



# Shoalhaven Libraries

## Strategic Plan


### 2021



# 1 CONTENTS

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2	Introduction .....	3
3	Shoalhaven LGA - a snapshot .....	5
4	Shoalhaven Libraries at a glance .....	7
5	Shoalhaven Libraries 2021 .....	9
6	KEY FOCUS AREAS .....	10
6.1	Access .....	11
6.2	Education .....	12
6.3	Culture.....	13
6.4	Inclusion .....	14
7	Relevant Legal Frameworks governing Library services .....	15



Bad libraries build collections, good  
libraries build services, great libraries  
build communities.

– R. David Lankes

## 2 INTRODUCTION

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Shoalhaven Libraries 2021 has been developed to provide a direction on the future of our libraries to ensure that they remain at the centre of their communities delivering services and resources that offer recreation, connection and foster lifelong learning opportunities.

Shoalhaven Libraries is a vital part of Council services, supporting the social, educational and recreational development of the local community. It offers a safe space where all members of the community are able to come and vital resources are provided for people that might not otherwise be served or feel integrated.

Research has shown that libraries build equity and serve as a community focal point. Unemployed people and those not in the labour force, people without access to a computer, people living in the most disadvantaged areas according to SEIFA (Socio Economic Indexes for Areas) were more likely to visit frequently. This shows that libraries are an important resource for relatively disadvantaged people, and also that public libraries show a sound return on investment. A recent report found a return of \$2.90 for every \$1 invested.<sup>1</sup> Libraries today are much more than book lending institutions and they cater for each area's cultural, social and economic situations, which in turn inspires a feeling of belonging and ownership by local communities.

Libraries have demonstrated socio-economic value in four crucial areas:

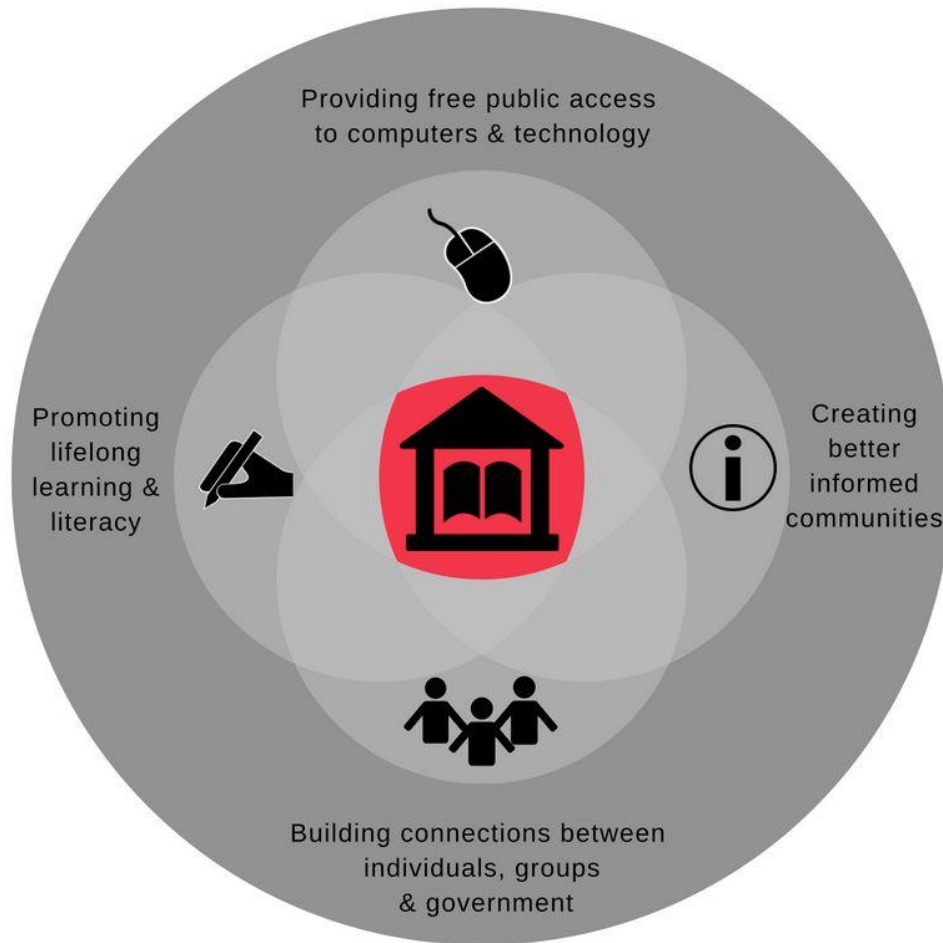
- Providing free public access to computer and technology resources
- Creating better informed communities
- Promoting lifelong learning and literacy and
- Building connections between individuals, groups and government<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Library and Information Association, 2013, *National Welfare & Economic Contributions of Public Libraries: Final Report*, viewed 20<sup>th</sup> July 2013, <http://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/Contribution%20of%20Australian%20Public%20Libraries%20Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> State Library of Victoria, 2005, *Libraries Building Better Communities*, 'Executive Summary', Melbourne, p.5

# The Value of Libraries



Shoalhaven Libraries is an important community resource which provides inviting and safe public meeting places for everybody. It is difficult to forecast the future, but technology is a firm focus, together with an emphasis on the library as a community space. In order to achieve our objectives we must increase public awareness of our library services, resources and programs using traditional marketing methods, as well as social networking, newsletters and other emerging technologies. Our staff are our greatest asset and we will continue to build on the library's strengths to meet the needs of new generations of library users.

### 3 SHOALHAVEN LGA - A SNAPSHOT

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The Shoalhaven Local Government Area has a population of around 100,000 people who reside in 49 towns and villages that run the length of LGA, which is approximately 160 kilometres long. It is also an area of both low and high socio-economic advantage, scoring 954.6 on the SEIFA index. Rural areas in the Shoalhaven score even lower at 788.9 (Jervis Bay), 877.6 (Sanctuary Point), 912.9 (Sussex Inlet), 917.6 (Ulladulla), 925.2 (Bomaderry) and 940.0 (Culburra-Orient Point)<sup>3</sup>.

The Shoalhaven is also a fast growing community with some real pockets of accelerated growth. In the South around Narawallee and Mollymook it is predicted that there will be growth of 32.84% by 2036, as well as 26% growth at St Georges Basin and 18% in the Vincentia area. And in the north this growth is even larger with 88% growth predicted in West Nowra and 127% growth in the Cambewarra area.

Demographics are an important consideration for shaping future library services and this is particularly relevant to this Local Government Area which has a higher proportion of older residents. Between 2011 and 2026, it is predicted that the age structure will see an 11.4% increase in population under working age, a 34.5% increase in population of retirement age, and a 4.2% increase in population of working age. In 2011, the dominant age structure for persons in Shoalhaven City was ages 60 to 64, which accounted for 7.6% of the total persons. The largest increase in persons between 2011 and 2026 is forecast to be in ages 75 to 79, which is expected to increase by 1,907 and account for 5.7% of the total persons. The largest 5 year age group in 2026 will be 65 to 69 years, with a total of 8,323 persons.<sup>4</sup>

These statistics have been used to inform the strategic priorities for Shoalhaven Libraries ensuring that it remains the community's most valued information resource and a socially inclusive and equitable space for all.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://profile.id.com.au/shoalhaven/seifa-disadvantage-small-area>

<sup>4</sup> <http://forecast.id.com.au/shoalhaven/population-age-structure?>



## 4 SHOALHAVEN LIBRARIES AT A GLANCE

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### **Mission Statement**

*Shoalhaven Libraries aims to educate, enrich, entertain, inform, involve and empower the people of the Shoalhaven.*

### **Vision**

*Shoalhaven Libraries will continue to embrace change and is committed to serving the information and recreation needs of all members of the community and visitors to the Shoalhaven. The Library aims to provide a welcoming environment, targeted resources and programs to meet the needs of all library users. Active promotion will be used to raise awareness of and access to resources.*

Shoalhaven Libraries has 4 branches and a mobile library service. The library team is made up of 39 dedicated and professional staff working across the service. In addition there are many volunteers who assist with general library duties and IT assistance.

The Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan is aligned with Council's Community Strategic Plan that reflects the community's aspirations for the Shoalhaven. It also aligns with the Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan, which looks at future provision, priorities and funding of community infrastructure at local, district and regional levels. Shoalhaven Libraries will respond to future growth and the changing needs of its community. Annual business plans, containing more detailed analysis and actions, will be developed from this strategic document.

## Shoalhaven Libraries



Nowra Library is the central branch and was built in 1967 and refurbished in 1990. It is 1570m<sup>2</sup>, which includes a large staff area downstairs where collection management occurs. This central library is located in the Nowra CBD with on average 520 customers visiting per day and is actively used for borrowing items, accessing the internet and hosting numerous adult and children's events.



Ulladulla Library is the newest of Shoalhaven Libraries, opening in mid-2014 as part of a refurbishment of the Ulladulla Civic Centre. This is a multi-function centre that houses a Visitor Information Centre, meeting rooms and two auditoriums. The library is 597m<sup>2</sup> and has dedicated break out rooms. It has seen increased usage of all parts of the facility since its opening.



Sanctuary Point Library is a demountable building currently situated on Department of Education Land that was opened in 1995 as a temporary facility. This is a small, but vibrant library that provides much needed services to the community. A new Bay & Basin area library is planned for the near future to accommodate the growing central Shoalhaven population and increased need for services.



Milton Library is housed in the old School of Arts Building, which was built in 1872 and is heritage listed. It is currently open three days per week, with Council working with community volunteers to extend the opening hours and provide additional services.



There has been a Mobile Library service running in the Shoalhaven since 1970 and in 2020 it will celebrate its 50 year anniversary. The Mobile Library visits the smaller villages of the Shoalhaven LGA stopping at pre-schools, primary schools, retirement villages and village stops. It also assists in the delivery of resources to housebound library customers in outlying areas, and the transport of items between branch libraries.



The Digital Library has seen considerable expansion over the last few years and is a well-used service. The range of resources covers eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and many databases on a range of subjects, such as science, languages, literature, computer assistance, legal information, jobseekers assistance, health information, HSC study, digital films & documentaries & Australian and international e-Newspapers.



## 5 SHOALHAVEN LIBRARIES 2021

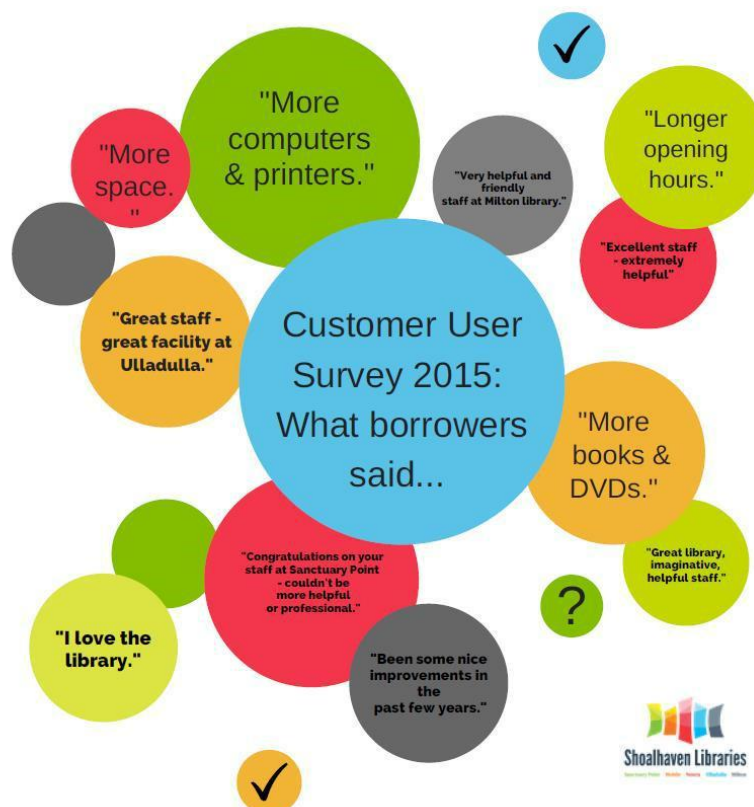
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Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan has been developed using professional public library research, direction and benchmarking; information regarding the changing role and profile of libraries and librarians; community expectations of libraries; technological advances; branch usage statistics; customer survey data and industry trends.

In 2015 a Customer User Survey was conducted which saw over 827 respondents provide information about the current level of service and future wishes. Overall the survey revealed a largely satisfied library clientele, but as expected more books and DVDs, longer opening hours, more computers and printers and more space for studying and reading were requested.

This new strategic plan aims to provide clear direction for staff and the community on the library's future priorities and the strategies and actions to achieve the desired goals. An alignment with Council's integrated planning and reporting framework and relevant strategies, as well as the overarching Cultural Plan, has been achieved. Shoalhaven Libraries 2021 works towards key themes and priorities that have been identified by the community, which are to:

- Build inclusive, safe and connected communities
- Activate communities through arts, culture and events
- Deliver reliable services that meet daily community needs



## **6 KEY FOCUS AREAS**

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Shoalhaven Libraries has identified 4 key areas to concentrate its efforts on in order to provide identified and effective services to the community:

### **ACCESS**

The current pace of life will only continue to increase and libraries need to keep up with changes in lifestyle and customer expectations of service delivery. Continued analysis of ways to improve access to library resources and services is undertaken, to ensure service excellence and membership growth.

### **EDUCATION**

Shoalhaven Libraries supports early literacy and lifelong learning. Children's services have traditionally and will continue to play a large role in libraries and it is also anticipated that, in the future, an increased number of older community members will be looking for lifelong learning opportunities, ways to maintain and learn new skills, as well as activities in which to participate.

### **CULTURE**

Libraries are at the hearts of their communities and Shoalhaven Libraries will continue to provide the services and resources that are requested by the community. Community engagement aids in the development of a vibrant relationship which assists in ensuring library services are tailored to meet expectations.

### **INCLUSION**

In all senses of the word – physical and digital. Libraries play a vital role in connecting the community and making people feel part of something larger. Shoalhaven Libraries will continue to investigate ways of reaching the wider community outside of the physical four walls of the library.

## 6.1 ACCESS

Shoalhaven Libraries aims to:

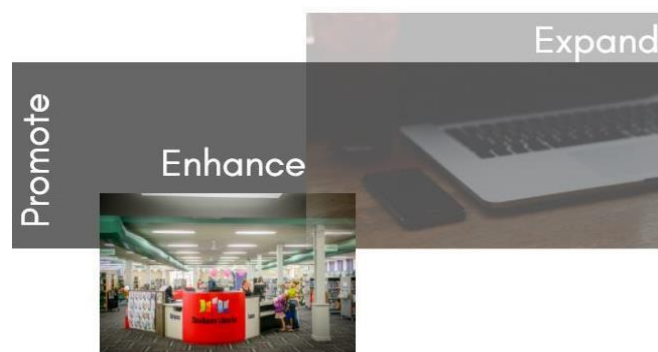
- Make it easier to find, borrow and return library resources both online and in person
- Increase awareness of the library and its benefits through expanded promotion and marketing of programs and services
- Exploit technology to increase 24/7 digital access to resources
- Streamline processes and procedures for ease of access and membership
- Expand the impact of the library beyond physical branches through outreach and digital services

### Strategies

- Develop and implement a Library Services Marketing Plan
- Provide access to all library resources from one customer friendly interface
- Enhance current website and upgrade library catalogue interface to be more user friendly
- Increase outreach activities for those unable to access a physical branch with pop up libraries and mobile library visits
- Promote online contact with library via website, Facebook and other emerging technologies and systems i.e. Contact a Librarian
- Introduce staff 'roaming' devices to enable more active, visible and approachable services
- Provide technology access in mobile library vans and increased access at other facilities

### Outcomes

- Increase membership statistics
- Increase virtual visits at Shoalhaven Libraries (website, social media, databases, ...)
- Delivery a Library Services Marketing Plan
- Provide opportunities to create informed and connected citizens
- Decrease item delivery time average



## 6.2 EDUCATION

Shoalhaven Libraries aims to:

- Promote early literacy, lifelong learning and community participation
- Position itself as a resource for all community members
- Continue to invest in staff development and training in order to provide skilled library and technology assistance to customers
- Advance digital literacy and engage users across the spectrum of technology proficiency



### Strategies

- Provide technology assistance and classes, and investigate partnerships that enhance service delivery e.g. GenConnect
- Continue to collect and assess physical and electronic resources that support lifelong learning
- Promote early literacy through regular rhyme times and story times, and support of Building Brighter Babies Program
- Provide curriculum appropriate resources for local students and build relationships with local teachers, pre-schools, primary and high schools
- Provide resources to assist job seekers with finding employment
- Promote library services to other Council units for research assistance and database access

### Outcomes

- Increase database usage and user statistics
- Provide opportunities for lifelong learning and literacy
- Increase use of reference services
- Increase number of programs and event attendees

## 6.3 CULTURE

Shoalhaven Libraries aims to:

- Support creative expression and build links with other Council units and local community groups to enhance the cultural richness of the local government area
- Continue to investigate the creation of cultural clubs in the Local Government Area
- Provide functional, attractive and flexible spaces that meet the evolving needs of our users
- Provide cultural programming and recreational opportunities for the community
- Preserve and provide optimum access to specialised resources (i.e. Local Heritage Collection)

### Strategies

- Pursue joint programs with Shoalhaven Arts Centre, Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre and local groups; and be an active member of the Shoalhaven Arts Board
- Grow programs and events at all libraries – e.g. Pathfinders Volunteer Program, Author Events
- Complete the Nowra Library refurbishment in order to update and optimise use of limited facility space
- Construct a new district Bay and Basin Library at Sanctuary Point
- Investigate ePublishing / online resources – the library/customer as creator
- Complete the Local Heritage Strategic Plan
- Assist with culturally relevant events – NAIDOC Week, Book Week, ...



### Outcomes

- Increase the number and range of programs delivered - School visit, Storytimes, Author talks
- Increase the number of joint/facilitated programs run
- Complete the Nowra Library refurbishment
- Provide opportunities for creative communities
- Complete the Local Heritage Strategic Plan

## 6.4 INCLUSION

Shoalhaven Libraries aims to:

- Ensure all library branches are welcoming and accessible destinations to serve as vibrant community spaces for all residents i.e. homeless, people with disabilities and those who are disadvantaged
- Select material that reflects the diverse needs of the community so that relevant print, digital and special collections are freely available
- Develop partnerships that extend or reach out beyond the library – other Council Units, local service providers
- Develop, expand and promote Home Library services to those unable to physically visit a branch
- Promote social inclusion with author events, programs and book related activities
- Continue to work with the Friends of Milton
- Provide advice to Council on current usage of libraries, including a review of the management and operations of Milton Library

### Strategies

- Establish a mobile library van for the Southern Shoalhaven
- Develop a policy and procedure to allow for membership of the homeless to enable them to be active library customers
- Develop suite of reports to analyse resource allocation and use
- Investigate ways in which mental health professionals can assist and work with library staff

### Outcomes

- Increase in number of Home library service deliveries
- New Southern mobile library van completed and on the road
- Implementation of a policy to allow membership for the homeless
- Provide opportunities for digital inclusion



## 7 RELEVANT LEGAL FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING LIBRARY SERVICES

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- Library Act 1939
- Guidelines for Local Government Authorities including Guidelines to Section 10: requirements as to services to be provided by local libraries
- Library Regulation 2010
- Library Amendment Bill 2011