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## **13.7 LIBRARY SERVICE PROPOSED NEW DIRECTIONS**

**File Number: 20/01/01**

**Officer: General Manager Community**

### **1. Summary**

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the findings of the Sustainability Review for Library Services prior to seeking feedback from the community in relation to the new directions and alternative service delivery model proposed from the review.

### **2. Recommendation**

**That Council:**

- (i) implement an Engagement Plan to seek feedback from the community in relation to the new directions and alternative Library Services Model as proposed in Section 4 of this report; and**
- (ii) is presented with a further report to consider community feedback prior to making any further decisions.**

### **3. Background**

The Library Service Sustainability Review has been undertaken to ensure that the Library Service is providing a cost effectiveness service to the community and is value for money. It is also to ascertain if it is delivering services as efficiently as it can and that it is affordable into the future.

Council has four physical Libraries located at Mildura, Red Cliffs, Merbein and Irymple and operates a Mobile Library Service to eight sites at Nangiloc, Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool, Cowangie, Murrayville, Lake Cullulleraine and Werrimull. The Library Service also provides an Inter-Library Loan Service to other Libraries mostly within Victoria and to its own members. The Library Service provides 166.6 hours a week of access to the community and 24/7 access through the Website.

Services include:

- collections of materials for use and loan
- branch services
- information technology
- community engagement programs.

The Sustainability Review has acknowledged that our public libraries are an important part of our community and contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of our residents but it has also identified a shift in the way people access library resources.

Other key points identified that our smaller libraries and Mobile Library are seeing a decrease in patronage at some locations and a significant increase in the cost of providing the service. (Total operating costs of Library Service in 2014-2015 was \$1,972,520 or 3.5 per cent of total rates raised that year).

The review also found that more people want to be able to access the library outside of normal opening hours and we have experienced growth in the use of our website and online services and e-resources.

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The Library Services Sustainability Review Confidential Final Report has been provided to Councillors in January 2016 which provides full details of the review including service levels, cost, benchmarking of services and alternative service methods to be considered.

The Review included consideration of different library models currently operating in Victoria and benchmarked our Library Service against itself and similar libraries.

#### **4. Discussion**

With all these changes the review identified that our current library service delivery model needs to be updated to ensure the service remains sustainable in the longer term. Costs to ratepayers are continually rising, while assistance from State Government is decreasing. Over the past 30 years State Government funding has decreased from 50 per cent to approximately 18 per cent.

Some of the key data from the Sustainability Review is identified below:

#### **Library Service membership, loans and visitation information**

##### **February 2015**

<b>Library</b>	<b>Membership</b>
Mildura	19,045
Red Cliffs	1,864
Merbein	1,245
Mobile	768
Irymple	473

##### **2014 - 2015**

The Irymple Library had the highest cost per loan and cost per visit compared to the other local branches

<b>Library</b>	<b>Cost per Loan</b>	<b>Cost per Visit</b>
Mildura	\$3.57	\$5.59
Red Cliffs	\$5.16	\$8.03
Merbein	\$5.46	\$8.37
Irymple	\$7.94	\$9.74
Mobile	\$14.22	\$38.45

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The below data also indicated the Mobile Library is a more expensive way to deliver library services and particular Mobile sites are underutilised compared to other sites. The Ouyen site had the lowest costs of all sites due to its higher loans and visitation numbers.

Mobile sites	Cost per Loan	Cost per Visit
Nangiloc	\$19	\$78
Werrimull	\$25	\$37
Lake Cullulleraine	\$13	\$74
Ouyen	\$8	\$23
Walpeup	\$13	\$30
Underbool	\$12	\$34
Cowangie	\$37	\$211
Murrayville	\$12	\$34

The proposed alternative service methods to be implemented would result in discontinuation of the Mobile Library Service and the closure of the Irymple Library.

## **New Directions**

### **Mallee Track and Werrimull areas**

As Ouyen is by far the most popular site for the Mobile Library, servicing the most customers, the proposal is to establish a permanent Library, available for use by the whole Community five days a week, at the Ouyen Service Centre. This would provide a significantly enhanced service to Ouyen residents and those along the Mallee Track who visit Ouyen.

The new Ouyen service would expand from an eight hour, one day per week service to physical access to approximately 4,000 library items five days a week from 8am – 5pm, a self-loans machine for the public to borrow their own materials, catalogue to search for and place holds on materials. Staff would be available to provide support and a computer with free internet access available, along with free Wi-Fi for those with their own devices.

The popular Home Library Service would continue to be available in Ouyen, and kindergarten and school visits will be continued along the Mallee Track. Library services to small towns such as Nangiloc, Werrimull, Lake Cullulleraine, Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool, Cowangie and Murrayville could include the introduction of a Depot arrangement whereby people can collect items they have requested and leave items they have finished with. Library items could be ordered online through the Library Services website at any time convenient to the customer and delivered through a parcel post arrangement and e-resources would continue to be available online as is currently the case.

This would replace the Mobile library service which only visits the towns one day per week for a short period ranging from one hour to 4.5 hours which only services very few people. On average, hourly visits to this service range between one to seven people.

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### **Irymple**

Data has also shown the Irymple Library is currently falling behind the other three Branch Libraries. The building itself is no longer appropriate for a modern Library, due mainly to its smaller size and technology advances that require more flexibility.

Changes to this service could include:

- A book return depot in shopping precinct

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- Library items would be ordered online through the Library Service website and
- delivered through a parcel post arrangement
- An expansion of the Home Library Service
- Kindergarten and school visits would continue
- Holiday activities for children would continue
- Building that is available for Community groups to utilise

If the changes are implemented the Library Officer at Irymple would be redeployed to a position available at the Mildura Library. The Mobile Library Officer position would change to Library Officer – Outreach which would assist in maintaining service to the remote areas of the Municipality, such as preparing Home Library Service at Ouyen, stock rotations etc and the part time Mobile Library Officer position (0.2 EFT) would be made redundant.

### 5. Time Frame

If the recommendations are adopted a further report will be presented to Council in July 2016 to consider what actions to take and determine timeframes if necessary.

### 6. Strategic Plan Links

This report relates to the Council Plan in the Key Result Areas:

#### 4.4 Financial Sustainability

Goals to be achieved:

- Financial sustainability
- Meet the community's needs in a financially responsible manner.
- 

Actions: Undertake an organisational sustainability review

#### 1.5 Arts and Cultural Heritage

Goal to be achieved:

- Everyone has access to a diverse range of quality library materials, services and programs.

### 7. Asset Management Policy/Plan Alignment

The Sustainability Review has considered the asset management implications associated with the Mobile Library, Irymple library and Ouyen Service Centre. However, this report has no implications on asset management at this stage.

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### 8. Consultation Proposed/Undertaken

The Review Panel members decided that since there was substantial consultation with the community in the development of the new *Library Service Strategic Plan in 2013* that this data would be used for the Sustainability Review. This report recommends that further consultation is completed before further consideration.

This consultation will include affected staff, library customers and the general community. This community engagement will include media releases, information sheets that can be accessed at libraries, service centres, relevant businesses, via social media and Council and Library websites.

Staff will attend advisory group meetings in relevant communities and conduct drop-in sessions at Irymple, Werrimull and the Mallee Track.

Submission forms will be made available for feedback.

## 9. Implications

### Policy Implication

The Engagement plan developed for the recommended process is in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

### Legal/Statutory Implications

There are no statutory implications with this report.

### Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with the recommendations of this report as the consultation will be completed by staff as part of normal operations.

The actions proposed in this report, if eventually adopted and implemented will provide the opportunity for the following cost savings:

- Discontinuing the Mobile Library Service would have operational savings per year of \$168,474.
- Future anticipated Capital cost savings for not replacing the Mobile Library are \$750,000.
- Closing the Irymple Library would have annual operational savings of over \$87,000.
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Set up costs for the Ouyen Services is estimated to be under \$30,000 and there will be costs involved with any parcel post deliveries. These savings do not factor in the proceeds of the disposal of the Mobile Library.

### Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

### Social Implications

Our library services deliver many benefits including the social interactions with others while visiting a library. The alternative services proposed are intended to continue to provide access to all existing services however, it is acknowledged that while opportunities for social interaction will increase at the Ouyen Service Centre, these opportunities will decrease for Irymple and Mobile Library customers.

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## 10. Risk Assessment

By adopting the recommendation, Council will be exposed to the following risks:

Risks	Controls	Residual Risk
Lack of community engagement.	Implement Engagement Plan and Council to consider feedback prior to making any decision to adopt changes.	Low.

## 11. Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared during the preparation of this report.

## 12. Conclusion

The alternative service delivery methods proposed for consultation and further consideration will continue to provide a diverse range of library services to the vast

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majority of residents. If eventually adopted, the changes provide the opportunity for Council to continue to provide these services in a more sustainable way for the long term and make significant short term and long term cost savings. This report recommends suitable consultation with the community before Council makes a final decision.

### **Attachments**

There are no attachments for this report.