



camden libraries

Camden Libraries Strategy 2021-2025

April 2021

Acknowledgement of Country

Camden Council acknowledges the Dharawal people as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to their Elders both past and present.



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Libraries offer people a “third place” separate from home or work, and are anchors of community life, facilitating creative interactions between people.”

- Ray Oldenberg



Narellan Library plaza at Narellan Rhythms festival (2015)
(Photo source: Silvia Grimm, Camden Libraries website.
Reference number: CLS0731)

Executive Summary

About this Strategy

Libraries have evolved from a place of books and information to more expansive ‘third’ places and community hubs. They play a crucial role in bringing people together from across socioeconomic backgrounds; forging greater understanding of other perspectives and cultures; offering a safe and free public space; and providing a place for people who otherwise might feel excluded.

Libraries are also focal points and drivers of local liveability. By providing a free, equal access space where everyone is welcome, libraries help to build healthier and more connected communities.

The Camden Libraries Strategy 2021-2025 sets out the strategic framework for the delivery of Camden Council’s library services across the Camden Local Government Area (LGA).

This Strategy aligns with the overarching community vision of ‘A Sustainable Camden LGA by 2040’ and the established Community Strategic Plan key directions, in particular Key Direction 5 - An enriched and connected community and Strategy 5.2.1 Provide library services that promote community hubs, enable people to connect, stimulate opportunities to share information and learn, and foster cultural and social exchange.

The Strategic Framework

our **aspiration** is:

Within the library walls, beyond the buildings and in the virtual spaces, Camden Libraries provide a place for the community to connect; share interests, stories and experiences; discover new skills and knowledge; inspire creativity; and read a good book.

Our libraries are places where everyone is welcome.

our **strategic priorities** are:

- 1 Our community feels welcome, safe and connected**
- 2 Our library spaces are vibrant, well utilised and provide for everyone in our community**
- 3 Our inclusive library programs and activities inspire learning, creativity and discovery**
- 4 Our collections and resources provide contemporary opportunities for lifelong learning and to tell our stories**
- 5 Our well managed libraries continue to support our growing and changing community**



BACKGROUND + CONTEXT

Introduction

Over the past decades, libraries have expanded their roles “beyond the shelves” to become community and cultural hubs. Today, libraries are some of the top visited and trusted public institutions in Australia, providing access to vital resources, services and information that support the wellbeing, liveability, connectivity and productivity of our cities and communities.

Camden Libraries are highly valued by our community as places where people of all ages and backgrounds are welcome. By providing a free place where people can meet, participate in programs and events, learn, find information, and feel connected to their community and place, our libraries help to build social cohesion and resilience.



Photo source: Cred Consulting

About this Strategy

This Strategy has been developed in partnership with the community to ensure our people are at the heart of our libraries and that we respond to their changing needs with opportunities to learn, connect, share stories and experiences, be creative and discover new skills.

In preparing this Strategy, we reviewed the relevant policy context, explored the Camden community's current and future characteristics and analysed the local place context. We also assessed gaps and opportunities in library service provision and were inspired by a review of best practice and emerging trends (see appendix).

We have listened to our community and their ideas, views, experiences and values have shaped the aspiration, priorities and actions outlined in this Strategy.

Council would like to thank everyone who values our libraries and has contributed to developing this Strategy, especially those who took the time to complete a survey and attended a conversation.

850+ locals have helped shape the Camden Libraries Strategy



444 community survey responses

Online from 3 January - 21 February 2020



250+ responses at pop-up stalls

via staffed and unstaffed pop-ups at the three libraries in August-September 2020



200+ school survey responses

from children and young people across a range of ages from K-12



Advisory committee focus groups

with the Youth Council and the Cohesive Communities and Access Advisory Committees



Staff workshops

with Library Services staff and staff across a variety of Council teams

The Value of Libraries

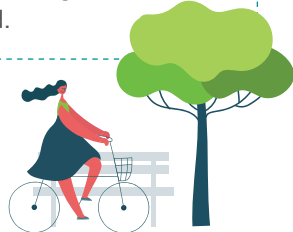
Building social capital

Libraries help build what social scientists call 'social capital'. Research shows that people who live in closer proximity to amenities, such as libraries, are more content with their neighbourhood, more trusting of others and less lonely regardless of whether they live in large cities, suburbs or small cities or towns.

More and more, libraries are expanding their reach beyond their physical buildings, with many providing access to digital spaces and e-resources, as well as home delivery and outreach services for those who are vulnerable or not able to visit their local library. For many, libraries also provide an important link to government information and other services.

Access + Participation

A 2017-2018 survey from ABS found that one in three Australians aged 15 years or over had attended a library, with similar visitation rates across people of different income ranges. Libraries had relatively high rates of frequent visits, with a third of attendees visiting more than 10 times in the 12 month period.



Contributor to liveability

Libraries are focal points and drivers of local liveability. Research shows that people prefer to live near a public library if they have a choice, and often perceive library access as part of an enhanced quality of life. There is increasing recognition of the benefits of libraries including healthier and more connected communities.

Lifelong learning

One of the understood roles of libraries is fostering learning and education. This is achieved through access to printed and digital information and resources, educational programs and events as well as spaces for study and learning outside the home.

There is increasing focus on how libraries can support learning throughout a person's lifespan, from babies through to the elderly. There is also increased focus on how libraries can support a broader spectrum of learning beyond basic literacy.

Research from the Australian Council for Educational Research indicates that students tend to be more engaged with learning on the whole if they engage with library resources, interact with library staff, and spend time using libraries.

Moreover, libraries can contribute to learning throughout a person's lifespan, from young to old and also play a role in facilitating intergenerational skill-sharing.



Building our community resilience

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have taught us the importance of ensuring our communities are resilient and able to survive and adapt in the face of the chronic stresses and unexpected shocks that we may face.

Libraries are increasingly playing a role in supporting the resilience of communities, by linking people to resources and information that can help connect people to their community, local service providers and other support. During the pandemic, Camden Libraries was quick to adapt, providing programs and resources online and expanded home delivery services for those in need.

Building community connections

Libraries play a crucial role in bringing people together from across socioeconomic backgrounds, forging greater understanding of other perspectives and cultures, offering a safe and free public space and providing connection into the community for people who are otherwise excluded.

They do this by providing places where people can meet and stay such as comfortable lounge rooms and multipurpose rooms, as well as sharing and celebrating local strengths and stories.

This is particularly important in new residential communities such as those in Camden's growth areas. While these new areas develop there may be limited spaces for the incidental connections that support neighbourliness, and libraries can serve as a community meeting place.



Flexible, multipurpose community spaces

Across the globe, there is a trend towards multipurpose library spaces that allow for flexible use and for function to change over time as community needs change and/or grow. Design trends include moveable furniture, bookshelves and walls that allow for reconfiguration of spaces when required, such as provided at Oran Park Library.

Multi-functional and adaptable library spaces are important in growing communities, such as Camden, as there may be limited social infrastructure available in new growth areas and needs may change over time.

Local economic benefits

Libraries can have economic benefits for communities too. A three-year study in Victoria shows that for every dollar invested in libraries, the community receives triple the value (McDougall, 2011). For every dollar spent on NSW public libraries the value back to the community is, on average, between \$2.82 and \$4.24 (Berryman, 2005).

Overcoming the digital divide

Libraries are often the only places where communities can access the internet and computers for free, playing a crucial role in ensuring that people on low incomes and other disadvantaged groups are able to access information and technology and develop the necessary skills to use these.

Many libraries today also offer public access to emerging and specialised technology programs and resources such as 3D printers and scanners, virtual reality and coding clubs. Providing public access to and education around these emerging technologies is important to develop skills that will be increasingly important in future jobs.

Celebrating local culture + creativity

Libraries support local culture and creativity in a range of ways including through exhibitions and displays, workshops, programs and events and through providing access to creative technology, equipment or software. There is also an increasing trend towards providing makerspaces within libraries where people can come to create and produce their own work.

Library collections can be troves of local knowledge and culture and should aim to reflect the diversity of the local community, including its shared histories, cultural backgrounds and a diversity of interests.



Context

Community and Place Context

The Dharawal people are the traditional custodians of Camden's land and their spiritual and cultural connection to Country is respected and acknowledged as a fundamental part of this area. The Camden Local Government Area (LGA) also sits at the intersection of three Aboriginal Nations boundaries. The groups include the Gundungurra to the west and south, the Dharawal to the south and east and the Darug to the north. This connection long pre-dates European settlement and despite modification of the land through urban development, many places of significance remain.

Today, the area is characterised by rural and heritage features set in landscapes of scenic and natural beauty, offering a mix of agricultural land, towns and villages, new residential areas and industrial areas.

The Camden LGA is located approximately 60kms south-west of the Sydney CBD. The LGA covers a total land area of 206 square kilometres and is bounded by Liverpool City in the north, Campbelltown City in the east, and Wollondilly Shire in the south and west.

Camden is one of the fastest growing LGA's in Australia, with the population forecast to grow from 78,220 in 2016 to 233,950 by 2036. This growth, and major investment in the nearby Western Sydney Aerotropolis, presents significant challenges as well as opportunities.

Over the next 20 years, Council will need to plan for new homes, jobs and services for an additional 140,000 people.

The Camden LGA is home to 101,437 people (2019). The current community is characterised by a younger age profile, with a relatively low, but increasing cultural diversity including people speaking English as a second language and those recently arrived to Australia.

An analysis of likely library participation and needs by community cohort has been undertaken to ensure the strategic priorities and actions consider the specific needs for different groups, ages, cultural backgrounds and incomes.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in ages 'parents and homebuilders aged 35 to 49 years' (+37,576), followed by 'young workforce aged 25 to 34 years' (+23,030). The following graphics (on page 11) provide a snapshot of the key current and future demographic information relevant to the future planning of the Camden Libraries network.

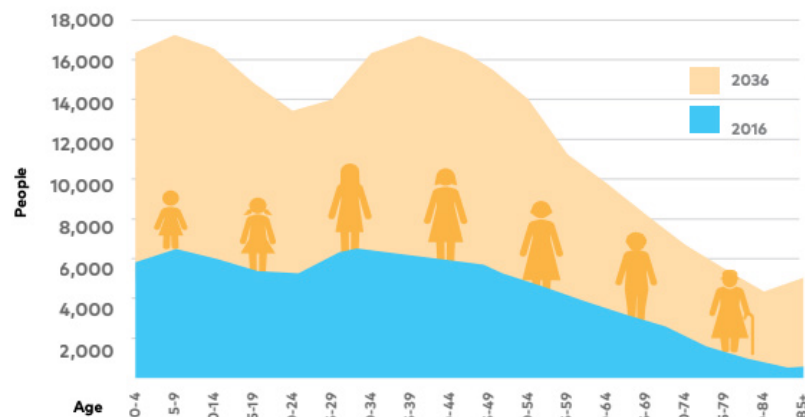
A significant portion of the northern part of Camden has been identified for future urban development, known as the South West Growth Area (SWGA). Ensuring the timely delivery of new and upgraded quality social infrastructure, including libraries, and enhancing Camden's distinctive local character and natural environment is integral to our community's wellbeing and resilience as we grow and change.

Leppington Town Centre Precinct is a strategic centre within the Western Parkland City in the Greater Sydney Commission's Our Greater Sydney 2056 and is part of Sydney's South West Growth Area (SWGA). It is expected the development will be predominantly high density with a forecast population of 45,947 residents and 12,500 jobs¹.

As our community grows and becomes more diverse, our libraries can play an important role in providing access to resources and information as well as provide crucial meeting places that can play an important role in fostering community connections and a sense of community identity, belonging and place and particularly for new residents.

1. Elton Consulting 'Leppington Town Centre Precinct Social Infrastructure, Open Space and Demographics (December 2018)

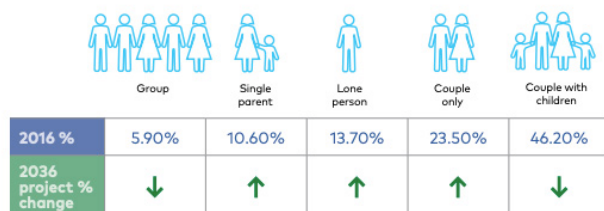
Age Profile (2016 & 2036)



New Residents (net 2011-2016)



Projected Household Structure (2016 & 2036)

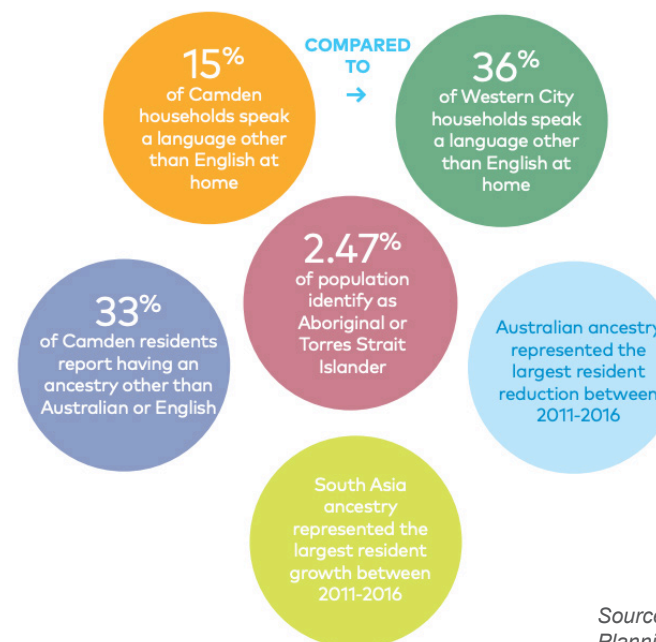


Education (2016)



	Camden	Camden Trend*	Western City w
University Qualification	12.4%	↑	11%
Vocational Educational Training	26.4%	↑	23%

Diversity



Source: Camden Council Local Strategic Planning Statement (March 2020)

Snapshot of library participation & needs by community cohort

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (0-11)

Children and families are key users of libraries with a focus on informal learning, play and storytelling. Libraries support literacy with free resources as well as programs for a range of ages from storytime for babies through to school holiday programs.

YOUNG PEOPLE (12-24)

Libraries provide a free public space for young people to access resources, study alone or in a group, relax or meet with friends. As 'digital natives' young people are keen users of libraries technology resources. Young people may require access to the library at night and on the weekend, particularly during exam periods.

WORKING AGED ADULTS

Adults are libraries' largest target group. Working-aged adults require access to libraries outside of work hours and on the weekend, and may often visit with their children.

OLDER PEOPLE (65+)

Older people are major users of libraries and this trend is likely to grow as the population ages. Many seniors live alone and may seek social interaction at libraries. As well as visit to participate in organised social programs. Computer literacy is becoming increasingly important for all ages as services and information move online.

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

Libraries can provide welcoming and trusted environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by creating visibly cultural inclusive spaces, for example through acknowledgement signage, artworks and through programs and collections that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures.

PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Libraries play an important role in supporting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through the provision of multilingual resources and collections, signage and English language classes. Ensuring libraries are welcoming and culturally appropriate is a priority.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

People living with disability may have specific needs that cannot be easily fulfilled through standard library services. Adapting the physical space, offering materials in accessible formats and accessible programs are some ways that libraries can support participation.

LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

As free public spaces, libraries aim to be accessible and welcoming for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Libraries are important for lower-income households as they may not be able to afford access to resources such as computers with internet access and books at home.

Strategic Policy Considerations

This Strategy sits within a wider international, national, state and local policy framework.

Libraries play an important role in contributing towards achieving the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals** to create more sustainable societies, by providing public, equitable access to information and resources and providing safe and inclusive meeting spaces where cost is not a barrier to developing knowledge.

The impact of libraries can be measured through a variety of outcomes such as literacy and lifelong learning, informed and connected citizens, digital inclusion and economic and workforce development as outlined in the **Australian Library and Information Association Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries**.

The NSW Government **Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+** recognises the opportunity for libraries to increase cultural participation and is committed to assisting their continued development as community and cultural hubs and technology and connectivity access points for communities.

The **Greater Sydney Region Plan & Western City District Plan** includes a focus on providing social infrastructure such as libraries to meet demand from population growth and to support the liveability, productivity and sustainability of the area. Council is investigating the provision of an additional library in the northern part of the **South West Growth Area Precinct**.

The **Children and Families Strategy** and **Active Ageing Strategy** both identify the important role that libraries play in facilitating opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development and for people to connect to their community through access to resources, programs and information.

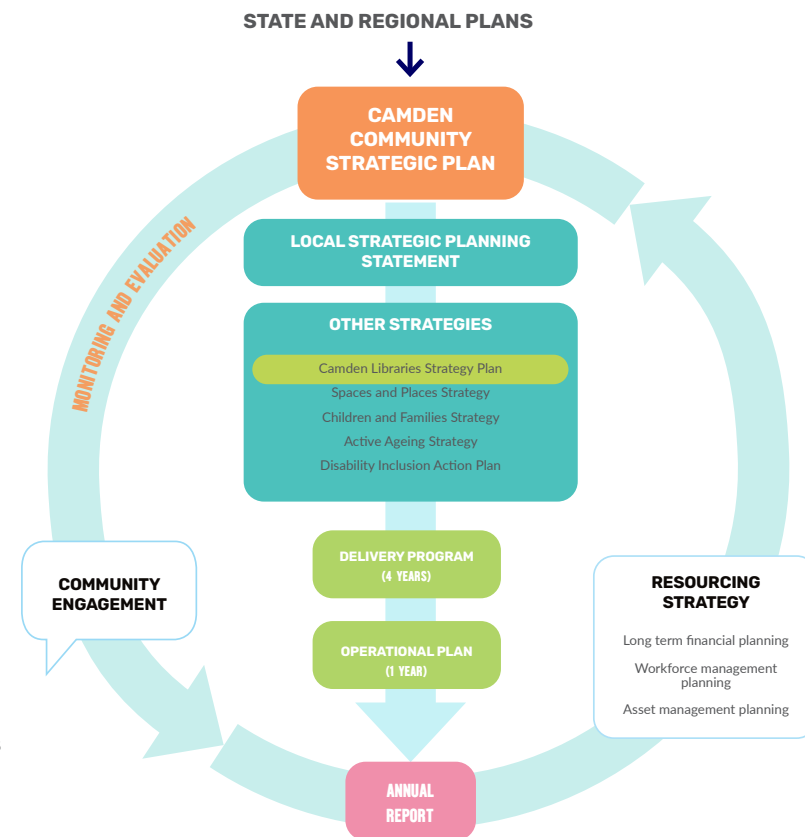
Aligning with the **Disability Inclusion Action Plan**, Camden Libraries should incorporate universal design principles and provide inclusive places for social connection, information in accessible formats and technologies, and offer support in navigating systems and processes to accessing services.

The **Camden Community Strategic Plan** (CSP) vision is for “a Sustainable Camden Local Government Area by 2040.” This Strategic Plan aligns with the CSP focusing on:

- recognising Camden’s heritage character including through provision of local and family history services, collections and programs and cooperation with the Camden Museum;
- providing libraries and library services that foster a healthy, resilient, inclusive and socially connected community;
- fostering vibrant town centres that reflect Camden’s evolving character; and
- fostering culture and creativity through the provision of cultural infrastructure.

The **Local Strategic Planning Statement** (LSPS) is the basis for Council’s strategic land use planning, in consideration of local economic, social and environmental matters. This Strategic Plan aligns to the following priorities:

- Local Priority L2 is “celebrating and respecting Camden’s proud heritage” which libraries currently and will continue to play a significant role;
- Local Priority L3 is “providing services and facilities to foster a healthy and socially connected community,” including library provision that responds to existing gaps and future demand;
- Local Priority L4 is “encouraging vibrant and connected centres which reflect Camden’s evolving character” which libraries play a significant role and provides opportunities for increased activation of the public spaces near the libraries; and
- Local Priority L5 is “supporting cultural infrastructure to promote cultural and creative spaces” which includes library spaces now and as they evolve and their collections and resources expand. The co-location of libraries with other cultural and creative spaces provides opportunities to expand programs, skills development, learning and workshops to meet the diverse interests of our community.



*Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and strategic policy context
(Source: Cred Consulting)*

Camden Libraries: Now and Future

Camden Libraries are important places that play multiple roles in the community. Camden Libraries has three sites located at Camden, Narellan and Oran Park.

Camden Libraries' network does not have a central library, with each individual library being largely self-contained with a core collection and services. Additional resources and distinct specialisations at each library depending on the size and nature of demand in its catchment.



Camden Libraries snapshot (2017-2018)

Camden Library

Camden Library is located within the historic Camden Town Centre and was refurbished in 2006 to be co-located with the Camden Museum, Camden Historical Society and Camden Area Family History Society. Offering specialised collections for local studies, family history and agriculture, the library provides a strong link between heritage and contemporary Camden. The library provides a range of printed, digital and technology resources and programs and events. It also includes a meeting room within the former Fire Station building.

Facilities + spaces

- 806m² floorspace
- Co-located with Camden Museum and Camden Area Family History Society
- Multipurpose meeting room
- Public access computers
- Foyer offering seating and meeting place

Programs + services

- Range of programs for babies and children, including Babies into Books, Storytime, Mini Builders, after school make and do and school holiday activities
- Book discussion groups
- Specialised family history, local studies and agriculture collections
- Programs for youth including school holidays activities
- Programs for seniors

Narellan Library

Narellan Library is located adjacent to the Narellan Town Centre shopping precinct and opened to the public in 2005. The library includes a range of spaces including an indoor/outdoor play space for children, three study rooms and The Space Digital Studios providing access to a semi-professional recording studio and computer lab.

Facilities + spaces

- 3,111m² floorspace
- The Space Digital Studios including recording studio and computer lab
- 3 study rooms and 2 multipurpose community rooms
- Large forecourt with shaded seating

Programs + services

- Range of programs for babies and children including Babies into Books, Storytime, after school make and do, school holiday activities
- Programs for youth including HSC Lock In, Dungeons and Dragons Saturday sessions, Code Club, school holiday activities and Homeschoolers day
- Alternative lending collections (e.g. Telescopes, science kits, book club kits)
- Other programs including movie club

Oran Park Library

Opened in 2018, Oran Park Library is Camden's newest library service located within the new master planned Oran Park Town Centre. The building features a striking and colourful design that serves as an urban marker and helps to create a sense of place and identity in this new urban centre. It is located next to Council's administrative centre to the south, as well as a planned leisure centre to the north.

The library has been designed to include for the provision of digital services and flexible and multipurpose spaces, including bookshelves on wheels for increased flexibility that can be adapted, modified and changed over time to meet the community's needs. The new building is a transparent, open, flexible and multipurpose space. The library has a large forecourt plaza with shaded seating and covered grass area that provides opportunities for indoor/outdoor events and programs.

Facilities + spaces

- 2,500m² floorspace
- 3 study rooms and 3 multipurpose community rooms
- Large forecourt with shaded seating
- Community support organisations on the first floor

Programs + services

- Range of programs for babies and children, including Babies into Books, Storytime, Saturplay, after school make and do, school holiday activities, 3D print workshops
- Programs for youth including after school and school holidays activities
- Alternative lending collections (e.g. Science kits)

Beyond the Building

Beyond physical facilities, Camden Libraries' network is supported by the library website, home delivery service and Books Unbound 'pop-up' library, an outreach service visiting shopping centres, schools and other community locations.

Camden Libraries' online e-resources and Home Library Service have proven to be particularly important and in high demand during the COVID-19 pandemic which saw the closure of public buildings. This demonstrates the value of providing library resources through a range of channels, including to those in the community who are more vulnerable and may be housebound.

Going forward, there are opportunities to expand Camden Libraries' presence beyond the library buildings. In particular, there are currently no library services in the rural areas with opportunities for alternative delivery models such as pop-up libraries and shared-use arrangements.



What is planned for the future

To support Camden's existing and new residents, Council is investigating opportunities to locate a new library within Leppington Town Centre to be co-located with a multipurpose community centre and cultural and performing arts centre.

While a new library in this location has been identified, the specific location within this precinct is yet to be determined as the planning and its development continues.

In proximity to a train station in a strategic centre with significant forecast population growth, this library could potentially be delivered as a joint service between Camden Council and neighbouring Liverpool City Council.

In consultation undertaken for Council's Spaces and Places Strategy (2020), it notes that the Camden and Narellan libraries were nearing capacity and only housed an English language collection, with books in other languages available through an interlibrary loan system. Primary user groups are parents with children and key periods are Saturdays, school holidays and during the HSC and university exams.

Increased hours, staffing, parking at Narellan, digital resources and meeting rooms spaces were identified to meet future growth.

Benchmarking future library provision

Council's **Spaces and Places Strategy** applies the established population-based library benchmark of one local library for every 40,000 people. Figure 2 shows the distribution of forecast population growth to 2036 with current and planned library provision.

The Strategy notes that based on this benchmark Camden LGA currently has a good provision of libraries for the existing population, with one local library for every 26,073 people. By 2036, the benchmark indicates there will be a shortfall of two libraries¹.

The total recommended floor space for a co-located library space and community centre space for the precinct is 5,000-5,600m². It has also been identified that there is a lack of arts and cultural facilities and recommended that the community facility is co-located with the library in the Leppington Town Centre Precinct which could include performing arts spaces, exhibition, workshop and studio spaces and other art and cultural spaces².

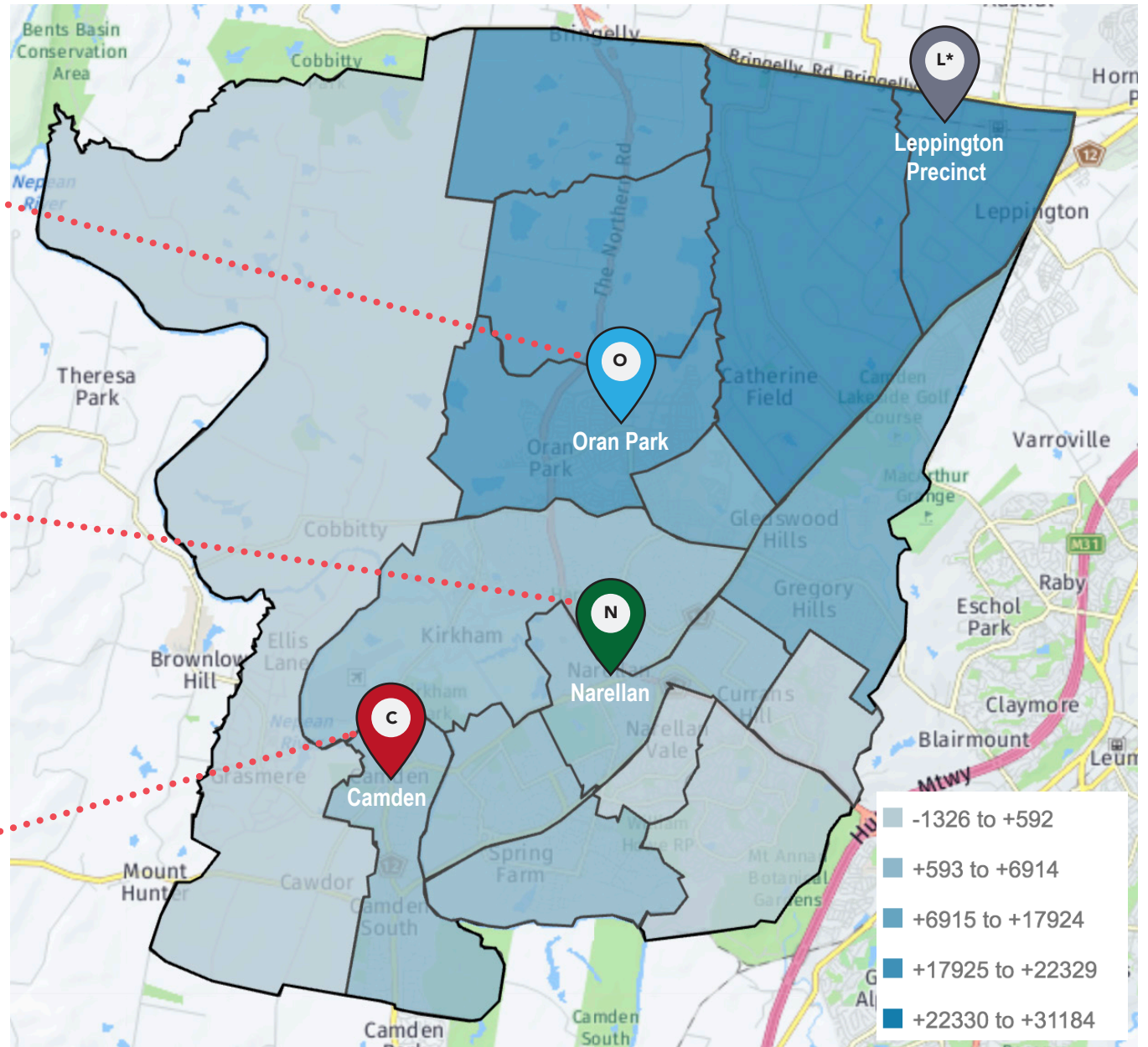
Demand for additional library provision will predominantly be in the Growth Districts. However, with provision of district level services provided in Leppington and Oran Park, this demand may be met, and additional need should be monitored.

While Camden's rural areas have limited population growth, they currently have no library services. To provide improved equity of provision, alternative delivery models could be considered, such as pop-up libraries and shared use arrangements².

It is important that the community are invited to inform the design of any new library or upgrades to existing libraries, including First Nations Peoples, new residents, people with disability, young people and children, older people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. This engagement would aim to understand their needs and start building strong connections.

1. Camden Council Spaces and Places Strategy (March 2020)

2. Elton Consulting 'Leppington Town Centre Precinct Social Infrastructure, Open Space and Demographics (December 2018)



- Oran Park library
- Narellan library
- Camden library
- Potential new library at Leppington

Figure 2: Distribution map of forecast population growth to 2036 and library provision (Map source: Forecast.id; (Photo source: Cred Consulting, April McCabe)



OUR COMMUNITY TOLD US

Introduction

The purpose of community engagement was to understand the Camden community's library service needs, priorities and aspirations to inform the development of the Camden Libraries Strategy.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated physical distancing requirements as well as the temporary closure of Camden Libraries required us to rethink our approach to community engagement. Cred Consulting and Council collaborated to deliver creative community engagement activities from July to September 2020 that ensured the safety of the community and staff.

What we did

Over 850 responses and conversations with children through to older residents, library users, staff and advisory groups members have shaped this Strategy.

Engagement built on findings from a Library Services survey conducted in early 2020, which provided baseline data about service delivery priorities that Council can benchmark against over time.

The second stage of engagement included a pop-up installation within each of the three libraries; two Saturday morning, in-person pop ups at Narellan and Oran Park Libraries and a series of focus groups and workshops with young people, community, people with disability and staff from across Camden Council.

Three separate surveys were also distributed to children and young people through schools and the library programs. Over 250 surveys were received from young children (4-8yrs); primary school children (9-12yrs) and young people (13+ yrs) which provided information about the types of activities and spaces within the library they would like as well as writing about and drawing their dream libraries. All their ideas have helped to shape the direction of this Strategy.



Photo source: Cred Consulting

Key themes

An assessment of all the responses and data received across all the engagement activities identified a number of key themes. These themes were:

Camden Libraries are highly valued

Our community told us that they appreciate their local libraries as places to learn, relax, read, participate in activities and programs, access a variety of resources and services, and meet and engage with other people in the community. People also said they value that their libraries are free public spaces where everyone in the community is welcome to 'just be'.

Results from the community survey indicated high levels of satisfaction with Camden Libraries (see Figure 3).

Providing access to a range of resources

Our community told us that, while they understand that libraries are no longer just books, "books are still important" and they want to see Camden Libraries continue to provide access to a range of resources to borrow and use, including books, CDs and DVDs.

We also heard from people who told us that access to computers, printers and copiers at the library had helped them through a challenging period in their life, for example when they first moved to the country, or were unemployed. They noted that digital technology resources may be particularly important for vulnerable community members who may not have access at home.

Camden Libraries are community hubs

Our community told us they would like to see Camden Libraries continue to expand their role as focal points for community life and be welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

People suggested ideas for increased library programs, for a range of cohorts to further connect and support the community. People would like to see longer opening hours at all libraries to support people to access them outside of work and school hours and on the weekend.

We also heard from Council's advisory committees about how Camden Libraries provide crucial support for young people, people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, older people and people with disability. Library staff emphasised that future planning should "keep the needs of the community at the heart of all decision making."

A summary of engagement findings are provided in the Appendix.



Figure 3: Percentage of respondents satisfied or very satisfied across a range of benchmarks (444 surveys, Feb 2020)

What libraries mean to the Camden community

People value libraries in Camden as places for all ages to come to learn, relax, read, participate in activities and programs, access a variety of resources and services, and meet and engage with new people in the community. Below are selected verbatim comments from community engagement.

"A free meeting hub, with helpful everyday life tools and resources"

"A calm place to come and borrow books for my kids' reading journey, particularly 5 & 8 year olds. Great you have home readers"

"It's a place I feel welcome - It's like a community loungeroom"

"The Camden Library is like a refuge for me. I can sit and read or just sit and no-one bothers me. The wide selection of books is a real asset. To walk into the library and be greeted with a smiling face behind reception is a blessing"

"A vital educational, information and cultural centre promoting literacy and learning and community connections"

"The library is welcoming and homelike, especially in the sense that it is one of the few locations one is allowed to exist, without demanding a charge. Peacefully."

"A safe and welcoming space where everyone in the local community can come and just be. Whether they want to study or participate in programs, or simply meet a friend, it's just a place to go for all, like a large community lounge room"

"Language and literature skills, exposing to children and adults of all ages to a variety of stories and reading"

"I have always had a fondness for the library, with many fond childhood memories of time spent there. Life has become busy and the library is a place where the pace slows a little"

"A space to connect with my knitting group and friends. Also a cosy, homely space outside of home to be around people and books without too much socialising"

"Great place for the whole family to have some quiet, educational entertainment"

"It is a place for interaction and sourceable material so that I can pursue interests important to me. I like the staff who are so helpful & share my love of reading & education and staying in touch with ideas"

"A central meeting point; a relaxing "time out" environment to browse through old and new reading material and catch up, coming community events, and a chance to read books without having to buy"



How do Camden's children and young people see future libraries?

In a fun and creative approach and a focus on storytelling, we asked young children, primary school aged children and secondary school aged young people about the preferences and aspirations for libraries.

Children and young people told us about what their dream library would look like through a range of surveys aimed at different age groups. Common features of children's drawings included a range of resources including:

- books, computers and gaming consoles;
- comfortable areas to sit with sofas and bean bags;
- colourful and creative design elements;
- separated study and quiet areas;
- areas for play, art and craft; and
- indoor plants and trees.

High school students told us that things that could make libraries better for young people include:

- longer opening hours;
- areas to meet with friends and study groups;
- more study support programs; and
- more social groups they can join, such as Minecraft club, chess club, gaming club and book club.

Young people also told us that they highly value access to free Wi-Fi at the library, and would like to see more technology at libraries including computers, 3D printers, ipads and charging stations.

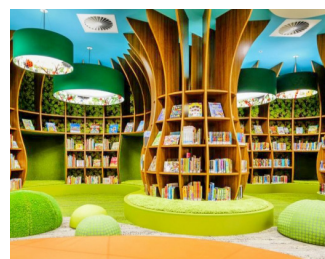
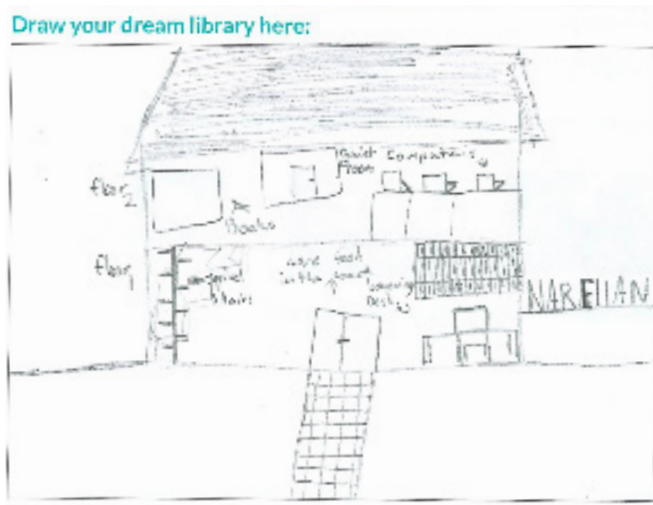


Figure 3 & 5 (above): Drawings of local children's ideas and their dream libraries

Figure 4 (left): Top 4 images chosen by children about the look, feel and activities they would like in libraries

Community ideas and opportunities for future library provision

Across all engagement activities, our community was asked about their ideas and opportunities for the future library provision that would meet their needs and enhance their experience. The key themes were:

Activities for young people

- More young people focused programs and activities, including recreational activities like arts and craft, science, music, gardening and coding.
- More programs specifically for young Aboriginal people at the library (e.g. weaving group).

Social spaces inviting you to stay

- Libraries could be more social spaces and provide a noisy, youth space (e.g. at Narellan library in the back of the library, or create a busy space in the centre with quiet edges).
- A café with food and drink where you can go and relax or grab a snack whilst you read a book.

Reflecting our community's cultural diversity

- Participants would like to see more resources for culturally and linguistically diverse community members at the libraries including books, signage and information in multiple community languages.
- Programs focused on cultural inclusion, for example providing free English classes at the library, using the demonstration kitchen at Oran Park Library where people can learn to cook different cultural cuisines.

Place to study and learn

- Homework hub for children that have learning difficulties, to learn how to source information and have someone that can read to them or listen to them read as literacy is still a big issue for many children.
- Programs like after school study groups or study skills programs for students and young people

Opportunities to explore and show creativity

- More creative activities and workshops.
- Art exhibitions to support local and emerging artists (e.g. in the Narellan Library foyer).
- Reading groups, music groups and craft groups for all ages.
- More access to creative technology resources (e.g. computers, 3D printers, video and sound editing).

Programs and events

- Author talks (and happy with a small cost).
- Having stories with signing – or teaching children some basic signing at story time.
- Sustainability workshops including gardening or reuse clothing and more sustainable 'environmental' activities.
- Expand skill development programs such as life skills (e.g. online shopping, how to change a tyre), developing young people's leadership skills and confidence and/or work readiness.

Sensory spaces, hours and experiences

- Pods to escape noise and read a book or alternatively taking the library to outdoor spaces to sit and read amongst the trees or an outdoor classroom.
- Sensory space or science station that families can explore and enjoy the experience together.
- Headphone stations with soft relaxing music, with big cushions to lay on or pods.
- Sensory time of day for people with a disability – lighting down, calm music, reduced stimulus or having an evening library time that can help families establish a bedtime routine, relaxation activities and story time.

Outreach and taking the library to people

- Opportunity for library pop-ups at shopping centres to attract more people and to isolated areas, such as new housing areas, so you can access the library even without transport.
- Libraries playing a bigger role in supporting vulnerable community members, including people who may be at risk of homelessness, family violence or other challenges.
- Opportunities to pursue more local partnerships to deliver additional resources or programs.

The background features a collection of overlapping, tilted squares in various colors: orange, teal, pink, and lime green. Some of these squares are decorated with patterns of thin, parallel lines in the same color as the square itself. The overall composition is dynamic and modern.

STRATEGY + ACTIONS

Our aspiration

Within the library walls, beyond the buildings and in the virtual spaces, Camden Libraries provide a place for the community to connect; share interests, stories and experiences; discover new skills and knowledge; inspire creativity; and read a good book.

Our libraries are places where everyone is welcome.





1

Our community
feels welcome,
safe and
connected.

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY

Our libraries are welcoming and inclusive places where everyone in our community can belong - no matter who you are, where you are from, what your abilities are and how much you earn.

We support our new and existing residents to meet, share and connect, especially as our community grows and changes, to build social capital and resilience, and reduce social isolation.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT...

Libraries have evolved from a place of books and information to community hubs. They play a crucial role in bringing people together from across socioeconomic backgrounds, forging greater understanding of other perspectives and cultures, offering a safe and free public space and providing a place for people who otherwise might feel excluded.

Libraries are focal points and help to build healthier and more connected, resilient communities. This is increasingly important with issues such as social isolation on the rise. We pride ourselves on our libraries connecting residents to each other, providing information, resources and services, programs that encourage life long learning and supporting our collective resilience.

Our community highly value Camden Libraries and love visiting, having a chat with library staff and meeting like-minded people. As our population grows and changes, providing opportunities for existing and new residents to meet and interact will become even more important to help foster cohesion, resilience and a sense of belonging in our community, and particularly in Camden's new growth areas.

At Camden Libraries, we welcome and include everyone, no matter who you are, where you are from, how much you earn or what your abilities are. We focus on people, and our spaces and activities reflect the diversity of our community and respond to their needs.

"The library is welcoming and homelike, especially in the sense that it is one of the few locations one is allowed to exist, without demanding a charge. Peacefully."

- Survey response

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US...

- They support the idea of libraries as community hubs, and think there is room for even more social interaction to connect community members.
- They think the ideal library is one that is *"a warm, friendly, helpful, safe place that you can receive help to connect to community in an inclusive, non-judgmental way. Information presented in a variety of ways to meet all learning needs"*.
- They would like to see libraries continue to expand their role as focal points for community life and be welcoming, inclusive and accessible for everyone, including the most vulnerable in our community to ensure no one gets left behind.

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Put the needs of our community at the heart of our planning and decision-making.
- Provide spaces for incidental social connections and for new and existing residents to get to know one another.
- Connect and support social programs and groups that bring people together around shared interests and learning.
- Be a place that our community can access information and the resources they need.
- Be responsive to our community's diverse and changing needs.
- Continue to ensure that everyone in our community belongs and feels welcome, including our most vulnerable community members.



2

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY

Our library
spaces are
vibrant, well
utilised and for
everyone in our
community.

We provide library spaces that are welcoming, free and accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Our spaces are comfortable, inviting and change responding to how our community want to use them, whether for community gathering, hands on learning, study or for quiet reflection and to just be.

We think beyond the buildings to how we can expand the library into outdoor, temporary and virtual spaces.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT...

Libraries are no longer just spaces with shelves, they are now multipurpose facilities that cater for a variety of activities, experiences and are an expression of who we are - our local stories, diversity, culture and creativity.

As our community grows we need to provide additional library floorspace to meet increased demand. Our libraries can serve as a community meeting place or community lounge room for new residents within our growth areas to connect.

The look and feel of our libraries is fundamental to them being vibrant, utilised and welcoming. Using colour and greening as well as maximising natural light and views to the outside contribute to a feeling of comfortable and encourage people to stay and relax.

Functionality is critically important for people to easily find what they are looking for and being able to seek help and information. Providing a range of spaces from enclosed spaces to just be with your own thoughts and quiet reading, working and study spaces to collaborative study areas, social spaces to meet others or, to technology pods and noisy, messy creative and maker spaces.

We also think beyond the library buildings and how to use both inside and outside spaces. There are opportunities to use the civic spaces surrounding our libraries to provide different experiences and spaces.

There are also opportunities for alternative delivery models, such as temporary, pop-up libraries or programs outdoors in local parks, taking the library to those who are not able to visit through outreach and home delivery services and using the virtual spaces to expand the capacity and reach of our libraries and increase participation.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US...

- They love that Camden Libraries are comfortable, welcoming spaces that encourage you to stay.
- Through the community engagement (from children to seniors) a number of desired design elements emerged that contribute to a positive library experience.
- They would like to see library spaces for different uses, from quiet reading to collaborative study.
- They suggested inclusive sensory spaces, hours and experiences for children, people with disability and families to learn and experiment with science together.
- They would like to see the upstairs spaces and resources at The Space at Narellan Library used more by the community.

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Plan and provide adequate library floorspace to meet the demand of our growing population.
- Ensure our library spaces are multipurpose and allow for flexible use to meet the diverse needs and interests of our community.
- Consider the layout, look and feel of our libraries to activate and create inviting, vibrant, comfortable and welcoming spaces for everyone in our community.
- Engage with our community to inform future design briefs to ensure the look, feel and function supports the role of our libraries' as community hubs.

"I would love a library where you have the space to do different things. My dream library would have a tech area where you can have experts help you use 3D printers and computers etc. You could also have a quiet corner so you can relax and enjoy."

- Primary school student response



3

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY

Our inclusive
library programs
& activities
inspire learning,
creativity and
discovery.

Libraries are places where anyone can learn and try out something new. Through shared experiences we can connect, inspire and learn from each other.

We deliver inclusive programs and activities that build skills, unlock creativity, spark curiosity and bring people together.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT...

Providing opportunities for learning, literacy, discovery and creativity is fundamental to everything we do at Camden Libraries. Along with our local schools, tertiary education, museums and community groups, our libraries are an important part of Camden's learning ecosystem.

Through our free library programs, activities and events we provide a sense of connectedness and opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to meet new friends and find like-minded people with shared interests and passions.

They offer lifelong learning opportunities, encourage people to build their skills, explore their creativity, debate and discuss contemporary topics, discover something new and let their curiosity run wild.

Our programs and activities play an important role in creating greater understanding, awareness and education about our First Nations community; their history and traditions, learning about our community's different cultural backgrounds and sharing the stories and learning from people with disability, the LGBTQIA+ community, people young and old.

In the ever changing world we live, our libraries provide hands on learning and build skills to use technology and increase the ability to learn, connect, create and access information.

Our programs and activities will continue to evolve to reflect the changing interests and needs of our community. The ongoing conversations help us to better understand what is needed and enable us to design and deliver programs and activities for all library users.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US...

- They want to see more programs and social groups for children and young people with a focus on learning, creativity and skill-development.
- They had ideas for programs that support and connect people across different ages, cultural backgrounds and abilities - as well as new and established community members.
- They think that library programs and activities should be inclusive and welcoming for people with disability, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, young people and the LGBTQIA+ community.
- They suggested more hands-on workshops focused on life skills sustainability, creativity and making.

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Support lifelong learning across all ages, from babies and children through to elderly people in our community.
- Build the capacity of our community to harness the power of technology to learn, create, connect and be informed.
- Provide the spaces to increase understanding and learning from and about our local First Nations people, their culture, stories and traditions.
- Reflect the diverse interests, issues that matter to our community, encourage creativity, learning and provide the opportunity to try something new.
- Seek partnerships with individuals, community groups and other organisations to expand our reach, build local capacity and to share the knowledge and skills that already exist in our communities.
- Provide opportunities via digital spaces and outside the physical buildings for people to participate and enjoy what our libraries have to offer.

A photograph of two children sitting at a desk, working on a project. The child on the right is wearing a grey flat cap and a green jacket, looking intently at a laptop screen. The child on the left has dark hair and is also looking at the screen. On the desk, there are various items including a yellow box, a green cable, and a small electronic device. The background shows a library setting with other desks and chairs.

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY

4

Our collections & resources provide contemporary opportunities for lifelong learning & to tell our stories.

Photo source: Camden Council Libraries

Our collection and resources continue to evolve and provide contemporary approaches and opportunities share knowledge. Combining our valued book collections with digital technologies, equipment and other resources, we will encourage new ways to learn and collaborate.

Our local heritage archives and stories connect us with our past and will continue to be collected for future generations.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT...

Our programs, activities, collections and resources continue to evolve and deliver contemporary learning approaches. Our collections and resources provide broad access to support learning and the exploration of interests and new skills. They include our much loved book and alternative lending collections, our technology equipment and our digital resources and activities.

The use of technology for learning and literacy is becoming increasingly important for everyone in our community - young and old. We are committed to help 'bridge the digital divide' for those who may not have access to the internet, computers or other technology at home. Access to creative technology resources provide a new way to tell our stories and enable our imagination to come to life.

Camden Library, co-located with the Camden Museum, Camden Historical Society and Camden Area Family History Society will continue to offer specialised collections for local studies and family history linking us to our past and assisting people to curate, capture and share their own stories and local heritage.

Having a collection, digital technologies and resources that our community use and want to keep coming back for, relies on us understanding our community's interests, needs and passions. Our collections will continue to evolve and grow to reflect our diverse community needs.

"Good to have the family history library and museum supporting each other. A great resource for the district"
- Pop-up activity response

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US...

- They want to see more and a wider variety of books and resources for all ages (such as DVDs, magazines and newspapers).
- They said there is a need to provide more books and resources in diverse community languages.
- They would like increased access to creative technology resources (e.g. computers, 3D printers, video and sound editing).
- They want improved access to library resources online via the website.

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Review our library collections on a regular basis to reflect the diversity and changing interests of our communities.
- Continue to build our local heritage archives, to tell and preserve our history and stories for future generations.
- Provide access technology and digital tools to help 'bridge the digital divide' and support our community to learn, connect and collaborate.
- Consider increasing available resources to include different types of equipment and technologies.
- Continue to work to make our collections more accessible to our community, including the digitisation of information.



Our well managed libraries continue to support our growing & changing community.

5
STRATEGIC
PRIORITY

Our libraries contribute to an enriched and connected community. They help build resilience, cultivate creativity, respond to the diverse needs of our community and provide access to information and services.

Through effective governance, resourcing and partnerships, our libraries and valued staff will continue to be a vital part of Camden's learning ecosystem.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT...

Camden Libraries have always played an important role in our community. As our population grows and changes, they will be central to building social capital and cohesion, supporting our community resilience and be a place that everyone can come together.

Our libraries are only as good as our people - staff, library members and the community organisations we work with. Our community highly value our libraries and staff and we will continue to support staff professional development to ensure they have the skills and resources to support our community.

Creating effective partnerships with individuals, local groups, service providers, schools and tertiary education helps us share the skills and knowledge that we have here in Camden and build a strong, local learning ecosystem.

Camden Libraries operate as a network, sharing resources across all of our libraries. However, each have their unique offering that reflects the local context, community and place identity - expressed through the collection, resources and building design.

Ensuring our library network continues to be well-resourced and managed will enable us to deliver spaces, programs, collections and resources that inspire our communities, respond to the changing needs and interests, expand our service delivery beyond the library walls and create a space for learning, understanding and connection.

"The library staff make us feel at home and provide creative solutions"
- Pop-up activity response

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US...

- They want longer opening hours, especially on the weekends to support working people and families to come and use the library more often.
- They would like to see social media platforms provide information about events and programs and about new books and resources.
- They want the library website to be more user-friendly and easy to understand and navigate.

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Provide well-managed and resourced network of libraries and services that meet the needs of residents across the Camden LGA.
- Promote our library services and their value broadly to the Camden community, particularly new residents.
- Seek partnerships to deliver new library services, programs and resources, including across Council teams and with external organisations in the Camden area.
- Provide a variety of services, programs and events delivered by knowledgeable, customer-focused and innovative staff.
- Support the professional development of our library staff to ensure they have the skills to support the varying community needs, including those most vulnerable.
- Continue to engage with the Camden community to understand their needs and priorities and refine the delivery of services and programs.

Actions

Timeframes:
Short: 0 to 12 months
Medium: 1 to 2 years
Long: 2+ years

Strategic Priority 1: Our community feels welcome, safe and connected within our libraries.

Actions	Measures	Timeframe	Responsibility
1.1 Provide opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to connect and come together to learn, work and play within our libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct regular surveys to assess and review diversity strategies. Encourage and support community use of libraries as meeting places for formal and informal activities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services
1.2 Support our growing community and new residents to connect to their neighbours, local services, information, activities and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand outreach library services to new and growing communities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions Economic Development and Activation
1.3 Celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provide opportunities for our culturally diverse community to share and connect through culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate across Council to deliver programs and activities to celebrate history and culture. Create targeted programs for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Economic Development and Activation

Strategic Priority 2: Our library spaces are vibrant, well utilised and for everyone in our community.

Actions	Measures	Timeframe	Responsibility
2.1 Improve utilisation by activating both indoor and outdoor library spaces to accommodate a variety of uses and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review indoor and outdoor library spaces to provide flexible options for delivery of programs and activities. 	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services
2.2 Optimise existing library spaces, layouts and improve wayfinding to and within the libraries to support a variety of users and their experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review library spaces, floor layouts and identify options for improvement and programming. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions
2.3 Monitor community need to inform the planning and delivery of adequate library space to support residents within the Camden LGA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library spaces provided according to best-practice models and relevant standards. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Strategic Planning

Strategic Priority 3: Our inclusive library programs and activities inspire learning, creativity and discovery.

Actions	Measures	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.1 Run targeted programs, activities and events that support skill development, improve literacy, increase digital capabilities, and support lifelong learning of our community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and diversity of activities provided. Participation rates in activities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions
3.2 Deliver programs, activities and events focusing on community needs and interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct regular surveys to assess and review diversity strategies. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services
3.3 Building on the existing artisan Camden community, deliver creative programs, activities and events that encourage, celebrate and showcase local arts, crafts and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of activities provided. Occasions of library spaces used for the delivery of creative programs. Participation rates in activities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services

Strategic Priority 4: Our collections and resources provide contemporary opportunities for lifelong learning and to tell our stories.

Actions	Measures	Timeframe	Responsibility
4.1 Develop our library collections to reflect our growing and diverse communities' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library collections developed using customer recommendations collected through the library survey. Evaluate library collections to ensure relevance, customer satisfaction, utilisation and value for money. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services
4.2 Build the physical Local Heritage Collection as well as digitise it to expand its reach and accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased collection including physical and digitised formats. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions
4.3 Continue to 'think beyond the books' and investigate alternative resources and equipment that enable exploration and discovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased alternate lending collection and resources. Number of activities provided to upskill community and facilitate discovery. Participation rates in activities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions
4.4 Develop and deliver programs that meet the multiple literacy needs of diverse audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant technology to support staff and customers to create successful learning outcomes. Number of activities provided to meet the diverse needs of the community. Participation rates in activities. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Technology and Information Management Solutions

Timeframes:
Short: 0 to 12 months
Medium: 1 to 2 years
Long: 2+ years

Strategic Priority 5: Our well managed libraries continue to support our growing and changing community.

Actions	Measures	Timeframe	Responsibility
5.1 Review the opening hours to ensure our community has access to libraries at times that suit their lifestyles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the community and staff. Investigate options to expand or change services and implement as resources allow. 	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services Corporate Performance & Customer Service
5.2 Provide a variety of services, programs and events delivered by knowledgeable, customer-focused and innovative staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a Library Service Review. Encourage and support individual and professional staff skill development to enable delivery of contemporary library services. Evaluate and improve our customer service. 	Short to Medium Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services People & Learning
5.3 Engage with local organisations, stakeholder groups and community volunteers to co-produce and co-deliver programs, activities and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of activities provided. Participation rates in activities. Number of new groups established and/or services promoted. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services

"The Camden Library is like a refuge
for me. To walk into the library and
be greeted with a smiling face behind
reception is a blessing."

-Survey respondent



The background features a collection of overlapping, tilted squares in various colors including teal, orange, pink, and lime green. Some of these squares contain patterns of thin, parallel lines in the same color as the square. The overall composition is dynamic and modern.

APPENDIX

Ideas to deliver on our strategic priorities

The following ideas were suggested through the engagement by the community and Council staff as ways to implement each of the five strategic priorities.

Ideas to achieve these priorities	Relates to
Strategic Priority 1: Our community feels welcome, safe and connected within our libraries.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate further opportunities to provide a safe, comfortable and inclusive place for people of all ages, backgrounds and people with disability. Continue to provide opportunities for our children and young people to feel welcome and connect and learn with their family and friends. 	Action 1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to engage with local Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal community to increase visibility and share knowledge and stories through our library services. Investigate opportunities to trial a local 'story walk' leading to the libraries telling the story of the place including Aboriginal stories to foster greater cultural understanding and learning. 	Action 1.,3
Strategic Priority 2: Our library spaces are vibrant, well utilised and for everyone in our community.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate ways to increase utilisation of The Space at Narellan Library as a makerspace for creative 'hands on' workshops and activities. Collaborate with Council's venues team to increase use of bookable event and meeting spaces within the libraries. Investigate opportunities and spaces for outdoor learning. Investigate opportunities to activate the outdoor spaces at the libraries through the day and at night to encourage people to experience our libraries differently. 	Action 2.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current access and comfort of library spaces being used for work or study and where community groups can meet to offer social spaces. 	Action 2.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for temporary and pop-up library spaces in growth areas to support access to library services in new communities. Consider best practise library design principles and engage with the community as a key input to inform the design, look and feel of future library spaces and building. 	Action 2.3
Strategic Priority 3: Our inclusive library programs and activities inspire learning, creativity and discovery.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide opportunities for the whole of the Camden community to improve digital and information literacy skills. In consultation with children and young people, review the activities on offer to ensure that they support social interaction, skill development and learning for all ages. Investigate opportunities to build business and employment skills, particularly for young people, people with disability and newly arrived residents from culturally diverse backgrounds. 	Action 3.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a series of workshops focused on cultural learning and understanding, environmental sustainability and STEM. Continue to connect the community through their shared interests with one-off events such as author talks and panel discussions on relevant issues. 	Action 3.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate across Council to identify opportunities to present local creativity in library spaces that reflect our culturally and artistically diverse community. Investigate opportunities for hands-on learning workshops and provide access to creative technology and spaces for making. 	Action 3.3

Ideas to achieve these priorities	Relates to
Strategic Priority 4: Our collections and resources provide contemporary opportunities for lifelong learning and to tell our stories.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access to e-collections and digitisation of the existing collection, to provide access for people that can't get to the library. 	Action 4.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the collection of community language books, materials and resources to reflect the increasing cultural diversity of the Camden community. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide access to library services, programs and resources online via the Library website, social media and other virtual spaces. 	Action 4.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current technology resources available across all libraries and identify existing equipment to be updated and/or inclusion of new equipment to build capacity and technology skills. 	Action 4.4
Strategic Priority 5: Our well managed libraries continue to support our growing and changing community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for longer weekend or evening hours to maximise the times the community can use the libraries. 	Action 5.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to trial low-sensory hours at the libraries for people with disability. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider training for staff to effectively respond to the changing needs of our communities and provide support for those in our community who are vulnerable and/or hard to reach. 	Action 5.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the strong connection between all libraries and teams across Council to increase community use and connections with their local library. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with local schools to understand the learning needs of local kids and explore partnerships to deliver programs and activities. 	Action 5.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for local partnerships with other organisations to deliver additional resources/activities. 	

Library Inspiration: Best Practice Case Studies

Planning for the future provision of library space, programs and services should respond to the researched and expressed needs of the local community. Consideration of trends and leading practice in library space, programs and service provision can also provide inspiration and be a catalyst for the implementation of new ideas to enhance the user experience.

The following provides a series of local, national and global case studies relevant to this Strategy.



WHITLAM LIBRARY, CABRAMATTA

Size: GFA 3,000m²

Whitlam Library is an example of how the boundaries of the traditional library can be pushed to deliver services that actively respond to community needs.

The creative re-use of spaces has resulted in 'the Workary,' 'Studio 2166' and a VR technology space. These spaces provide resources and support to develop business ideas, produce music and video in the studio, as well as learn and trial different technology.

The business incubator space; located upstairs; provides a variety of resources including bookable meeting rooms, dedicated work space and a variety of business support programs available.

Located in the Whitlam Library's busy foyer, The Alcove offers performers maximum visibility to visitors with high foot traffic. It is open to performers for 30-60 minute intervals weekly.

The library has also extended its opening hours to midnight, enabling students who may not have a dedicated quiet study space in their own home to be able to say at the library into the evening.



DARLING SQUARE LIBRARY, HAYMARKET

Size: GFA 3,145m²

The Darling Square Library, opened in 2019, is part of the redevelopment of Darling Harbour. The library is located over three floors of The Exchange building.

Darling Square Library houses a collection of more than 30,000 items (including an Asian literature collection), bookable meeting rooms, intuitive digital technology, workspaces, public computers with free Wi-Fi, children's area (with bilingual rhyme-time and storytime sessions) and a space for hands-on workshops and events.

The Ideas Lab is a dedicated 200m² makerspace and multipurpose room to create, invent or tinker. The space focuses on supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs. The program of hands-on workshops features 3D design and printing, robotics and electronics to help startups and curious makers upskill, share knowledge and network.

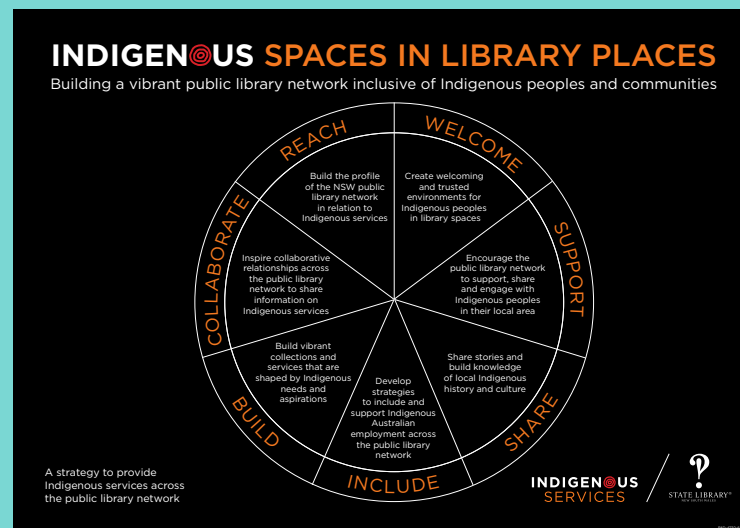




INDIGENOUS SPACES IN LIBRARY PLACES

The State Library of New South Wales has developed an online toolkit to provide guidance to the public library network, as a part of their ongoing commitment to enhancing services dedicated to the local Indigenous population. The toolkit provides a number of strategies, tools and case studies with key strategies including:

- Create a visible Indigenous presence in the library spaces - for example through welcome or acknowledgment signs of the local Indigenous community;
- Promote event programs and collections related to Australian Indigenous history and culture;
- Acknowledge and share successful stories and feedback from the Indigenous local population accessing the library;
- Liaise with the local Indigenous groups and associations regarding shared aspirations and programs – for example, Reconciliation groups and Land Councils;
- Explore collaborations with their local council and other organisations involved with Indigenous peoples in the community;
- Collect, expose and share local and national resources on Australian Indigenous culture and history;
- Collaborate with local Indigenous peoples and communities to create and share stories – for example, collecting local histories relating to experiences of the Indigenous community, collecting ephemera, collaborating with Indigenous artists etc; and
- Develop volunteer and/or other work experience or placement opportunities for Indigenous Australian students in public libraries.



State Library of NSW,
Indigenous Spaces in Library Places Strategy



DOK DEFT LIBRARIES, THE NETHERLANDS

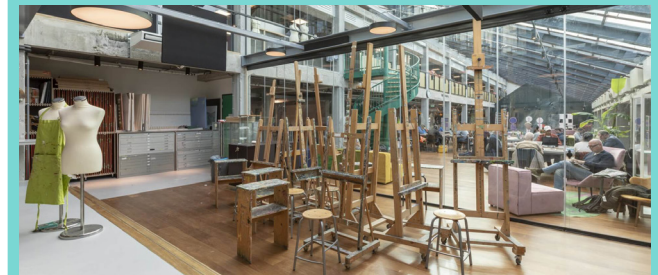
Size: GFA 4,300m²

Delft's award-winning central public library service (DOK) reopened to the public in 2017 following an extensive renovation. With the aim to breathe new life into the library and get people curious, it was rebranded as a "library concept centre."

DOK features bright and colourful design and has introduced a range of different and fun experiences into the library space, including music listening and Xbox gaming pods, and an atrium cafe on the first floor.

DOK provides a flexible space that aims to create more space for people by storing the majority of books in bookshelves with wheels so they can be moved around making space for readings and other programmes.

DOK Delft Library is co-located with a music school and an art school, with a design that emphasises mix of uses rather than separation (shown in first image below) to stimulate circulation through the building and provide a staying place for all users.





ALBURY LIBRARY MUSEUM

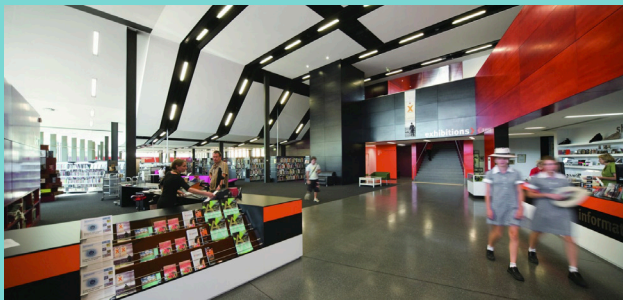
Size: GFA 3,000m²

Opened to the public in 2007, Albury Library Museum is Australia's first purpose-built library and museum under one roof. It serves a population catchment of 50,000 people.

The Albury Library Museum functions as a public library, research and technology centre, social history museum and community meeting place, providing integrated spaces, services and management across the Library and Museum. One of the benefits of this model is the potential for audience development.

The Library Museum is a superb showcase for national and international touring exhibitions, and for works from the Albury City Collection housed in the permanent exhibition, Crossing Place. Crossing Place is also the starting point for many of the educational programs offered by the Library Museum, including resources for school teachers, an audio tour and guided tours for members of the public.

The Library Museum is characterised by a striking design that provides an urban marker within the Albury town centre. The Library Museum was developed as part of a masterplan that combines cultural buildings with a new public square and landscaping, providing access via pathways to the neighbouring Albury Art Gallery and Entertainment Centre.



BANKSTOWN LEARNING & KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Size: GFA 7,235m²

The Bankstown Learning and Knowledge Centre is a public library and community centre encompassing a series of indoor and outdoor public spaces and connected community facilities, to create a civic centre at the heart of Bankstown.

Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre provides an integrated and flexible space containing a new library over three levels, 300 seat theatre, four new multipurpose rooms and a new café. The library is also adjacent to Paul Keating Park, which is a popular community park with a range of programs, events and festivals.

The library is co-located with Brian Brown Theatre and Function Centre. The 300-seat theatre hosts touring performances as well as local community showcases and initiatives such as Bankstown Poetry Slam.

Environmental initiatives include a geothermal heat exchanger, thermal labyrinth, high performance facade, greenwall bio-filter, rainwater collection and recycling. The building performs extremely well relative to other comparable public buildings with the energy use approximately 42% less than the average Sydney based public building.



TURANGA CHRISTCHURCH LIBRARY, NEW ZEALAND

Size: GFA 10,000m²

Tūranga Christchurch Library is a new, earthquake-resistant library in Christchurch, New Zealand. Located at the center of the earthquake-damaged city's redevelopment, the five-story building provides a 10,000m² public space that strengthens the local community and aims at drawing people back to the historic city center.

The ground floor is designed as a continuation of the historic square, (design as an 'urban carpet' acting as a link to the neighbouring performing arts precinct and convention centre) offering public spaces for gatherings, events, markets, and performances. The second level of the library houses a community arena as well as a children's area which includes a reading cave and an activity room. The upper three floors house various book collections, staff offices, meeting and study rooms, a production studio, a computer lab and a music studio.

The library features creative and entertainment spaces, including music and video editing studios, rooms for activities such as craft sessions, up to 100 computers, innovation zone for trialling new technology, Spark Place offering flexible space for seminars, presentations and workshops, free Wi-Fi internet access and 3D printers and laser cutters.





MARRICKVILLE LIBRARY & PAVILLION

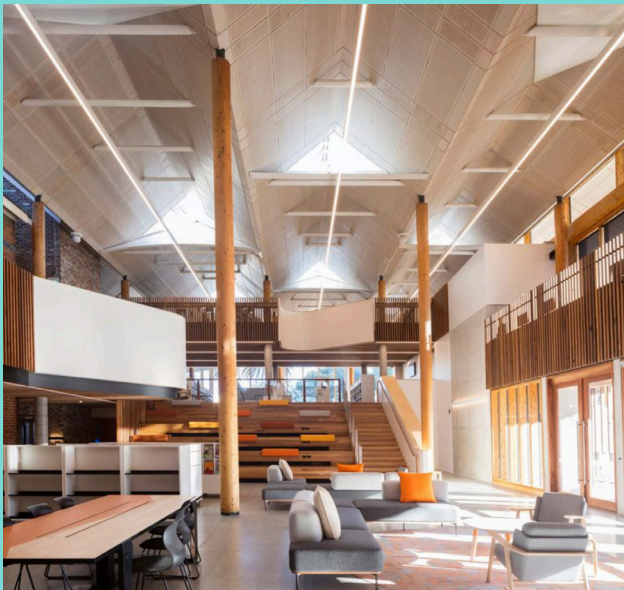
Size: GFA 3,600m²

The building integrates contemporary design and technology with the original, conserved heritage elements of the main hospital building. It is incorporated with recycled elements and design features that reduce energy consumption.

Home to a collection of 85,000 books, it also has a robotic collection available to borrow. The second floor is dedicated to the Council's historic art book collection that previously was not easily accessible to the public.

The library offers 1,200m² of landscaped outdoor garden and a 100m² children's playground, small study rooms, a technology teaching area, printing facilities, Wi-Fi connectivity throughout the building, 26 public computers, cafe with indoor and outdoor seating and underground car parking.

The Pavilion is a 120m² large, bookable event room fitted with conference facilities and a commercial catering kitchen.



THE HUMAN LIBRARY, COPENHAGEN

Size: NA

The Human Library or "Menneskebiblioteket" was created in Copenhagen. It is a global innovative and hands-on learning platform and was designed to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue.

The Human Library is a place where real people are on loan to readers. A place where difficult questions are expected, appreciated and answered. While starting in Copenhagen, Denmark, it is available in more than 80 countries.

'A book' in the Human Library is a person that volunteered to represent a stigmatized group in the community and based on their personal experiences can answer questions from readers to help challenge what is being said/told/understood about a given topic. To help shed light on the facts as you know them. 'Books' are not political, but rather able to surrender to the agenda of the reader and allow them control of the conversation.

Embedded in high school to higher learning, medical training to civic engagement, the aim is to improve understanding of diversity in order to help create more inclusive and cohesive communities across cultural, religious, social and ethnic differences.



A 'book' and his reader

source: humanlibrary.org



THE CONTAINER LIBRARY, AUCKLAND

The Container Library is situated in a picturesque setting on Te Wero Bridge on the waterfront in Auckland. Library visitors can lay back on their bean bags and read to their heart's content.

Open to the public during daylight hours on sunny days, it's a public spot where library visitors are both librarian and borrower, custodian and patron.

This is a wonderful place to stop with friends, letting visitors relax and read a story together while enjoying a view of the water. Visitors can also rotate their own personal book collection here, with a 'take one, leave one' swap system.

The container library was put together by Panuku Development Auckland with sixty-five dollars cash and the generous offerings of books from Auckland Council Libraries, plants from Auckland Council City Parks and some great furniture from lovely free-cycle donors.

This is a great example of how pop-up and alternative, low-tech library spaces can activate neighbourhoods and encourage social interaction for communities.



The Container Library

source: heartofthecity.co.nz/

Community Engagement Findings

The following provides a summary of the key community engagement findings that have shaped the aspiration and strategic priorities of the Camden Libraries Strategy.



Engagement promotional poster

Library Installations + Pop Ups

Cred Consulting installed unmanned feedback stations at Camden Library, Oran Park Library and Narellan Library over a four-week period in September. Across all libraries, over 200 responses were received.

The feedback stations provided an opportunity for library visitors to have their say over a relatively longer period of time compared to a traditional pop-up, a benefit considering lower library visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also allowed visitors to view and be inspired by responses from other people.

At each library, visitors were encouraged to respond to the following questions by writing their comments on a post-it note and sticking it on a poster:

- What do you love about your library?
- What would you change about your library?
- What are your future ideas for your library?

Visitors were also encouraged to provide written feedback on a colourful card to the question: "What does your library mean to you?" These cards were then attached to a piece of string to create a colourful bunting that decorated the library throughout the engagement period.

Ensuring COVID-19 safe practices, Cred Consulting facilitated two physically-distanced pop-ups at Oran Park Library and Narellan Library on Saturdays in September. The purpose of these pop-ups was to collect qualitative data through conversations and observations with community members about the questions posed through the feedback stations. Across both pop-ups, we spoke with over 50 community members including families and children, older people, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Feedback about Narellan Library

Participants **loved**:

- Friendly, helpful and kind staff;
- The wide range and variety of books to borrow;
- The light and airy space;
- Quiet places to work and study;
- It is a peaceful, calm and pleasant atmosphere;
- Take-home kits to keep you occupied at home;
- The large and easy design and access;
- Other resources for loan including DVDs, CDs, and telescopes;
- Range of technology, including computers;
- The range of programs and groups (e.g. tech savvy service, knitting groups) ;
- Being able to come and sit and read;
- Desks for studying;
- Being able to do family history research; and
- The enclosed play area.

Things they **would change**:

- Longer opening hours, especially on Saturdays;
- More and improved study spaces (e.g. improved lighting and more modern and fun design);
- More of and a wider variety books;
- Wider range of DVDs and newer CDs;
- Better promotion of resources and facilities available upstairs;
- More staff to have help at hand for everyone;
- Improved system to return books; and
- Improved parent room facilities.

People wrote down the reasons ***why Narellan Library was important to them*** on a card that was attached to a colourful bunting and decorated the building throughout the engagement period. Common themes included:

- Wide range of books that cater for all interests;
- The atmosphere of the library, with key words used to describe the place including: quiet, tranquil, safe, peaceful, comfortable, clean, helpful, productive and accessible;
- A quiet place to read and/or study without distractions or with friends;
- To borrow books, audio books, DVDs and CDs;
- Access to free resources and information;
- Access to technology including computers, Wi-Fi, printers and photocopiers;
- Staff are helpful and friendly;
- Borrowing is easy, affordable and eco-friendly;
- Size and open spaces of the library;
- Aesthetically pleasing design and layout;
- An important place to escape to during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- A place to socialise and talk to people;
- A free service for the community; and
- Open for many hours in the day.

Feedback about Oran Park Library

Participants ***loved:***

- The modern and colourful design of the building, including the artworks and metal bugs;
- A good selection of books to borrow;
- The quiet and relaxing atmosphere;
- Good customer service;

- Nice study areas;
- The large windows that provide a lot of natural light;
- The large size of the library, and the split level which allows for quiet studying upstairs and play downstairs;
- Programs for young children, which are great for kids and a nice place for parents to connect and meet; and
- The fun and interactive play areas for children.

Things they ***would change:***

- More of and a wider variety books and resources, including books in diverse community languages;
- Longer opening hours, to make it more accessible for people who work during the day;
- Would like to be able to log in to computers for a longer period of time;
- Would like study rooms to be available to everyone in the community and not just students;
- More programs for children and young people; and
- More programs available in the evening or on weekends to enable people to attend outside of work hours.

The reasons ***why Oran Park Library was important to the community*** was:

- The importance of the library during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Provides a quiet and calm place to come to study, work or borrow resources such as books and DVDs;
- Access to computers and free Wi-Fi at the library; and
- The colourful artworks and metal bugs.

Feedback about Camden Library

Participants ***loved:***

- Friendly, helpful, supportive and positive staff;
- The history and character of the old building;
- It's quiet, calm, relaxing and comforting;
- Fast computers;
- Air conditioning;
- No traffic to get here;
- Co-location with the family history library and museum;
- The great collection; and
- Generally happy with the services.

Things they ***would change:***

- More separated spaces for quiet study;
- More space for young people / larger youth space;
- More computer time for students that have no internet at home;
- Prefer books for children rather than screens;
- Increase the size of the library;
- More social activities for seniors;
- More social groups after hours, for example reading clubs for working parents;
- Lounge and comfortable seating to relax;
- More new audio fiction books and DVDs; and
- Provide hot water for tea.

The reasons ***why Camden Library was important to the community*** was:

- It's a welcoming and safe place;
- Provides good access to resources including books, information and computers; and
- Staff are known to the community.

School Engagement

As there was a relatively lower response rate from children in the online community survey (conducted by Council in February 2020), Cred Consulting prepared three surveys aimed at very young children, primary school aged children and secondary school aged young people. These were distributed by Council to local primary and secondary schools and were also distributed at each library.

The surveys aimed to be fun and creative, with a focus on storytelling, and also to collect meaningful information about the preferences and aspirations of children for their libraries.

Over 250 survey responses were received from the following schools:

- Camden Public School;
- Elderslie High School;
- Elizabeth Macarthur High School;
- Harrington Park Public School;
- Magdalene Catholic College;
- Mater Dei School;
- Mount Annan Christian College;
- Mount Annan High School; and
- Narellan Vale Public School.

Young Children's Survey (age 4-8 yrs)

The survey for young children included two activities. The first activity asked children to draw a picture of themselves visiting the best library in the world.

A few drawings are pictured on the following pages, with common elements including:

- books and comic books;
 - computers;
 - bean bags;
 - play spaces;
 - quiet areas;
 - indoor plants or trees;
 - cool design elements;
 - arts and crafts areas;
 - tech areas including 3D printers; and
 - study area with desks and chairs.
-
- Other elements include:
 - gaming devices
 - food and drink
 - animals (dogs and cats)
 - happy smiling faces and lots of kids
 - beehive.

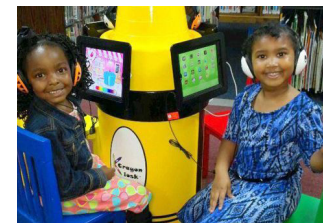
For the second activity, a sheet of images was provided and the children were asked to cut out their three favourite images and write down what they like about that image. The top images are shown to the right.



- There's a lot of colour and books and a slide
- It looks fun and exciting



- Kids might get tired & they can have a lie down
- So many books, curved shelves
- Fun places
- Looks like a tree house



- Play video games or ipad reading
- Kids are learning on their devices and having fun



- Comfortable
- Reading makes you smart
- It is colourful
- Bean bags



- We could have so much fun
- Love watching youtube
- Play games

Primary School Children (9-12 yrs)

Children said that what they like doing now in the libraries is reading and borrowing books, using the computers, relaxing and resting, seeing people be happy and doing arts and craft including drawing.

Based on a series of pictures provided on a worksheet, the following activities were identified as being those they would like to see or do in the future:

- computers;
- books to read;
- 3D printers;
- bean bags;
- places for art and craft;
- quiet areas;
- lots of plants;
- play spaces; and
- toys and games to borrow.

Children were asked to draw and/or describe their dream library, with descriptions including:

"A library that when you walk in it feels like heaven. Decorations above, lots of kids books, lots of sofas, lots of bean bags, a wall of plants, some computers and a projector, and wooden walls. And if you can, plants hanging"

"My dream library has computers and has 2 storeys. The upstairs area is where kids can play and read, also there is a room up there with computers. Down stairs there is an area for parents and a quiet area"

Young People Survey (age 13+ yrs)

Survey respondents were most likely to have visited Narellan Library, followed by Camden Library and Oran Park Library. Young people were most likely to have used the library for study or research. Common uses included:

- study or research;
- meet with friends;
- borrow books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks, magazines;
- Wi-Fi;
- use as a quiet place to read; and
- use the internet.

Young people were asked what they think would make Camden Libraries better places for young people, and the most common selections were:

- Longer opening hours;
- More places to study in groups;
- More homework and study support programs;
- More social places to relax and meet friends;
- Bigger variety of books;
- More access to creative technology resources (e.g. computers, 3D printers, video and sound editing); and
- More free and affordable programs and activities.

Young people had the following ideas to help make Camden Libraries better places for young people:

- 24 hours access;
- More study areas, including for groups;
- Designated areas for junior students, senior students, uni/TAFE, the elderly, children;
- Programs to encourage literature acquisition for all ages;
- More study groups for year 11 and 12;
- Inviting outdoor garden space that can be used as a study escape and where people can relax;
- Laptop charging stations or even ones for iPods for those who bring their own devices;
- More study materials (e.g. textbooks, study guides);
- Outdoor space, nature, fresh air, windows; and
- More group study space.

Stakeholder engagement

We held three focus groups with Council advisory committees, including the Youth Council, the Access Advisory Committee and the Cohesive Communities Advisory Committee. We also hosted two workshops with Council staff, one with the Library team to better understand the role of libraries in the Camden LGA, what is working well and challenges as well as ideas for the future spaces, programs and how to respond to the needs of the Camden community.

Stakeholders told us that libraries in Camden are inclusive community spaces that are welcoming, safe and non-transactional for everyone to enjoy. They indicated libraries have a range of roles within the community, such as acting as a community hub, information resource centre, as well as recreational space for people to enjoy.

Staff told us the community values their libraries as places to meet, gather and socialise. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, participants told us the important role libraries play in fostering social connections and supporting individual wellbeing through the programs, activities and spaces they provide.

Stakeholders also indicated libraries within Camden are places that encourage and nurture education and learning experiences for people of all ages. Participants expressed that libraries provide additional resources and support, whether it be online or face-to-face, including classes, workshops and other training sessions that enable the community to continue to learn and grow.

Library staff discussed that their aspiration for libraries in Camden is to be:

- The role of libraries should be fluid – they should be all things to all people. With the local community changing we have to change with them;
- Sometimes a homeless person just wants to be – the role of libraries should be to be open to everyone in our community to do what they need. We need to keep the needs of the community at the heart of all decision making;
- Libraries should provide a ‘third place’ for the community and be welcoming and supportive. This means that anyone and everyone should be represented and included at the library, including culturally diverse community members and First Nations people. The library design itself can be powerful in this sense;
- Libraries should be open to everybody. We need to have a clear purpose and mission in everything we do when it comes to programs because we are competing with commercial offerings;
- Libraries should be setting goals to reduce emissions and waste and be a leader in the community. We can play a role in creating the sustainable and renewable environment;
- Libraries can play an important role in reaching the UN goals and in particular related to inclusion across income;
- Libraries can connect people across different cultural backgrounds and to their local place; and
- We are specialists in finding information and connecting people to that information.

Staff noted that they would like to see new and innovative approaches adopted to library service delivery in new areas. For example, when discussing a possible new library at Leppington Town Centre, staff noted opportunities to implement pop-up approaches, such as shipping containers or moveable, temporary structures.

Stakeholders said that library services could play an important role in connecting community members in new neighbourhoods, contributing to a strong emerging sense of place, bringing people together and connecting them to important resources and information about their new area. In this sense, the new library could play a dual role as a customer service centre in the early days.

Staff think that there is opportunity for increased internal stakeholder partnership at Council to realise interesting new projects, as well as partnerships with non-Council partners and industry.

All stakeholders also noted that it will be important to ensure future library service delivery responds to the changed characteristics of the Camden community, including increasing cultural diversity with potential need for more resources in community languages, English as a Second Language programs and library design that actively celebrates cultural diversity and local connection

to place.

Other ideas across all libraries included:

- Acknowledgment of country at all library locations;
- Opportunity for increased awareness of the value of libraries within Council;
- Increased multicultural collections including books and newspapers;
- Increased promotion of library services and programs;
- Improved promotion of library programs with library logo included on promotional materials;
- Increased opportunity for partnerships around programs and events. Would be good to have a library stall at the Camden Show and other community events to promote the library; and
- Opportunity for more 'life skills' programs for all ages (e.g. how to change a tyre, how to pay taxes etc).



Photo source: Matthew Duchesne©
FancyBoy Photography

