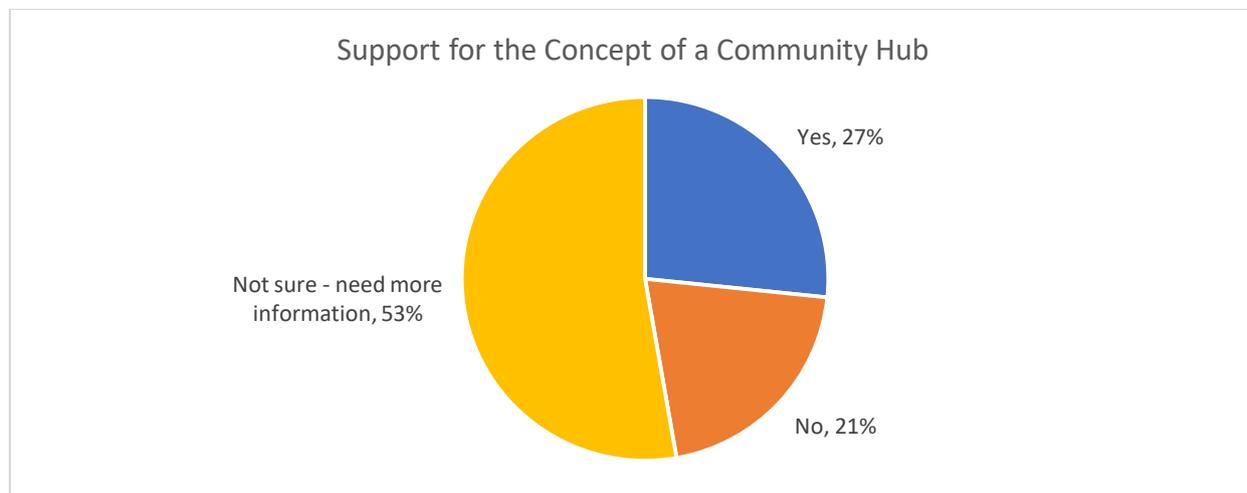


Figure 9: Showing respondent views about co-locating libraries with other services (n=586)

The majority of respondents indicated they wanted more information about community hubs before forming a view. A quarter of respondents supported the concept and 20% were opposed. This could be considered a surprising result. Community hubs are now common in many municipalities and are generally well supported by the communities that have them. It is possible that, in answering this question, respondents felt they may lose library space rather than gain new facilities or services.

Respondents were then asked if they supported providing space for small entrepreneurs or ‘start-ups’ in the libraries. Responses are shown in the chart below.

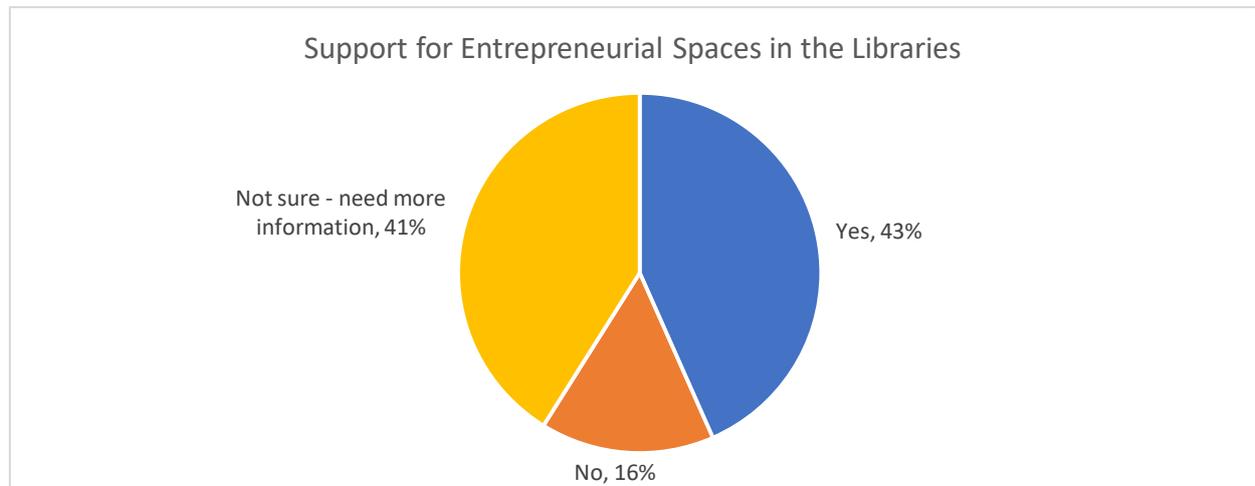


Figure 10: Showing respondent views about entrepreneurial spaces in libraries

There was more support for entrepreneurial spaces than there was for community hubs. The chart shows that 43% of respondents were supportive of spaces for start-ups but 41% were unsure and wanted more information.

**Implications and opportunities:**

*If Council pursues the development of community hubs or spaces for entrepreneurial hubs, it will be important to provide more information to the community, promote the benefits of these concepts and further consult the community prior to any implementation*

**9.11. Demographics Characteristics of Respondents**

Respondents were asked a number of questions about themselves to provide a picture of the demographic groups responding to the survey. The charts below show the age cohorts of respondents.

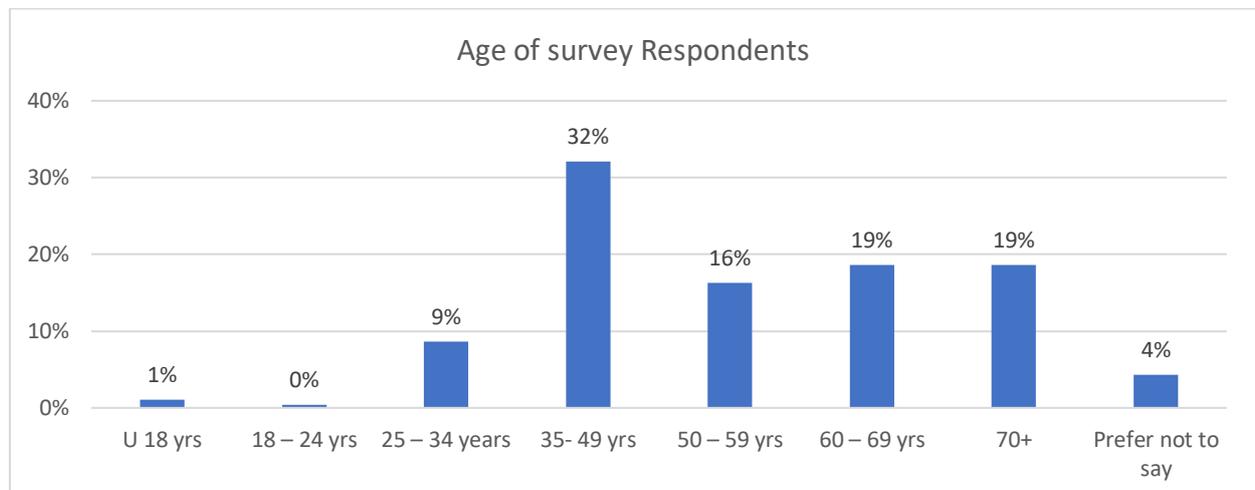


Figure 11: Age of survey respondents

The chart shows that three quarters of survey respondents were adults of working age, 25 - 69 years. Surprisingly, very few young people (secondary school students and tertiary students) answered the survey even though this age group is a significant user of the libraries. Of course, many students use their own computers in the library and may not have been aware that the survey was being conducted. Nearly a quarter of respondents were 70+ years.

The chart below shows the household type of respondents.

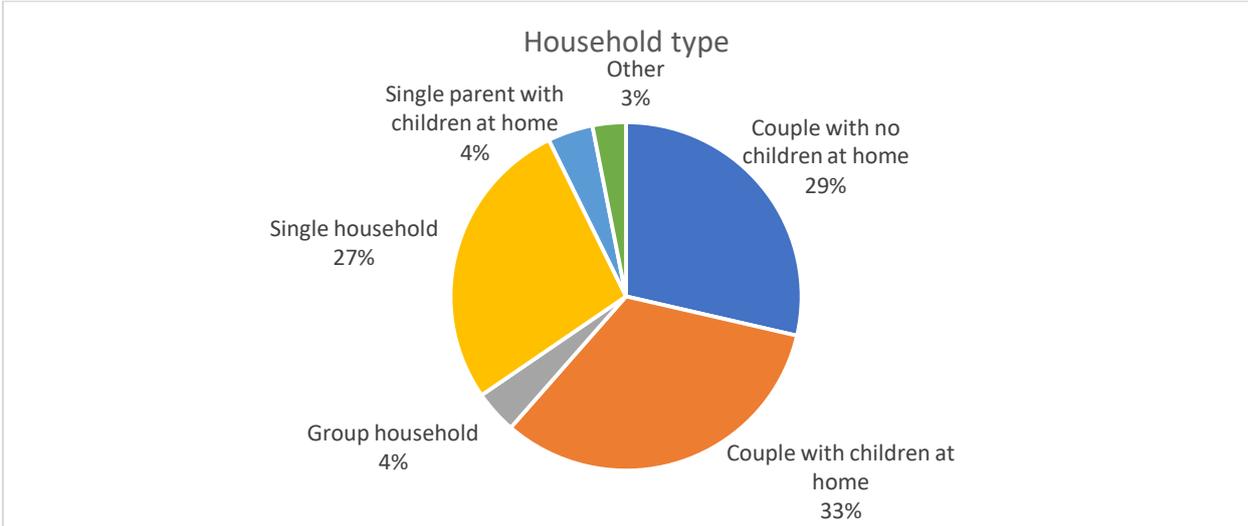


Figure 12: Showing household type of survey respondents

The chart shows that nearly two thirds of respondents were family households with approximately half having children at home and half not having children at home. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents live alone.

## 10 SUMMARY AND ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN THE ACTION PLAN

Libraries in Port Phillip are definitely alive and well. This consultation, of library users and community organisations, has shown that libraries in Port Phillip remain a vital community service across all ages and across all socio-economic and cultural groups. They are used by families with pre-school children for story time, by primary school children for borrowing and Lego programs, by secondary and tertiary students for study, by older people for leisure and, also by adults of working age.

The consultation provided a wide range of opportunities to participate – in the libraries, through the community survey or through the consultations with community groups that are stakeholders in the future of the libraries. There were almost as many viewpoints as there were people in the consultation. Some were very positive about the libraries while some were critical of certain aspects.

Some of the strongly positive findings were:

- Libraries are highly valued in Port Phillip and considered an essential local government service
- Staff are highly respected and considered friendly, professional and helpful
- People want to, and do, walk to the libraries
- Services for children are important – for parents as well as children
- People from all backgrounds use the libraries

The community engaged in the consultation also had many requests and improvement suggestions. These have been fully summarised in Section 5 of this report and, rather than repeat those, a short summary of the findings is set out below.

### ***Fabulous Spaces: Library buildings that are a joy to visit***

Across all five libraries, participants in all consultation activities believe the libraries need significant upgrade. There is a view that Port Phillip is primarily a well-educated community that ought to have first class libraries. People expect libraries to be light and bright with plenty of room for all users and with spaces for the full range of activities – for children, for those studying quietly and for those sitting and reading. That also means comfortable furniture and access to refreshments. The implication is that, to meet community expectations, Council would need to develop a plan for library infrastructure and allocate a capital budget over future years.

### ***Responsive programming: Programs designed by and for the community***

It is clear that the community is ‘hungry’ for programs in the libraries – programs for children, creative programmes, literary activities, educational programs. Responding to, and balancing, aspirations for programs in the libraries is challenging as expectations from different groups can be in competition. The two most frequently identified requests for programmes came from parents wanting more activities for children and from older people and people from different cultural backgrounds wanting technology classes.

Provision of additional programs may not require additional resources although it may require additional skills. A review of staffing could be undertaken to identify relevant skills and capabilities and to reorganise staffing to align with community aspirations for responsive programming.

### ***A contemporary collection: Catering for all tastes in Port Phillip’s diverse community***

There were some in the consultation who commented that the library collection is excellent while others felt it did not cater for their interests. This is another challenge for the service – providing a collection that is broad enough to satisfy expectations in a diverse community. The issue was raised sufficiently often, however, to suggest that a review of collection policy may be warranted. There were particular segments in the community that were seeking different resources – young readers, some from different cultural backgrounds and some highly educated residents. More frequent rotation of stock across the five libraries would also be welcome by library users.

### ***Engagement and connection: Libraries enabling connected communities***

Participants certainly see the libraries as welcoming and open to all, but many have a vision of a library service that is fully integrated with other community services, that welcomes community input to service planning and that proactively reaches out to all segments of the community. Librarians are not necessarily trained in community engagement and outreach and, hence, new skills may be required. An outreach program could be designed that involved regular meetings with community organisations, co-development of activities for special needs or under-represented groups and development of plans to make the library buildings more accessible for community use when the service is closed.

### ***Future oriented technology: becoming a leader in future-focused community technology***

While Port Phillip is a middle-class community and most households have access to their own technology, there were many in the consultation that wanted access to common-use computers, better Wi-Fi and

advanced technology for film, audio, and creative activity – which many cannot personally afford. Many libraries are exploring provision of these technologies and, in Port Phillip, they are likely to resonate with people in the arts, music and with the technology industry.

There is also strong interest in access to technology classes. Older people want classes in basic computer use while others want classes in the use of smart phones, social media, accessing pod casts etc. There is also a need for classes in using the libraries e-services as some do not access these as they do not know how.

It is understood that there is a strong tech industry in Port Phillip, likely to be strengthened as Fisherman’s Bend develops. Opportunities may exist to create partnerships with businesses and schools to establish creative tech networks that support Port Phillip as a centre of excellence in technology development

## **NEXT STEPS**

This report was prepared to provide community input to the development of the Library Action Plan. It is, therefore, not appropriate to provide specific recommendations as the Action Plan must also take account of its assessment of library service capacity, of service benchmarking and of new thinking about the role of libraries. Nevertheless, it will be important that the Action Plan takes account of the findings from this consultation as that will facilitate support for the Action Plan within the community.

## APPENDIX 1 – FRIENDS OF EMERALD HILL SUBMISSION

Friends of Emerald Hill Library Meeting - August 24, 2019.

### Basic points:

The Emerald Hill Library (EHL) has been long established, and serves a diverse community including some of the city's most disadvantaged. A Public Library was established at Mechanic Institute in Emerald Hill 1857. The City of South Melbourne had operated a public library since 1904.

The Emerald Hill Library serves a major shopping centre, in the city and not just the local neighbourhood, but the northern half of Junction Ward ("St Kilda Rd Neighbourhood"). The combined area of its catchment has had a very significant increase in population in the past 20 years (>50%). Major residential development is now underway in South Melbourne Central, and along Clarendon St and Albert Rd and Kingsway.

Beside the increase in population, there has been a very significant demographic change, where families with children are a growing part of the population in proportional and absolute numbers.

There is a high density of childcare centres and kindergartens located nearby, at least nine (9), within 400 m of EHL in South Melbourne, (2 in Park St, 2 in Albert Rd and one each in Coventry, Clarendon, Dorcas, Ferrars, and Heather St).

The number of young children in Emerald Hill Catchment area has increased considerably. One state primary school has been built and another is under construction, just on the edge of South Melbourne, one 600 m and the other 800 m from the library.

There is currently a children's' story time and a baby rhyme time event (one of each per week) offered at EHL, and both are well attended. There is a volunteer run coaching / tutoring service run in the library Thursday evenings, the "Homies Club". Two Port Phillip Library Service (PPLS) book clubs and a volunteer run book club, open to the public. As well there is the a Friends of Emerald Hill Library group who have organised more than 20 author's talks ranging from Graeme Simian (the Rosie project), Arnold Zable, Paul Cox, Leslie Cannold to A.S. Patric (Miles Franklin Award winner).

### Short term and mid-term goals:

1. Continued work by the FoEHL to promote EHL by author events and other activities (website, flyer, children's event).
2. Improvement in the **free** parking available for library and UHC visitors
3. Clearer naming and provision of signage to enable visitors to find the library (eg South Melbourne Library, at Emerald Hill; lettering on the portico glass).
4. PPLS working co-operatively with FoEHL to promote EHL.
5. PPLS clearly counting number of the days closed, excluding holidays, and reporting it.
6. Implementing book stock rotation between branches.
7. Increased children's services at Emerald Hill Library, in particular story time sessions and stock.
8. Increasing the stock at Emerald Hill Library to (as a minimum) the level held in 2000. Importantly increasing book stock, as CDs and DVDs have increased massively, and books diminished.
9. The budget of the Port Phillip Library Service for stock being increased at a rate equal to or greater than inflation.

10. Increased access and use of the planned Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre by increasing the opening times for Emerald Hill Library from 40 hours a week to 48 hours per week. **(Note we would like to discuss how we might provide evidence based need to demonstrate this.)**

Sometimes even simple issues take extensive time, to resolve if ever. An example is the failure to place signage in front of the branch when the EHL was moved in 1995 from South Melbourne Town Hall (for ANAM) until August 2010. Even then it took 9 months from the time the mayor, Cr O'Connor, committed the council to it, until one was installed. That sign was removed during the major refurbishment and today no signage indicates it is a library that are larger than 25 mm high. A suggestion is that lettering on the portico glass, at waist height be added - it is low cost, no impact on the heritage fabric of the building.

The level of new acquisitions provided to EH was very low for a number of years post amalgamation, combined with set of a policies and actions (eg to reduce the age of stock held) have resulted in EHL stock holdings shrinking by a third (33%) since 2000, compared to the service in total which is 12% smaller ( see table attached). This has now rebounded, but much of the stock is no longer books but CDs and DVDs, we firmly believe, that like Albert Park borrowings increase when stock to browse increases. In addition, although small steps such as rotating stock between branches have not been followed up.

This would allow all branches to freshen up their stock with minimal expenditure but would be particularly good for the smaller branches.

The name of the branch is something of an issue – try it on your mobile for a library in South Melbourne. Most residents are not aware that the historic name is Emerald Hill, which though a charming name, confuses those trying to locate the place.

Emerald Hill Library is the only branch where most of the parking is metered. Now it is six days a week, every day the library is open. Removing the paid parking from in front of the building, and a notice that it is for library and heritage centre users, would help for visitor numbers. Removal of the 10-minute grace period, means even returning books risks a fine.

The library serves to activate Emerald Hill, encourage visitors, and encourage residents to use their local shopping area. EHL are now open for 40 hours per week, and attracts 55,000 to 60,000 visitors pa, by way of comparison the CEO of ANAM stated ANAM has attracted 20,000 visitors pa.

Despite the lack of signage and publicity and the shrinking stock levels, a fire, being moved twice recently, and static opening hours (until recently), visitor numbers have been maintained or increased in some years to nearly 9% of the entire library service. With relatively modest improvements, a much-improved library would result – one that would benefit South Melbourne and enhance the library service.

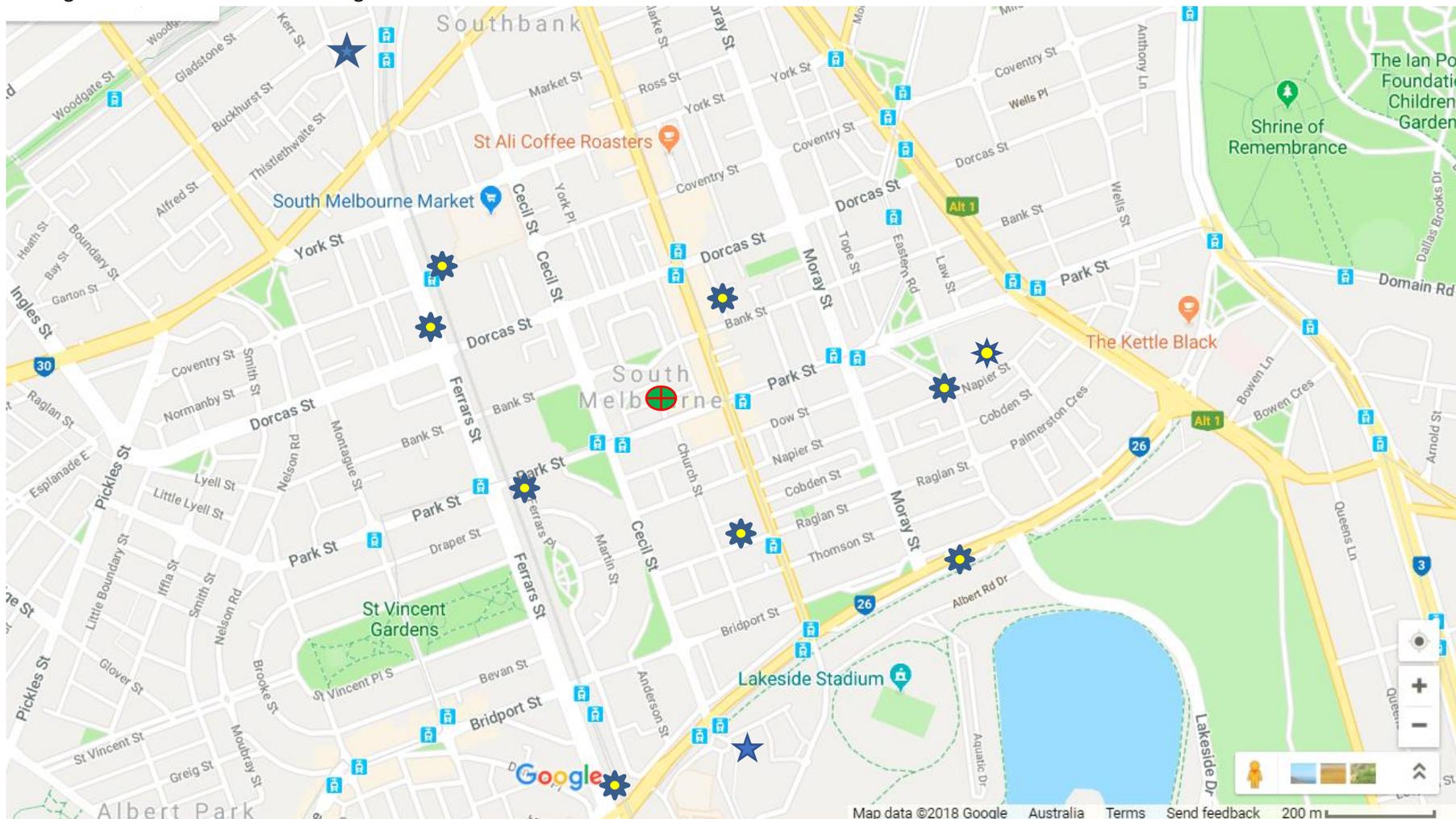
**Attachment to submission: Map showing South Melbourne Library – Primary schools & kindergartens**  
See next page

### South Melbourne Library – Primary schools and kindergartens

New state primary schools = ★

Emerald Hill Library = 🟤

Existing Childcare centers and kindergartens = 🌸



## APPENDIX 2 – SUBMISSION FROM MIDDLE PARK LIBRARY ACTION GROUP

Below is an extract from an email received from MPLAG. It sets out the 12 key learnings that the Group assessed as key to the success of the 44 small libraries visited. MPLAG advised that these form the basis of what the Group wants to see take place at Middle Park Library.

### ***1. Books. Books. Books.***

Restore Middle Park Library as a fully operating library with the lending of books for children and adults as its core purpose.

### ***2. Open at least eight hours a day.***

The hours at Yarraville Library (6.5) Maribyrnong) had been cut to four hours a day. New library management extended the hours to eight per day plus four hours on Saturday. This amongst other initiatives contributed to a turnaround in patronage.

### ***3. Renew stock regularly.***

At Greythorn Library Lounge 2.4 (Boroondara) the collection is smaller than that at Middle Park Library. But the books etc are changed every six weeks to keep the collection fresh for regular visitors.

### ***4. Enable staff to build relationships with patrons.***

In Susan Orlean's *The Library Book* she describes how the first reaction of the staff when they heard that the library had burnt down was "what will happen to our regular patrons?" In order for this to happen there must be a key member of staff on duty for at least three days a week. This is the case at Fairfield (Darebin) where the lead librarian is in the library three days a week for a year. Others are part time.

### ***5. Display the collection attractively and refresh it every day.***

At Newport Library (Hobsons Bay) the librarian emphasized the importance of constantly reassessing items on display and books etc stocked. He took a more retail attitude to display i.e. "more colourful covers in both children's and adult books attract readers". Shelves must look as if the library is full of books.

### ***6. Communicate with community centre staff and patrons.***

Follow the example of the Kathleen Syme Centre 7.2 (Melbourne) and work closely with other council officers using the community centre. The kindergarten, the maternal and child health centre, the toy library, the book clubs, the tai chi classes, and all the myriad of activities that take place in the community hall.

### ***7. Spreading the word at local schools once a week.***

At North Melbourne Library 7.5 (Melbourne) every Friday a member of staff visits local schools and kindergartens to encourage literacy and spread the word on the good things available free at the library. Arrange visits with Middle Park Primary School, and the kindergartens and playgroups in the neighbourhood.

### ***8. Driving literacy and library usage with weekly story time.***

The importance of encouraging parents to develop the habit of visiting the library with their children is essential. At the Kathleen Syme Centre (7.2) Melbourne, story time is held on the first floor which is accessible by lift and stairs. Of course, the library is open at the same time. Albert Park story times are oversubscribed there is no reason the community hall could not be used for story times.

### ***9. Define the role of the library.***

A small library cannot be all things to all people, but it can do one important thing well. For example, Newport Community Centre and Library 5.4 (Hobsons Bay) specializes in children's books. Middle Park Library could play a similar role in the CoPP group of libraries.

Of course, the role of an individual library may well change over time as the demographics of its catchment area evolves.

### ***10. Establish a community liaison group.***

Engage the local community by establishing monthly meetings with local Library support group to get feedback and spread the word on new developments e.g. Darebin (3.0).

### ***11. Encourage the staff to be visible and welcoming.***

At the other small libraries visited the staff were clearly identifiable as they wore name badges and in some cases uniforms. In New York the name of the manager of even the smallest of the NYPL's branches appears on each library's website.

### ***12. Become a test market for communication activities.***

80% of the community are not active library users. Middle Park could become a low cost, test market for communication activities. Will monthly letter drop box drops drive increased library usage? Will weekly emails to Middle Park Library members increase usage? Will a poster campaign around the area work better? Regular posters leaflets that are library user focused distributed to schools and kindergartens. If any of these activities are successful, they can be rolled out to other libraries in Port Phillip.