

# Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027



# Acknowledgement of Country

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We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this country and their continuing connection to the land through culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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# Message



**Sarah Taylor**

*Library Services Manager*

On behalf of Shoalhaven Libraries, I am pleased to present the Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027.

Libraries play an important role in the community by providing access to safe spaces, free-use technology, and high quality collections and information.

The library also offers varied programs and leisure activities that provide opportunities for connection, lifelong learning, and literacy support.

Shoalhaven Libraries staff are extremely driven and passionate about the role public libraries play in the community, and this plan will help shape our future direction, so we can continue to support our growing community needs.

The key priorities of this plan have come directly from the feedback and results of a customer survey, staff workshops, and are informed by industry trends and objectives in Shoalhaven City Council's Delivery Program Operational Plan (DPOP).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this plan and if you haven't already, I encourage you to explore all the wonderful services your library provides.



Storytime





# Introduction

**Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027 sets the strategic framework for the delivery of Shoalhaven City Council's library services across the Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA). This plan has been shaped by relevant federal and state legislation plans and is aligned with the Shoalhaven 2032 - Community Strategic Plan, which reflects the community's aspirations for the Shoalhaven. In particular it addresses Shoalhaven City Council's vision for the future:**

*"We will work together in the Shoalhaven to foster a safe and attractive community for people to live, work, stay and play; where sustainable growth, development and environmental protection are managed to provide a unique and relaxed lifestyle".*

Libraries are community hubs and drivers of local liveability. They are spaces for people to gather to share ideas, exchange information, promote lifelong learning, and preserve information and culture for future generations. By providing a free, equal access space where everyone is welcome, libraries help to build healthier and more connected communities.

In 2021 a Library Customer Survey was undertaken, and these responses have also helped shape Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027 by providing direction for our key priorities and actions. Residents indicated that overall they were satisfied with library services and would like:

- A diverse range of programs to create opportunities to meet others, learn and share
- Inclusive and welcoming libraries that provide space for all members of the community
- Access to technology and skilled support staff
- Easier ways to find what our libraries have to offer

The Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027 was created to provide clear direction for staff and the community - it is a roadmap of the future priorities of the library service, and the objectives and actions that will be required to achieve the desired outcomes. Annual business plans containing more detailed analysis and actions will be developed from this strategic document. These will include specific deliverables, timeframes, resourcing and key performance indicators.

Shoalhaven Libraries is committed to sustainable, inclusive, and diverse practices. In all aspects of our work we uphold the following UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals:



# Our People



Population

**108,531**

13.5% born overseas

8.1% need disability assistance

Average Age

**49**

Population Increase

**+10,308**

by 2031



**20%**  
increase for  
aged 65+ years



**6.5%** of the Shoalhaven's population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



**39.5%**

completed year 12

25.8% vocational  
qualification

12.1% university  
education

**35,751**

jobs

47% in workforce

7.3% unemployed



**21%**

of households are made  
up of couples with  
children

17% couples without  
children

26.5% single person  
10.3% single-parent



**45,901** total  
households

25.8% mortgage

23.1% renting

3.4% social housing

279 individuals  
homeless

Additional  
Households

**+5,408**

households  
by 2031

Single person households  
increasing to

**30.7%**

by 2031





# Shoalhaven Libraries at a Glance

Shoalhaven Libraries is located on the South Coast of New South Wales, with the regional centre of Nowra-Bomaderry located 160 kilometres south of Sydney. Shoalhaven Libraries services the Shoalhaven LGA which covers an area of 4,531 square kilometres and has 4 branches and a mobile library service. The library team is made up of 42 dedicated and professional staff working across the service. In addition, there are many volunteers who assist with general library duties.

## Members

**31,160**



## Locations



**4** branches

**2** mobile branches

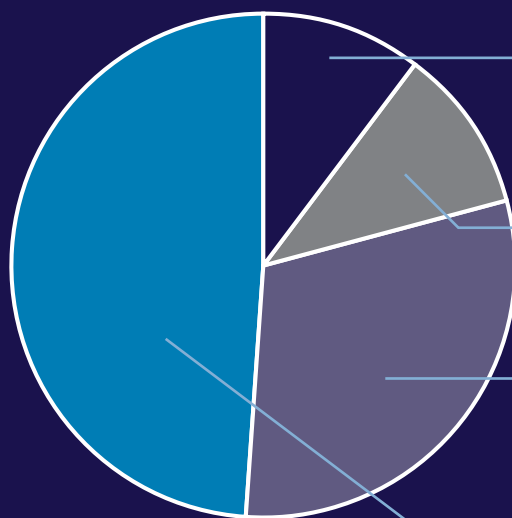
## Ages

**10.4%**  
aged 0-9

**10.6%**  
aged 10-19

**30.1%**  
aged 20-49

**48.9%**  
over 50 years



## Collection Purchase

Figures taken from Shoalhaven Libraries  
Annual Report 2021-22



**14,058** books

**3,006** non books



**192,751**

Library visits

## Total stock

**284,577**

## Total loans

**405,493**

## Internet sessions

**54,121**

## Programs/events

**370**







# Our Libraries

## Nowra Library

Nowra Library is Shoalhaven Libraries central branch. It was built in 1967 and refurbished in 1990. It is 1,570 square metres and home to a public library space with over 70,000 items, a local heritage room, a meeting room and staff area. In addition to housing a vast selection of books, the library offers a range of activities for all ages throughout the year, including storytimes, author talks, book clubs, school holiday activities, and tech help. It is home to the Collection Development Team, Digital and Outreach Team, Customer and Community Team and Administration Team. On any given day there can be up to 14 staff on site providing services to the community.

## Sanctuary Point Library

Sanctuary Point Library is situated on Paradise Beach Road and was established in 1995. Always bustling despite its size (currently only 140 square metres), this little library runs regular kids programs including LEGO Club, Coding Club, Storytime and Rhymetime as well as fun, creative school holiday activities and other special events. The library is run by one full-time Branch Manager and two permanent part-time Library Assistants, and currently holds over 11,000 items! As loved as this little blue library is, staff and customers are eagerly anticipating the beautiful new library that will be coming very soon.

## Ulladulla Library

Ulladulla Library forms part of the vibrant multi-purpose Ulladulla Civic Centre. It offers dedicated study rooms equipped with PCs, printing, copying, and scanning facilities, and houses a collection of approximately 26,000 items. It is unique in that it also houses Visitor Information Services, an auditorium, meeting rooms and an adjacent café. The harbour outlook and friendly staff provide a warm welcome to both community members and tourists alike. The Library and Visitor Information Centre is open 7 days and operates with a full-time Branch Manager, a part-time Library Technician, and five Customer Service Assistants. The library successfully runs a range of regular programs such as tech help, monthly movies, children's storytimes, as well as more specialised activities such as author talks, art and craft activities, and cultural events – something that has been made possible through the positive connections made within the local Ulladulla and Shoalhaven community.

## Milton Library

Situated in the heart of Milton and built in 1872, Milton Library is housed in the heritage listed School of Arts building. Faced with a potential closure in 2014, community concern led to the formation of a not-for-profit community group, the Friends of Milton Library (FOML). Shoalhaven City Council now works closely with FOML to continue to keep this branch open four days per week.

Between Council staff and FOML volunteers a small number of monthly programs are run in connection with local schools and community groups. The library provides an inviting space, and it is equipped with printing and copying facilities, and a collection of over 7,000 items in varying formats. Milton Library remains an important local resource for the community.



## Mobile Libraries

The Mobile Library Service consists of two vehicles that visit outlying villages, schools, and pre-schools. The libraries collectively hold 8,000 items and are operated by one full-time staff member and casual drivers. These vehicles are fully accessible and service over 125kms of the Shoalhaven, travelling on average 26,000kms per year. The libraries on wheels are highly valued by residents in the outer areas of the Shoalhaven. They are also used for outreach events such as expos and festivals in order to get the library and its services out into the community.

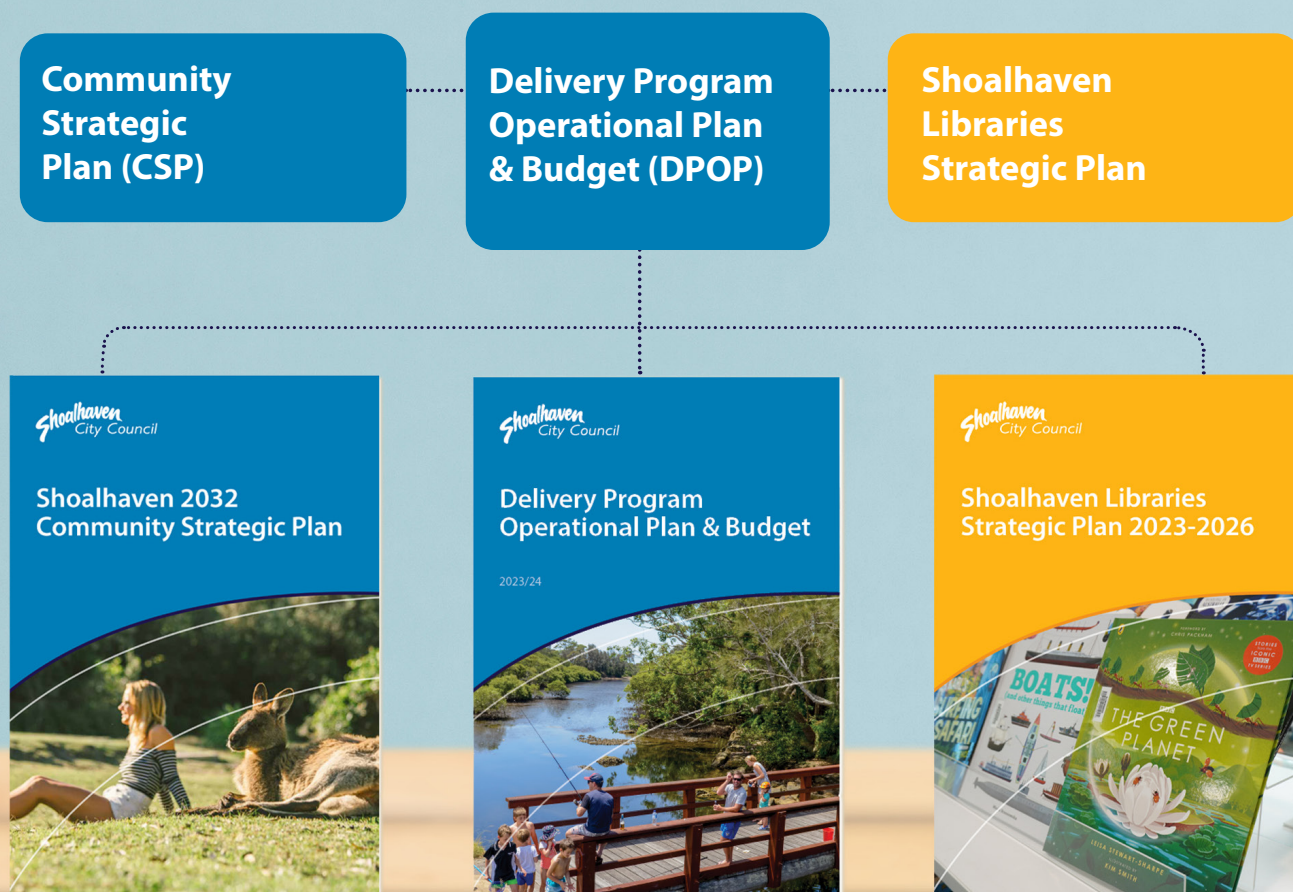
## Digital Library

Our Digital Library includes over 284,000 items. It is home to online resources, including eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, streaming services, newspapers, and study and research materials for all members to access. Being a digital resource, these items are available to borrow, browse, watch, and learn from anytime, anywhere.









## Shoalhaven Community Strategic Plan - Our Vision For the Future

Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027 links directly to the Shoalhaven 2032 Community Strategic Plan, and the Delivery Program Operational Plan & Budget 2023-24. These three documents work together to achieve the Shoalhaven City Council's Community Vision Statement:

*"We will work together in Shoalhaven to foster a safe and attractive community for people to live, work, stay and play; where sustainable growth, development and environmental protection are managed to provide a unique and relaxed lifestyle."*

Within the Council's Shoalhaven 2032 Community Strategic Plan, key objectives have been assigned to Shoalhaven Libraries with the purpose of achieving the Community Vision Statement.

In response, Shoalhaven Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2027 identifies key priorities to direct our resources towards:

- Supporting inclusive, safe and connected communities
- Preserving, supporting and developing cultural and creative vitality across our communities
- Supporting community wellbeing through fostering active and healthy communities

The outcomes, objectives and actions developed from these key priorities form the remainder of this document.

# Key Priorities

Based on responses to the Customer Survey, the following priorities were considered most important by the community. We have categorised them into five themes.



## People: Support and strengthen our community

- Support inclusive, safe and connected communities
- Professional, trained and confident staff



## Collection: Provide a relevant and contemporary collection

- Community access to collections
- Collections that support our community



## Spaces: Promote connection, belonging and engagement

- Offer vibrant spaces in which all community members can meet, learn and play
- Create inclusive and accessible library spaces



## Technology: Support access, equity and inclusion

- Community access to free-use technology
- Enhance user experience by embracing emerging technologies



## Programs: Champion lifelong learning, recreation and wellbeing

- Build inclusive library programs that support community wellbeing
- Support literacy and learning in the community



# People: Support and strengthen our community

Key Priority		Outcomes	Objectives	Actions
<b>1.3.01 - Support communities to access opportunities for lifelong learning and help others</b>				
	Support inclusive, safe and connected communities	All members of the Shoalhaven community feel welcome and represented in Shoalhaven Libraries	Build strong links with local communities, such as youth, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities, First Nations, LGBTQI+ and at-risk groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate new locations and opportunities for outreach</li> <li>• Raise awareness of these groups in the community by designing relevant and inclusive events and programs</li> <li>• Provide increased opportunities for the community to interact</li> </ul>
		Increase membership and collection usage	Investigate ways to target and reach non-members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Library Engagement and Promotions Plan</li> <li>• Investigate the benefits of a Book Selection Service</li> <li>• Plan a campaign to target inactive users to reengage with Shoalhaven Libraries</li> <li>• Investigate opportunities for internal promotion to Council staff on a professional and personal basis</li> </ul>
	Professional, trained and confident staff	Library staff as library advocates	Investigate and implement opportunities for staff engagement and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for staff to contribute to strategic planning</li> <li>• Encourage ownership of roles within the library</li> <li>• Implement training for staff to enable them to respond to the changing needs of the community</li> </ul>
		Workplace wellbeing	Support mental and physical wellbeing in our workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with Council to provide regular workshops and practical sessions that focus on wellbeing and health</li> <li>• Create a workplace where staff feel comfortable asking for support</li> <li>• Create a culture where staff are celebrated, recognised and valued</li> </ul>





# Collection:

## Provide a relevant and contemporary collection

Key Priority		Outcomes	Objectives	Actions
1.3.01 - Support communities to access opportunities for lifelong learning and help others				
	Community access to collections	ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) baseline targets achieved for loan rates per capita	Increase access to collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote usage of Shoalhaven Libraries app</li> <li>Digitise, preserve and provide access to the Local Heritage collection</li> <li>Update Local Heritage Strategic Plan</li> <li>Investigate and evaluate current collection procurement</li> <li>Continue to evaluate and integrate stack collection</li> </ul>
			Continue to build and improve digital collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly evaluate digital content and expand collection</li> <li>Promote digital content through outreach visits</li> </ul>
	Collections that support our community	A diverse and responsive collection	Develop wide-ranging collections for our diverse community that facilitate cross-cultural communication, collaboration, mutual understanding and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively seek out partnerships with local community groups and organisations</li> <li>Collaborate with Council to identify community needs</li> </ul>
			Build contemporary and relevant collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Collection Promotion and Communication Plan</li> <li>Continue to undertake regular collection reporting and evaluation</li> </ul>
			Develop new and unique collections to encourage engagement and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to investigate the possibility of special and sustainable collections</li> </ul>



# Spaces: Promote connection, belonging and engagement

Key Priority		Outcomes	Objectives	Actions
1.3.01 - Support communities to access opportunities for lifelong learning and help others				
	Offer vibrant spaces in which all community members can meet, learn and play	Welcoming library spaces	Create versatile library spaces for our growing community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a new mobile library vehicle</li> <li>• Deliver a new Sanctuary Point Library and accompanying business plan</li> <li>• Investigate opportunities to activate external space at Ulladulla Library</li> <li>• Review current opening hours and investigate opportunities for activation</li> <li>• Actively pursue alternate funding through state and national grants</li> </ul>
	Create inclusive and accessible library spaces	Library spaces that are adaptable for our community and its needs	Increase access to library spaces to the whole community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assistive technology and accessible equipment/furniture for community members with diverse needs</li> <li>• Continue to improve existing library spaces</li> <li>• Continue to survey the community regularly to understand and better meet their needs in library spaces</li> </ul>



# Technology:

## Support access, equity and inclusion

Key Priority		Outcomes	Objectives	Actions
1.3.01 - Support communities to access opportunities for lifelong learning and help others				
	Community access to free-use technology	Strong digital literacy across the community	Provide technology access that meets the evolving needs of the community whilst fostering safe online practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of public access PCs</li> <li>• Increase access points for community members bringing their own devices</li> <li>• Improve Wi-Fi access</li> <li>• Promote cyber safety through training guided by eSmart principles</li> <li>• Continue to provide opportunities for the whole community to improve digital and information literacy skills</li> </ul>
	Enhance user experience by embracing emerging technologies	A future ready community	Explore opportunities to provide the community access to emerging technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek and provide opportunities for people to learn about and use emerging technologies</li> </ul>



# Programs: Champion lifelong learning, recreation and wellbeing

Key Priority		Outcomes	Objectives	Actions
<b>1.3.01 - Support communities to access opportunities for lifelong learning and help others</b>				
	Build inclusive library programs that support community wellbeing	A connected and engaged community	Provide opportunities for the community to connect and actively participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a vibrant and engaging program of events for all ages</li> <li>• Seek partnerships with community groups for opportunities to facilitate library events</li> <li>• Continue the strong connections between all library branches and teams across Council to increase community use and connections with their local library</li> <li>• Provide creative hubs in libraries</li> <li>• Support ongoing community engagement activities and services undertaken by Council and the community</li> </ul>
	Support literacy and learning in the community	Higher levels of literacy within the community	Promote reading and love of literature in the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite members of the community to share skills and stories with others</li> <li>• Liaise with the SLNSW (State Library of New South Wales) and other organisations to bring learning opportunities into our libraries</li> <li>• Partner with local authors, publishers and booksellers to run events and festivals</li> </ul>





# Testimonials

*I love Shoalhaven library. My entire family loves reading and so we are often there. The staff are really friendly and super helpful, whether it's tracking down the location of a book, recommending a book to try or holding a requested book. I always enjoy my visits to the library.*

*It's just great to walk in and see all the wonderful books. It's a friendly and comfortable environment and well run by the staff. We use digital and audio books whilst travelling. The reference area is appreciated too.*

*Love the Shoalhaven library friendly staff always willing to help. The mobile library is a bonus. Also a good selection of books.*

*I love the community spirit of the Shoalhaven Libraries. The community support and connections the libraries provide enrich the community users. And of course I love being able to have access to so many books to immerse myself into!*

*Guess how much I love you? Your spaces are light and inviting, your shelves are filled with books to enlighten the mind, your staff are caring and helpful. Why would I not?*



*It is a treat for me to visit the library- the staff are always cheerful & helpful! Exploring the aisles and looking for another adventure hidden in the pages of the books lifts my days.*

*The library staff are always so cheerful and super helpful, patient and seem interested in my enquiries!*

*My local library is a friendly and inspiring place. All the staff enjoy dealing with the public and they are always helpful. Great selection of books, DVDs, CDs and lots of activities. The library is my living room away from home.*





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