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Library Strategic Plan

Vibrant Places - People Spaces



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Vibrant Places – People Spaces

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Foreword

Vibrant Places – People Spaces

A vision for Camden Council Library Service 2010

"A Camden which has achieved a broad range of opportunities for a prosperous and complete lifestyle...A sense of community and involvement is an important factor in the quality of life and must be nurtured in order to produce a 'better future' for the entire Camden community."

Camden 2025

Our community has evolved and so to ensure that Council's libraries continue to be relevant and contribute to the achievement of the 2025 vision a strategic plan has been developed.

Our libraries play a pivotal role in providing opportunities for all Camden residents to embrace Camden's culture and sense of community.

The Library Service Strategic Plan: "Vibrant Places – People Spaces" provides direction, a vision for what our libraries will be in the 21st century.

What is the role of libraries in the 21st century

What is the role of libraries in Camden?

How can libraries assist Council to meet its strategic vision of 2025?

The plan is underpinned by three key documents that set out:

- Critical success factors and transition plans;
- Blue print for achieving the outcomes; and
- Background research upon which the plan has been developed.

The vision for Council's libraries is ambitious, innovative and achievable. The realization of the outcomes of the plan will contribute towards Council's achievement of the 2025 vision for a socially and economically sustainable community.

Our Vision

A Vision For Camden Library Service.... More Than Books!

Camden libraries are a focal point, a centre of activity and natural meeting place. They provide a focal point for the community, in the same way that the village square provided a focal point in the 18th century.

Our libraries provide:

- An environment rich in experience
- A range of recreational opportunities from puppet shows for children, play stations for adolescents, literary discussion and workshops for adults
- Opportunities for learning - from bubs and books programs for toddlers to internet classes for seniors
- Opportunities to meet, form connections, a communal meeting place
- A place to be - a safe place that provides opportunities for individuals to pursue areas of interest or to participate in group activities
- An environment of acceptance and valuing - where all members of the community feel significant and represented in the environment and programs provided
- A place for people to call their own - to belong.

To achieve these outcomes our libraries will be wonderful interesting places that continually capture people's interest through architecture, art works created by professionals and community, programs, collections and activities that continually evolve.

- Our libraries are modern libraries, connecting tradition with technology, reflecting the best of both worlds. Our libraries will become libraries without walls, extending our services through web based technology to meet the needs of our community.
- Our libraries will retain the traditional core library services however, will have a place based focus that reflects the location of the library and the people within that community. Each library service will have its own personality and identity, rather than a franchise approach where one size fits all, there is an approach of tailoring the environment, services and programs provided to reflect the community in which it is located.

Through this approach rather than trying to be all things to all people and spreading the service too thin, each library will have a focus that will offer a depth and richness to the service provided to the community.

Camden libraries are libraries of opportunity providing a visionary gateway to the world.

Libraries are more than books - they enrich people's lives. Libraries are places where you can come to read, learn, connect and belong. Our libraries provide a common ground – a place in our community where individuals can be connected. They foster a passion for reading, spark intellectual curiosity and support lifelong learning.

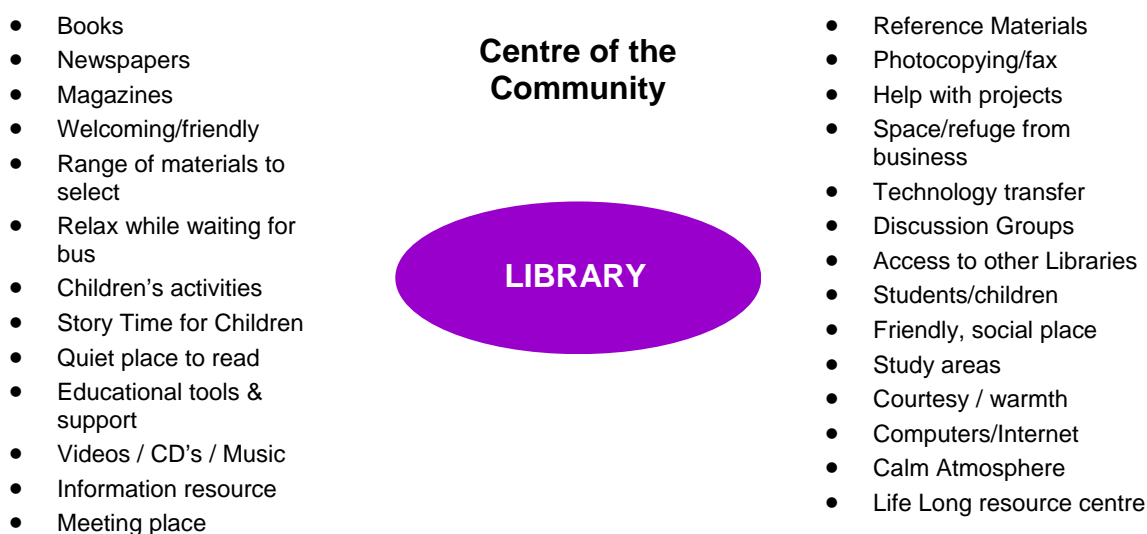
The Face of Our Community

Council undertook a program of broad consultation and research to provide libraries that are reflective of the community and the place in which they are located. In order to plan for our community it is important to know and understand the community.. the people.

Our libraries are for everyone. With this in mind Council consulted with a broad cross section of the community using a variety of strategies. This included surveying people who currently use Council's library service as well as those who do not; conducting focus groups and workshops involving people from a diverse range of backgrounds including high schools students, young mothers, adults/parents of various ages, senior citizens, Chinese and Arabic residents.

What our community has said

People who took part in the consultation were asked what came to mind when asked about their local library. Below is an overview of how local people perceive Libraries ...



People in our community already value and support our libraries. The perception and expectation of our libraries vary however; fundamental to this is that the library has meaning for every individual and all individuals see that the library provides something for them.

As part of the community the library has different meanings for different people and expectations are equally varied. Some people need a haven, a safe place to go, a quiet oasis, whilst others desire stimulation and activity

Libraries make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of the local community. They provide a sense of place and create opportunities for all citizens to participate in the life of the community. Libraries provide opportunities for learning, cultural and recreational pursuits as well as a place to make connections with others in the community. Libraries create a sense of belonging.

Community Expectations of Future Library Facilities

Our community was asked what should be considered when developing new library facilities

This is a summary of what they said:

- Flexible spaces and meeting rooms should be available to serve a range of community organisations. Training room with associated equipment is desirable.
- Lack of space is a major limitation in the existing facilities. Consideration must be given to more flexible and creative use of internal open space. Practical space allocation between stacks is also required for ease of use (i.e. whether a wheelchair or pram can be turned in comfort).
- The amenity of the facilities was indicated as very important to all ages and genders. A library should have a welcoming, light airy ambience or atmosphere and be a stimulating environment incorporating topical and local interest displays and creative art. A library must also have space to relax, reflect and 'recharge the batteries'. Provide comfortable lounges in quiet areas, tables and chairs in research and newspaper areas.
- Libraries should be 'resource centres' integrating a range of community facilities by either incorporating them into one facility or co-locating. These facilities include childcare, medical services (e.g. baby health) clinic, youth services, shopping and recreational activities.
- Availability of refreshments is agreed by all to be desirable, preferably a coffee shop possibly linked with 'friends of the library' who may assist staff.
- Facilities for children and teens are essential but should be in separate areas (possibly with glass partitions) so self-expression and interaction does not interfere with other library users. Linking location of future facilities with youth centre nearby would be a great advantage.
- Formal occasional childcare, play area and activities centre are seen to be essential to encourage use by young families. Sufficient space to turn a stroller (1.5sq.m) and easy access throughout building is essential, including a comfortable parenting room.
- Technical equipment including computers, scanner, photocopier, fax machine and access to the Internet are vital. Training in the use of this equipment is seen as an activity naturally linked with the library.

"Libraries should be 'resource centres' integrating a range of community facilities"

"Develop the Libraries into community information centres, linking them to up-to-date community information"

"Camden Library's heritage façade should be retained to enhance the ambience of the township"

- Expanding the range of resources is always desirable particularly in school support materials, self-help and hobby topics. This extends to CDs, videos and computer tutorials in various topics including English lessons for use by non English speaking background residents.
- Expansion of interactive groups to incorporate community, current affairs, local issues in discussion groups has been suggested by many as a way of building community capacity.

Our community was asked about where future libraries should be located

This is a summary of what they said during focus groups:

- Mount Annan near Leisure Centre. Particularly preferred by young mothers group. This location was seen by young people to be too close to Narellan. Young people were requesting services/facilities more related to Youth Activity Centre with a library annex
- North of Camden Valley Way at Harrington Park or further north in new development area.
- Extend Narellan Library to provide required facilities in central location, already close to transport and other facilities.
- There was strong support in the focus group to extend Camden Library to incorporate the former Fire Station and areas adjacent to buildings. The community prefers the current location of the library as it is seen as central. However, comments from the focus groups indicated that the space needed to be expanded and improved to provide better access for people who used wheel chairs and prams and improved space for activities in the library.

Accessible and centrally located libraries

Who Are The People
In Our Community And
How Do They Live?

Our community is growing and changing rapidly. This brings a number of challenges in terms of how to ensure our libraries can meet the demand for services as well as the increasing expectations.

The majority of growth is occurring in the new release areas to the north, south and east of Narellan. These new communities are mostly two parent families with young or teenage children who have not previously lived within the Camden Local Government Area. This means that most have limited networks and connections within the community.

According to the ABS Census 2001:

- Camden's population has reached 43,945. This means an increase of 11,836 people or 37% from the last census in 1996.
- Camden is currently growing at a rate of 8% per annum. On average 44 new residents move into the Camden LGA each week.
- Almost 40% of Camden's community are under 25 years of age.
- Approximately 85% of our population is under 55 years of age
- Approximately 80% of our people who are in paid employment commute outside the local government area each day.

It is within this context that Council must ensure that its library services are delivered, not only to the established communities but also the establishing areas and recognize the different needs, expectations and aspirations of these communities.

What This Means For Our Library Services

Where we are now

Camden Council's Library Service currently consists of two service points, at Camden and Narellan.

These libraries provide a range of services and programs for the local community including:

Children's Programs

- Internet training
- Outreach visits to schools, playgroups child care services
- After School Activities
- Holiday Activities
- Pre-school Story time
- Summer Reading Club

Youth Services Programs

- Book Launches
- Project Busters to assist young people to research effectively
- One-on-one Internet Training
- Pizza & Internet
- Summer Reading Program
- School Holiday Workshops
- Youth and Information Expos
- HSC Lectures & Coping with the HSC

Adult Services Programs

- Internet Training Workshops
- Home Library Service
- Bulk Loans to local organisations, including retirement villages, hostels and nursing homes
- Book Discussion Group

Council has also previously identified the need for a library service in the Mount Annan area and has been collecting developer contributions to fund this service.

In late 2001 the New South Wales government announced the major development of the Bringelly area. If this development proceeds it will result in an additional 100,000 people living in the local government area. Given the magnitude of the proposed development the area was not considered as part of this strategic plan. If the development does proceed planning for library services in the area will be undertaken in conjunction with the overall planning for the release area.

However, access to library services and programs are still an issue for the people in the rural north areas of Camden. Advice was sought from the New South Wales State Library on how best to meet these needs given the announcement of the State Government. The State Library has advised that it would not be cost effective for Camden to have a mobile library service due to the significant capital cost and the fact that it is more difficult to provide a full service using a mobile library service.

In the interim to assist people living in the rural north area, older people and less mobile people to access Council's library services the following will continue to be implemented and further developed:

- continue to cater for older and less mobile people through the home library service;
- improved web based access through upgrading our web site; and
- provide a range of outreach programs to identified target groups using existing community facilities and structures

"Libraries are not made; they grow" Augustine Birrell

Where do we need to be

Libraries with Personality. Library Services that are vibrant places – people spaces

Through its library services Council is able to deliver a number of the key community outcomes identified in its vision 2025.

Council's library services make a significant contribution to the well being of the local community by fostering a sense of belonging and place and by promoting the well being of its citizens.

Through re positioning its library services so that they are place based and have a stronger community focus there will be improved outcomes in terms of the social sustainability of Camden.

People from all walks of life will find common ground inside the walls of our libraries. They will be centres for learning, literature, heritage, knowledge and cultural activities. They will be critical to the development of a well-informed and vibrant community.

We will continue to be the same familiar place where you can borrow books, CDs and videos and introduce your children to their first reading experience, but rather than a franchise approach of one-size fits all, Camden's Libraries will be place-based and place-focussed.

Our library service will not have a central library or branch structure, but rather three individual services, Camden, Narellan and Mount Annan, each operating to meet the needs of its community.

In order to effectively 'place' our libraries within the community where they are located, each library will continue to provide the core services such as a range of fiction and non-fiction resources; Internet and word processing facilities; meeting spaces and literacy support programs such as preschool story time.

Our libraries will also have specific features both architecturally and physically, and will provide a range of programs and activities that will give each its own identity and 'personality'.

The individuality of each library will be reflected in its collection, services, programs, building architecture, artwork and in the partnerships developed with local organisations and groups.

Each library should incorporate within its environment:

- multipurpose meeting space that can be used for library activities, training sessions and community activities. The rooms would be equipped with a small kitchenette, audiovisual equipment and have floor surfaces that allow for wet and dry activities.
- Community art and display areas.
- A café – this will be leased to a private operator with lease income used to supplement the library income to support a greater range of activities and programs.
- Space for promotions and events/displays provided by local community groups, businesses and organisations.
- Outdoor space that will encourage a program of street performances enriching the cultural experiences available.
- Concept of 'living rooms' providing a variety of spaces for individuals and groups where people feel comfortable and at ease.
- User friendly promotional material and signage.

We will provide diverse spaces to facilitate a variety of activities to meet the needs of our community. The community will have a place to gather, to attend workshops and programs, to meet friends and make new friends and most of all to have fun.

Libraries Of Opportunity

Each of our libraries will be co-located with other facilities and organizations. This will improve access to services by members of our community, raise the profile of our library services as well as the other services they are co located with and achieve some economies of scale when constructing new facilities.

Over the past 12 months a number of community organisations in the Camden Local Government Area have expressed the need for more visible, appropriate and accessible office accommodation and program delivery space. Co-location with the library would achieve this outcome. Libraries draw in the community and open doors to windows of opportunities.

The benefits of co-locating our library services are numerous; including one stop convenience and opportunity, the community using and acknowledging the facilities as a “community building”, building maintenance and security and sharing of infrastructure.

The library will form strong partnerships and networks. Engaging in partnerships with a variety of partners, including community members, businesses, community organisations and agencies that share mutual goals will expand and revitalize the reach of our library. Our services will be enriched and partnerships will bring new dimensions to all.

These partnerships will bring new perspectives, new ideas and possibly additional resources and funding to library programs. Through partnerships we will attract new audiences and be able to create unique programs and services for our community.

Summary of Strategic Directions to Promote Our Libraries “As Vibrant Places - People Spaces”

Place and people focussed libraries

STRATEGY:	1. Positioning our Libraries to be central to and a reflection of the community in which they are placed by:
	a) Identifying and establishing appropriate partnership arrangements
	b) Creating vibrant and accessible facilities for local communities
	c) Reflecting the local culture

STRATEGY:	2. Providing equitable access to library services by:
	a) Ensuring our libraries are accessible
	b) Providing a choice of access points
	c) Providing opening hours which reflect community needs
	d) Delivering information in a variety of formats
	e) Providing community information

STRATEGY:	3. Promoting the role of our libraries as centres for information literacy; recreation, leisure and cultural activities; and lifelong learning by:
a) Promoting lifelong learning	
b) Developing partnerships with appropriate agencies to meet community needs	
c) Increasing awareness of each Library's facilities and services	
d) Providing cultural opportunities within the libraries	
e) Promoting the recreation and leisure services	

These directions will ensure that the Library Service will continue to provide a sense of place and opportunity for all citizens to participate in the life of the community.

Through innovative design, partnerships and effective use of emergent technology, the Library Service will form an effective hub for community development and individual participation.

Camden Library

A “working country town” library with a strong heritage and cultural focus



The Camden Library will be enhanced to strengthen the “working country town” identity and will provide a focus for the cultural and heritage aspects of Camden.

Camden Library will retain its heritage facade, however, behind this facade will be a library service with cutting edge technology. Camden Library will retain its historical flavour with a sensitive redevelopment of the historical precinct to maximise the available space. This redevelopment will allow the Camden Library achieve the space requirements of the State Library, which will then mean that Council will be able to apply for future capital funding and improve physical access to the library.

The existing library service will be physically linked with the Camden Historical Society and former Fire Station to create an exciting cultural heritage precinct. This precinct will provide a place in the community where people gather. The library site will emerge as a social centre – a library co-located with a museum, promoting the “working country town” through displays, collections and programs. Information will be provided to residents and visitors alike about historical and contemporary Camden.

The existing lane way between the Library, former Fire Station and Museum will be covered to create a galleria, providing an inviting and accessible entrance to the Library and Museum. The galleria will provide an interesting entrance with exhibition space as well as a small café. Smell the aroma of the café, buy a coffee and sit back comfortably and read, take in the moment or meet with friends.

People will enter the library from the galleria and will be greeted by a library containing traditional style furniture to complement the heritage focus. The library will contain specialised collections for local studies, family history and agriculture. The local history collection currently held will be further expanded with an interesting collection of books and photographs. These local studies resources will be used to actively promote local culture and heritage to the world through Council and community web pages.

The Museum and library activities and collections will be strengthened through a partnership, which will involve sharing expertise, time and collections. This will improve access to the local collections to both residents and visitors

A Local Studies/Community Information Librarian will be employed to provide the local community with a record of the past, to actively document the present and to celebrate with the community local endeavour and achievement. Students in the community will have access to resources that help them to understand the historical context of Camden's past. Visual displays will make ‘yesterday’ available to the community.

The Camden Area Family History Society will complete the experience, relocating from the Narellan to the Camden Library. With increased interest in the history of the area, people will be able to receive expert advice from local historians how to research their family history and access the wide range of resources available.

The former fire station will be redeveloped to provide workshop, meeting and collection and exhibition space.

Current and future generations of Camden residents will have access to local information resources that enable them to participate fully in the life of the community. The redeveloped library will develop knowledge of and an appreciation of Camden's history and its people.

The proposal seeks to preserve and strengthen traditional services that Camden Library has offered the community, while at the same time, presenting new and exciting opportunities through partnerships and technology.

This proposal provides a base, which can be expanded if the Visitors Information centre relocates into the Camden Township. Once this occurs, the Library, Museum and Visitors Centre can provide joint programs such as historical walks and guided tours to places of local significance.

Mount Annan Library

Experiential multi-functional library focussing on families and young people

The library services at Mount Annan will perform a crucial role in providing a meeting place for the community and offer a variety of opportunities that do not currently exist.

Over 90% of the population in the Mount Annan / Currans Hill area are under 54 years of age. There are a significant number of families with young children and young people living in the area.

The new library service at Mount Annan will be a modern library with a focus on recreation and promotion of life long learning.

There are two appropriate sites in the Mount Annan area that are in Council's ownership. One site is the land adjoining the Mount Annan Leisure centre; the other site is located within the Mount Annan District Centre.

Consultation with the community and Council officers have identified that a new library service located on the leisure centre site will provide far greater benefits and opportunities to the community. Development of a modern library service co-located with the Mount Annan Leisure centre will result in a multifunctional space providing a range of exciting opportunities - combining recreational, library and general community use.

There is opportunity to incorporate youth specific spaces within the complex and extend existing children's and youth programs within the precinct such as the youth room that currently exists within the Leisure Centre and the Mount Annan Youth car park project.

The library will focus on families and young people providing a range of experiences on the one site, reducing travelling time and car trips for families who need to transport their children to various activities. The co-location of the library with other facilities will allow family members to undertake a range of activities on the one site for example while children are at swimming lessons - parents will be able to visit the library enjoy a quiet coffee in the café or take their younger children to story time.

The library will be a modern facility with a particular focus on families with children and young people, reflecting the needs of the local community. The library will consist of a series of "living rooms", spaces specifically designed for children, young people and adults. The children's area will be creatively designed to provide an optimum early childhood environment that is child-scaled to provide a sense of enclosure and intimacy. Small - scale environments draw children into complex play sooner and they play longer and with greater attention spans.

The youth living room will have vibrant and funky seating, study tables, computers, CD Listening stations, bookshelves, visual displays and a wet space workshop area.

CD Listening posts will be located throughout the library, offering people a range of music to enjoy while reading or passing the time of day.

There will be a community meeting room, equipped with a small kitchenette, chairs and tables and display boards to enable a variety of activities.

A small theatrette will be incorporated in the library to be used for school holiday movies, commercial hire and training purposes.

Computers will be strategically placed through out the library to enable ready access to electronic resources.

There will be a flow of indoor to outdoor space for the conduct of library activities as well as outdoor performance space where families can gather on a lazy Saturday afternoon to watch a play, band or street theatre. Families will be able to bring a picnic, sit back and enjoy the activities.

The site will emerge as a focus area of community activity - a natural meeting place.

A drive through library will also be provided on site where people are able to request items on line and collect their books without leaving their vehicles. It will also be possible to return items via drive through using an after hours-return chute. This facility will assist the residents that commute out of the area each day.

Through placing the library on the leisure centre site the alternative site in the Mount Annan District Centre could become available for the provision of accommodation and program delivery space for local community organisations.

Narellan Library

The technology and “how to” library



Narellan will be the main information and technology library focussing on current and evolving technologies and “How to...” information reflecting the new growth characteristics of surrounding suburbs.

The Narellan Urban Improvement Plan (UIP) has as a key objective “to improve the community focus and activities in Narellan”.

The proposed draft vision recommends that Council provide a built presence on its land fronting Elyard Street reinforcing a civic presence in this emerging heart of Narellan. It is envisaged that civic presence will be a library co-located with other community agencies.

The site is ideal and offers opportunities for Council to meet one of its key strategic directions through the creation of a civic and community focus in the Narellan area. The proposal to move the library to the corner of Elyard and Queen Streets will complement the extended community activities proposed. This extension includes the development of a Children’s and Family Services Resource Centre.

The building will be designed to be flexible so that over the years it can accommodate growth.

There will be a unified identity to the building with a central foyer displaying community information, local arts and culture

Attached to the foyer will be community meeting rooms available to community organisations or local businesses equipped with tables, chairs, a small kitchenette, whiteboard and overhead projector.

Narellan Library will have a technology centre that will be used to provide instruction in Internet searching and the use of other electronic resources.

Computer classes and “How to” workshops, including gardening, landscape design and stress release classes will be among many learning opportunities readily available to residents.

The library will consist of a series of “living rooms”. There will be opportunities for youth library services to include late night programs – complementing the proposed cinema complex. After a late movie session young people will have the opportunity to visit the Library and Youth Group Internet Café.

Round tables and comfortable seating will be available for people to read newspapers and magazines.

Interactive displays will be located throughout the library.

Adequate space will be provided for staff to perform their jobs effectively.

Re-locating the library to the corner of Queen and Elyard Streets will free up office space in the Narellan Administration building. This space could be used to meet the future accommodation needs of Council and would require minimal retro fit-out.

How Will This Be
Funded

Council has been collecting Section 94 funds from developers over a number of years to fund district level facilities such as libraries as well as a range of other community facilities.

Council currently has approximately \$3.8 million in paid contributions towards library services, under the Contributions Plan 2, 21 and 18. These funds were collected for facilities predominantly in Mount Annan, Currans Hill and Harrington Park areas.

The contributions plans are currently being reviewed and consolidated into one overall plan. The consolidated plan will provide Council with greater flexibility in implementing the associated works programs. This means that Council will be able to forward fund projects where there is a priority need.

As at October 2002 Council has collected sufficient Section 94 funds to undertake the proposed works at the Camden Library and the Mount Annan library. Funding for the Narellan Library will predominantly come from the Spring Farm and Elderslie release areas. This means that it will be some time before these funds are collected.

Conclusion

Libraries play a vital role in our community in the 21st century. As our community evolves our libraries too need to evolve to ensure that they remain relevant.

The Library Services Strategic Plan will position Council's Libraries to fulfill the extended role that libraries play in the 21st century. A place where all people in our community will find something - whether it is a place to be, information for a school assignment, opportunities for continued learning or a place to form friendships.

Through reflecting the place in which our libraries are located and the people within the community they serve our libraries will extend beyond a place where books dwell to become dynamic places offering experiences, knowledge and opportunities for life long learning.

They will be vibrant places...people spaces.