



BOARD AGENDA

MEETING OF THE
GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARY
CORPORATION

Thursday 20 June 2024, 5.30pm

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre, Level 4
and MS Teams

The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nations as the Original Owners of the lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.





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ATTACHMENTS

- ATTACHMENT 1 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD 18 APRIL 2024 (CONFIDENTIAL) PLV
- ATTACHMENT 2 MEDIA RELEASE 13 MAY AND GEELONG ADVERTISEMENT, 4 JUNE

SECTION A - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
2. ATTENDEES

BOARD MEMBERS	
Cr Liz Pattison (Chair)	Surf Coast Shire, Mayor
Cr Melissa Cadwell (Deputy Chair)	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Anthony Aitkens	City of Greater Geelong, Deputy Mayor
Cr Ross Ebbels	Borough of Queenscliffe, Mayor
Cr Belinda Moloney	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Marg White	Colac Otway Shire, Mayor
Cr Owen Sharkey	Golden Plains Shire
Cr Trent Sullivan	City of Greater Geelong, Mayor
COUNCIL OFFICERS	
Damian Waight	General Manager, Community Life, Surf Coast Shire
Dean Bushell	Acting Manager Community Programs & Venues City Life, CoGG
Anthony Basford	Executive Director City Life, CoGG
Gayatri Baskaran	Finance Coordinator, CoGG
Ian Seuren	General Manager Development & Community Services, COS
Martin Gill	CEO, Borough of Queenscliffe
Lynnere Gray	Director Corporate Services, Golden Plains Shire
GRLC Officers	
Vanessa Schernickau	Chief Executive Officer
Skye Wilson	Director, People, Culture and Strategic Engagement
David Semmens	Director, Community Experience
Vanessa Rechichi	Executive Assistant
GUESTS	
Cr Kate Hanson	Colac Otway Shire
Lucy Davies	Manager Heritage Services

3. APOLOGIES

Cr Belinda Maloney, Cr Marg White, Cr Anthony Aitken

4. INTERESTS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND PECUNIARY INTERESTS

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES DATED 18 APRIL 2024 (ATTACHMENT 1)

Recommendation:

That the draft minutes of the Board Meeting held 18 April 2024 be confirmed.

SECTION B - PRESENTATIONS

HERITAGE SERVICES STRATEGY YEAR ONE UPDATE

Presented by David Semmens, Director Community Experience



SECTION C – REPORTS

DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25 AND STRATEGIC RESOURCE PLAN (CONFIDENTIAL)

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Background

A preliminary budget report for the 2024-25 financial year was first considered by the Board at its meeting held on 15 February 2024. At its 18 April 2024 board meeting, a draft budget was presented.

The GRLC Draft Budget 2024-25 was advertised for public comment on 19 April 2024 via GRLC's website. A notice was placed in the local print media on Saturday 20 May 2024, and we received no submissions after which it was confirmed that the special Board meeting was not required.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT – APRIL (CONFIDENTIAL)

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation:

That the MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT be noted.

HERITAGE STRATEGY YEAR ONE UPDATE

David Semmens, Director Community Experience

Recommendation:

That the HERITAGE SERVICES STRATEGY YEAR ONE UPDATE be noted.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an update on the first year of the Heritage Services Strategy 2023-2025. A slide presentation will be shared at the meeting.

Connecting and Thriving

This presentation demonstrates how the Heritage Services Strategy has delivered against:

Community: Work collaboratively with First Nation Peoples; sharing stories, cultural heritage, language and knowledge. Accelerate digitisation program, expanding access to community history and heritage collections.

Places and Spaces: Actively reflect the unique character, stories and cultural heritage of local places through library programs, collections and spaces.

Our People: Pioneers in new digital technologies and platforms. Focus on customer experience.

Regional Leadership: Increase access to digital content that facilitates connection, learning and literacy for the whole community. Bringing fresh eyes and perspectives to heritage collections.

Background

In late 2022, a need for a Heritage Services Strategy that brought Geelong Heritage Centre in alignment with GRLC's Library Plan was identified. Following engagement with internal stakeholders and the Centre's Collection Advisory Committee, a set of opportunities and principles were selected to guide actions over the next three years.

Key Information

Geelong Heritage Centre (GHC) joined Geelong Regional Libraries in 2015. Located on Level 3 of Geelong Library & Heritage Centre, Kim barne thaliyu (meaning 'here yesterday') is on Wadawurrung Country. It comprises a research room, collection work area and climate-controlled repository.

The primary function of the Heritage Centre is to preserve and facilitate community access to its nationally significant collection. Along with accessing collection items, the Heritage Services Team support customers undertaking local and family history research.

As a Class A Place of Deposit with Public Record Office Victoria, GHC is accredited to hold permanent and temporary public records. Public records comprise 20-30% of the total collection.

A conservative estimate puts the total collection at over one million items and over half a million images. Since much of the collection is unrecorded, the exact number, contents and condition is unknown.

A team of Heritage volunteers has been invaluable in improving collection access through scanning, research and transcription.

The presentation that accompanies this report provides an update on year one of the Heritage Strategy, which included 21 key actions. Of the 21 key actions, 16 have been completed or are now ongoing pieces of work, and 5 actions are in progress/planned to occur.

Next Steps

Year two of the Heritage Services Strategy will commence in July 2024 and an update will be provided to the Board at the end of that period.

GRLC LOCAL LAWS (CONFIDENTIAL)

David Semmens, Director Community Experience

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to adopt arrangements post the cessation of Local Law 1 and 2.

CEO REPORT

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation

That the CEO Report be noted.

Connecting and Thriving

The CEO Report demonstrates how we deliver against our Purpose:

A thriving public library service that boosts our communities' health, prosperity, connectedness and belonging

CONNECTING AND THRIVING: COMMUNITY

Children and Youth Events and Programs Expression of Interest

This is the second year that we are formally seeking expressions of interest to complement our existing children's and youth programming. We are inviting a diverse selection of workshops and programs from artists such as, street artists, designers, musicians, local authors, STEM programming and community groups and organisations to support innovation, education and inclusion in our community libraries. Similar to our Adult Events we are focussed on supporting local creatives and activating the local communities in which our libraries play a central role.

Applications closed on Monday 10 June 2024.

Customer Experience Strategy

We already know that our customers appreciate and value us and that our people deliver great customer service. Our Customer Experience Strategy will help us build on what we are already doing well and inform our next Library Plan from 2025, by providing customer insights and strategic goals. As well as community focus groups, we invited our staff to participate as we continue to improve our experience for our people including:

- **Clearer purpose:** Understand how your role contributes to delivering an exceptional customer experience.
- **Empowerment:** Make decisions and take action to resolve customer issues and improve services.
- **Professional growth:** Develop new skills and knowledge relating to customer experience.
- **Collaborative culture:** Work together to share ideas, best practices, and feedback

Corio Library

As well as our ever popular Pearl Jam and regular events we focussed on community health and wellbeing at Corio Library with some chair yoga to introduce our community to our wide range of health and wellness related resources.



Torquay Library

The team at Torquay received some lovely feedback from a grateful customer:

I just wanted to drop a line to provide some positive feedback for the team at Torquay. The last 9 months have been a bit of a challenge for me as I have been an Executor for a Will, that has been quite an emotional rollercoaster.

Without needing to dive into the details here, I have become a bit of a regular at the library. We had consciously not had a printer at home (environmental considerations etc etc), and I have needed to make a number of trips to the library for photocopying, printing, scanning... you name it.

The team have ALWAYS greeted me with a smile, with some friendly banter and ALWAYS ALWAYS been super helpful with using the technology - even during a change in process for some of this... I cannot thank them enough for their assistance at all times, even if I had to wait for service as they were busy helping someone else, throughout this entire period.

I did tell some of them in person, but please let them know they are appreciated. Thanks again. xxx from Torquay

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre

Zine Vending Machine

G:Zines say it best themselves on their website: : Zines is a Geelong based zine space for all things zines. Our first monthly swap/sell launched Saturday, 20 Jan 2024, followed closely by our monthly workshops. Very soon (1 June 2024) our new G: Zines Reading Lounge will be opening...with our very own [zine vending machine](#) (compliments of a community project grant from the City of Greater Geelong). So where is all this joyous zine activity happening? Why at the Dome of course! The Dome (Geelong Library & Heritage Centre) is in the heart of the arts district of Geelong (51 Little Malop Street) and the wonderful staff from the Geelong Regional Libraries (GRL) are keen as mustard to support local groups to use their spaces in new, creative ways. So we (the G: Zines Collective – three Geelong based zinesters) are delighted to be working closely with the Dome staff to bring you Geelong’s first dedicated zine space.



Sewing Machines



Crafting and making activities continue to draw new people into the library. This feedback was received for our sewing machine programs, and yes, there will be machines at Biyaal-a Armstrong Creek. We also have machines at Corio Library and some on order for Colac Library. The photo shows a Mother’s Day workshop with Mums and daughters.

Community Exhibitions

Community demand continues to grow for exhibition space on the ground floor. Currently, we have the results of our partnership with Barwon Health and the Community Knitting Project to raise awareness about Elder Abuse, the Corio Camera Club celebrating their 70th anniversary and the Tamaduni (multicultural fashion) mannequins.

Hello,

I would like to share my feedback on these workshops, which have been very enriching and enjoyable. Besides encouraging me to use my machine again (and enjoy using it), the techniques Emily showed us made these workshops a weekly meeting with other creative people, dedicating 2 hours a week to their creativity. The world of sewing seems vast and impressive, and these workshops were significant steps into this new world. Thank you so much for this, and I hope to see these workshops back in the Geelong Library programme soon (or maybe at Armstrong Creek Library).



Collage Workshops

Each month a popular (and very messy) collage workshop is held on the ground floor.



In May 2 occupational therapy students from Deakin spotted the group from the stairwell and ditched their 'study sesh' to come do some art - because it "looked more fun".... They crafted alongside a 70 year old woman who had them in stitches after leaning over and opening with "remember my face because I'm going to need your services one day soon and I won't know who you are".

Bannockburn Library



The winter themed Intergenerational Storytime continues to grow. At the last session, Kardinia Kindergarten joined Estia Aged care residents and staff along with multi generational families from the community. All up there were 30 children and 25 adults. They enjoyed songs and book readings as well as scones and pavlova!

Our pop-up stall at the Bannockburn Farmers Market saw new members signing up, as per usual.

The Bannockburn Library Coordinator sits on the 'Bannockburn Community Planning' group who have been managing a council grant to the local community of \$10,000 (Berrybank funding).

Borongook Drysdale Library

The inner courtyard recently filled with the harmonies of the Coryule Chorus community choir.

The choir had originally formed in the same location where the new building stands so it was great for them to sing here once more.



Colac Chatty Cafe

Congratulations to Colac for becoming our first Chatty Cafe (noting that there is one held upstairs in the community centre above the Leopold Library). In the first month, a variety of people attended including an isolated parent looking for some adult conversation, a young person from Geelong looking to expand their social network and some people curious about what we are doing, including from our U3A cohort.

Here is the info on the chatty café website, enter Colac in the search and we will come up:

<https://chattycafeaustralia.org.au/find-a-chatty-table>

Vinyl club is up and running in Colac once a month with an afternoon tea and a chance to brag about vinyl and all things music. This has included the sharing of vintage players and vinyl.



Visit the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre to enjoy the current exhibition by the Geelong F Stoppers, a local photography group founded in 2019 that includes hobby and professional photographers.

IDAHOBIT DAY

May 17 marks the date in 1990 that homosexuality was removed from the WHO Classification of Diseases. Over two decades later, LGBTQIA+ communities still face discrimination and is particularly important for our staff and public libraries as we respond to increased calls for censorship based on discriminatory thinking. Our library teams chose to mark the day in their own way, including with displays of our collection.



National Simultaneous Story Time

This year we had over 900 people all simultaneously listening to *Bowerbird Blues* read by Mayors, Board Members, Councillors and our people across 15 of our libraries.

National Simultaneous Storytime @ Borongook Drysdale Library



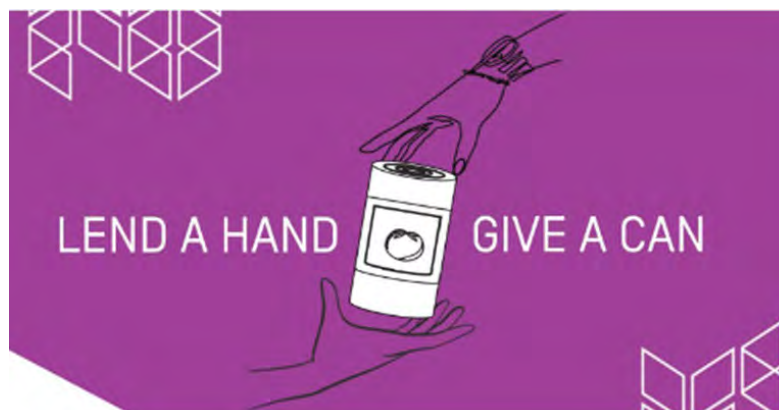
Queenscliff Library

The library recently hosted three events:

- Lucas Jordan-The Chippilly six
- Fiona Basile-Immerse
- Denise Main & Ian Chisholm- Voices of the Whipstick



Lend a Hand Give a Can



LIBRARY WINTER FOOD DRIVE

Give what you can.

Please give generously to help local people who are experiencing food crisis.

We are proud to partner with the Geelong Food Relief Centre.

We accept donations of packaged and non-perishable food items, canned items in particular.

You can donate at any of our library locations from **Mon 13 May to Wed 31 Aug.**

Scan the QR code below for full details.



Leopold Library

The Leopold's Hub's *Biggest Morning Tea* was held Thursday 23 May. The event was a jointly hosted event by Leopold Library and Leopold Community and Learning Centre.



The picture shows our Library Coordinator, Victoria hosting the trivia quiz.

CONNECTING AND THRIVING: PLACES AND SPACES

Biyal-A Armstrong Creek Library

The new collection of approximately 34,000 new items is being catalogued and shelved. Recruitment closed on Monday for the 13 positions and we received over 650 applications. This strong interest is a reflection of our culture and a credit to all the team - we all judge a place by the welcome and help we receive as a customer, visitor or collaborator.

Golden Plains Mobile Library

New GOLD Mobile Library vehicle hit the road for the first time on 13 June and headed out to surprise and delight customers at Meredith, Rokewood, Dereel and Enfield with a fresh new collection and a stylish new body.



Golden Plains Shire successfully applied for a Victorian Government Living Libraries Infrastructure Grant program to purchase and fit out the new mobile library. The new vehicle will replace the unreliable, ageing mobile library which travelled over 380,000 kms and was becoming expensive to service and difficult to find replacement parts for the 25-year-old vehicle.

Research was undertaken to enable us to select the right type of vehicle to provide a reliable and sustainable library service.

Geelong West Library



In consultation with library customers, the team chose new furniture, to replace the red chairs and bay ends in the children's area that have been well loved over the last twenty or so years.

Geelong West also has their long awaited returns chute. No more rolling the bin back and forth every day. 24-hour external chute access and an internal chute for those who still want to use it while we are open.

Collection Update

In late 2021 we introduced CollectionHQ software alongside the philosophy that collection management can be done by individual library teams and anyone who is part of the team. This is a cultural change and has involved ongoing communications and training.

Our collection works harder and creates better value for the community, noting the collections budget has remained static for the previous 6 years, excluding new library collections. The following graphs illustrate the number of items transferred from one library to another. This is specifically for items that had no turnover and were due to be deselected, being transferred to another library where it has reached a new audience and is now being borrowed and enjoyed by our customers.

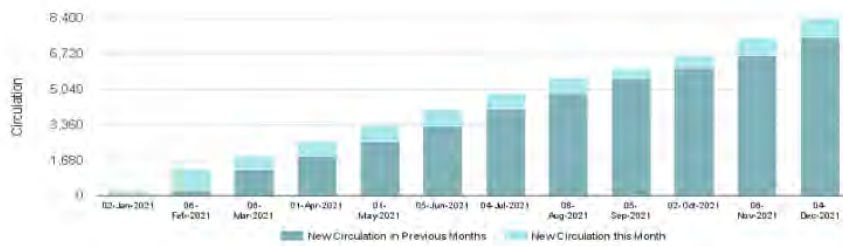
Collection Update

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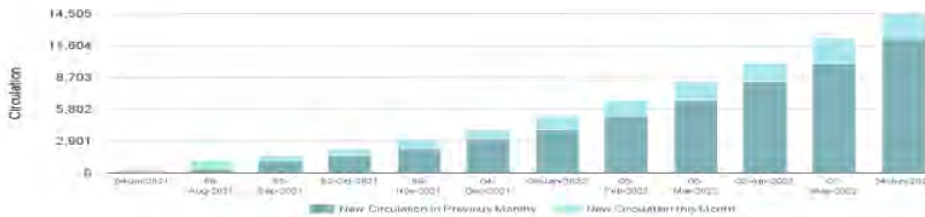
DECEMBER 2021

4,047 items transferred generating 8,397 circulations with a monetary value of \$79,712 since January 2021



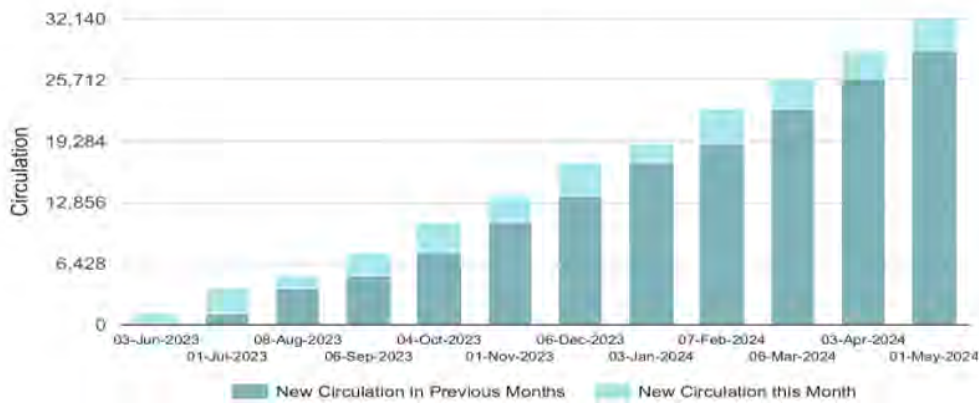
JUNE 2022

7,728 items transferred generating 14,502 circulations with a monetary value of \$144,357 since July 2021



MAY 2024

12,168 items transferred generating 32,137 circulations with a monetary value of \$211,242



Last year we also introduced a dedicated Collection Chat on our internal communications site where each library is encouraged to manage their own collection:

Corio
May 13

Seen by 46 ⋮

Hi everyone,

Our parenting section is looking a little bare. If anyone has any excess parenting books in good condition, please send them our way.

Thanks :)

Like

Comment

Share ⌵

Kimbra Neill

Katy Elwin May 18

A few coming your way Corio from Newc

1

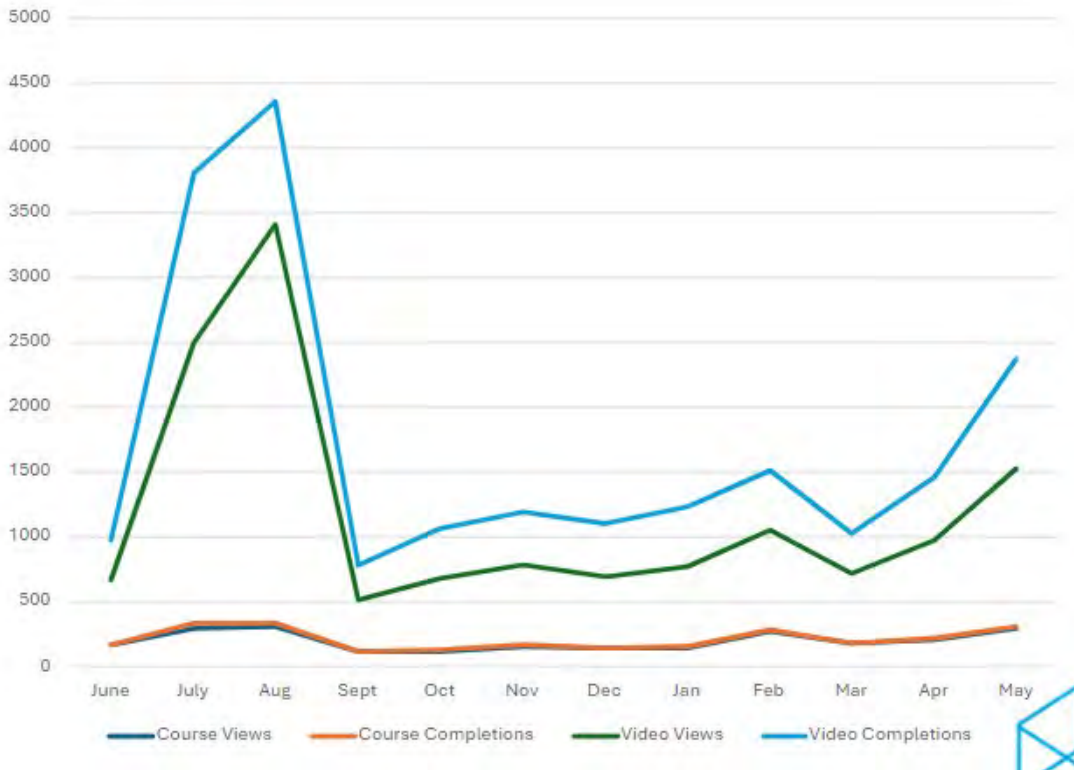
We regularly review formats to see if they are still current and whether we can reallocate budget to our e-resources that are not keeping up with demand. Recently we reviewed our magazine subscriptions.

For the 2024/25 financial year we will have 493 active individual subscriptions, reducing the budget by \$5,176.67 for physical magazines to \$52,497. The saving will be reallocated to our online collection.

There are 5,335 digital magazine titles available through our online subscriptions.

LinkedIn Learning

As an action from the April Board meeting, the City of Greater Geelong included a social media post on our free LinkedIn Learning access for all library members, similar to a promotion by Surf Coast Shire in July and August last year and GRLC posts on LinkedIn. The results indicate spiked interest:



Geelong Heritage Centre

The Heritage Services team were generously gifted a copy of the book and *Geelong's Market Square The first 100 years 1838 to 1938* by Rob Ganly the author that can now be viewed in the Research Room. The book includes an acknowledgement of our team.

The Geelong Heritage Centre (GHC), on behalf of the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV), hold the original Minutes of all Geelong Town and City departments, for all Town and City surveyors and engineering reports. With this access I was able to follow the Market Square development in great detail. I thank the GHC librarians for their unstinting help in my quest for information. The GHC is also blessed with a fantastic set of maps and plans. Again I was provided unfettered access to the records. My thanks to Laura, Rochelle, Melody, Francis, the two Lucys.

In particular my thanks go to Fern, who could find the needle-in-the-haystack for me and helped as I often floundered with the intricacies of the microfilm, microfiche apparatus and the computer.

Waurm Ponds Library

Waurm Ponds Library for Adult Graphic Novels illustrates this; within the first week at the new spot, loans of graphic novels quadrupled.

Colac Library Outreach

Birregurra community and Barwon Water celebrate water savings

We received the following feedback from Barwon Water.

On behalf of Barwon Water, we would like to thank the GRLC for their involvement in a recent community activation event we ran in Birregurra.

The aim of the event was to engage with young families in the community during the school holidays and celebrate the achievements of the Birregurra Sustainable Communities program. Kids enjoyed participating in fun activities, including a DIY water cycle project and pot painting for water efficient plants. There was also the chance to snap a photo with Barwon Water's mascot 'Drop' and enjoy story time with Geelong Regional Libraries Corporation's mobile library.

We were grateful for Mary Eaton, the outreach services librarian, representing the Colac Community Library and Learning Centre at this event. Mary provided story time with puppets at the event which the kids really enjoyed.

Educating and engaging children in sustainable water practices sets the groundwork for future generations to be more water-wise. For more information on this program [Please click here](#)

Thanks again to Mary and the GRLC for your support.



CONNECTING AND THRIVING: OUR PEOPLE

National Volunteer Week Trivia Quiz

Heritage and Home Library volunteers had lots of laughs and memories evoked at a Trivia Quiz at Belmont Library.

The 2024 theme was *Something for Everyone* and the Collections team had selected 10 quality donated books to match up beautifully with the quiz questions. The Heritage team contributed a local history quiz segment including some questions for Colac Otway volunteers.

Children’s Book Council of Australia



Congratulations to Ilona, our Children’s and Youth Librarian at Leopold for her first Judges Talk as one of the three Judges for the CBCA Book of the Year Awards - Younger Readers Category.

Enterprise Agreement

Our EA Bargaining Committee kicked off in May with delegates and organisers from the ASU joined by GRLC representatives. It is pleasing that they can meet in person this time round and are not bound by pandemic restrictions.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Marsha and Nick Uppill have now concluded the four establishment workshops with people from across our network and the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan is underway.

Alternative Enterprise Business Model

The Executive Steering Committee with representation from our 5 member Councils continues to meet and through this channel presentations to Council executives, Councillor briefings and Council meetings are scheduled. The Committee representatives also navigate Council calendars and the first planned alignment by the 5 Councils will be seen at their July Council meetings. When they will each table a report on the future transition by GRLC to a Company Ltd by Guarantee.

As required under the Local Government Act 2020, GRLC will transition to a company registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and register to keep our charitable status. The company will be owned by the member Councils and is a specific form used for non-profit organisations where any revenue raised is reinvested within the organisation to deliver its core purpose, not paid to shareholders.

We have commenced some of our internal planning work, including the development of a strategic financial framework and we are about to recruit a project manager to focus on our system integration, including inhouse financial systems.

CONNECTING AND THRIVING: REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Candle Light Vigil

It was a very moving candle light vigil on Wednesday evening held at Wurdi Young in partnership with the Geelong Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre and MELI. I was very honoured to be asked to share the important role that we play for our community and reflect on how we continue to create a safe workplace for anyone experiencing family violence. We do reflect our community and as a largely female workforce I am glad that those needing help can confidentially access our Family Violence Leave and other support through our EAP. Audience members introduced themselves to me afterwards to tell me they didn't realise we do so much for community fleeing family violence through our safe spaces and access to online services without needing to provide ID.

For a full update on our major events please refer to the Report, **Major Events**.



Advocacy

I met with Minister Horne on 1 May, prior to the State Budget release on 7 May.

This was further to our meeting in February and we considered the Public Library Funding Program model and the potential opportunity to work with Local Government Victoria in its review. The following media release and opinion piece built on this discussion.

PLV media release and article from the Geelong Advertiser, 3 May (Attachment 2)

I met with the Member for Bellarine, Alison Marchant to discuss our programs, services and funding.

Our Chair, Cr Liz Pattison, Mayor of Surf Coast and I met with Member for Geelong to discuss our program, services and funding.

Reconciliation Week

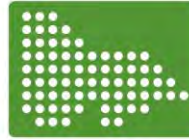
The week was marked locally at our libraries and we participated in wider regional events in partnership with others including Barwon Water, City of Greater Geelong and the Gordon. David Semmens represented us on a walk through the Little Malop Street precinct where we were invited to share our journey on the path to Reconciliation. In the evening I attended a yarning circle at Platform Arts.

Warm Winter Reads

I attended the launch of Warm Winter Reads, with Minister Horne, at the Wheelers Hill library. <https://vic.readbooks.com.au/wwr>

Vale Joseph Cullen

I attended the memorial service for Joseph Cullen, who was the CEO of Your Library (previously called Eastern Regional Library Corporation) for twenty years. His dedication to the library sector followed a career that started in the Irish Tax Office and led to his time as CEO of East Gippsland Shire, before culminating at the library corporation.



MEDIA RELEASE

13 May 2024

STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING REFORM

The peak body for public libraries has called for funding reform following another State Budget that failed to address inflationary pressures on public libraries at a time when the population in growth areas is booming and more Victorians are turning to their local library for help as the cost of living bites.

“Millions rely on their local library for everything from books to early childhood literacy sessions, to a free and safe space with heating and cooling. But Victorian Government funding for public libraries continues to fall in real terms. It is not keeping pace with inflation nor the increasing demand for library services,” said Public Libraries Victoria President, Vanessa Schernickau.

“Public libraries are being asked to welcome more people through their doors, open for longer, expand online services, deliver more pre-school literacy sessions and education programs, and make more books and other resources available for loan – all with less money.

“The 2024/25 Budget is providing important support for families with school-age children. But families with kids under five, teenagers looking for homework help when mum and dad have long commutes, and older Victorians in financial distress, will continue to look to their library for help,” she said.

Public Libraries Victoria is calling on the Victorian Government to commit to reforming the Public Library Funding Program. It wants funding indexed to CPI and the distribution formula changed to an equity model that takes account of population forecasts rather than dated census information, together with more accurate measures of community need.

Ms Schernickau said two-thirds of the people that walk through the doors of libraries are aged under 50. But Victorian Government funding is based partly on the percentage of the population that is aged over 60.

“Victorians of all ages use libraries. We know that early learning starts well before kinder, often in a library. Research has proven that children who are read to regularly begin school with an almost 12-month head-start and maintain higher language, literacy and numeracy skills later in life.

“We want every child to have access to Story Time and Baby Rhyme Time, every Victorian to have free access to the books they want to read in the language they prefer, and every library to have the technology and digital resources people want and need.”

/ ENDS /

Contact: Bee Edis
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Libraries need funding

Vanessa Schernickau



Did you know there are more public libraries in Victoria than McDonald's restaurants?

Of 283 libraries, Geelong Regional Libraries runs 20, plus three mobile libraries.

In the G21 region, hundreds of thousands of people rely on their local library as their home away from home, where they can make friends, create, work, study or play in a free and safe space with heating and cooling.

When people are battling the cost of living and social isolation or juggling work, study and family, we're there to help.

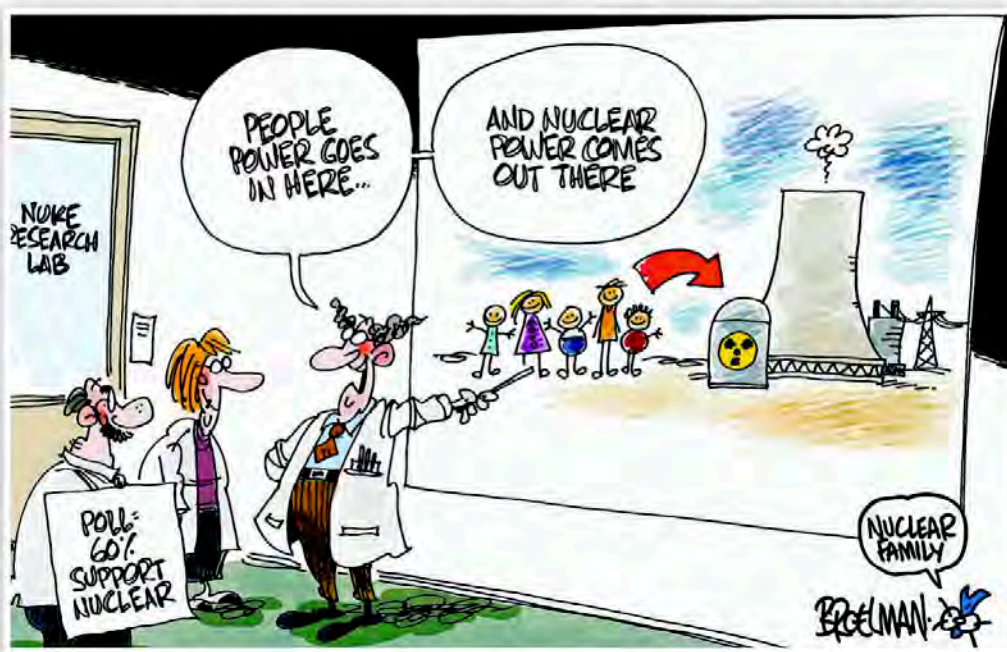
We know families with kids under five, teenagers looking for homework help, job seekers, people working from home, anyone needing access to online government services and older Victorians in financial distress all turn to their local library.

Importantly, our hubs are getting off to a good start. Early learning begins well before kinder, often in the library.

Children who are read to regularly begin school with an almost 12-month headstart and maintain higher language, literacy and numeracy skills throughout life.

I'm proud to say 1650 kids and their carers enjoy our preschool programs every week and head home with a stack of books.

Geelong Regional Libraries is co-



funded by the five G21 councils (Geelong, Surf Coast, Colac Otway, Golden Plains, Queenscliffe) and the Victorian government.

For years, government funding has fallen behind inflation and demand, putting pressure on councils to fund the gap.

When I'm chatting with people, many are surprised to learn we're now seeking non-government funding, including philanthropic donations, to keep pace.

The government's Public Library Funding Program needs reform. It's remained static and is partly

Children who are read to regularly begin school with an almost 12-month headstart

calculated on the percentage of users aged over 60.

However, times have changed. Two thirds of library users are now aged under 50, and inflation and population growth are key factors that must be reflected in the funding

formula. We all benefit from great public libraries.

They are the cornerstone of prosperous, healthy communities. Every dollar invested returns \$4.30 in social and economic benefits. As one of the only places you can stay socially and digitally connected – or simply be – for free, they are not “a nice to have”, but absolutely essential, especially in tough times and for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Vanessa Schernickau is CEO of Geelong Regional Library Corporation and president of Public Libraries Victoria

MAJOR EVENTS

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation

That the MAJOR EVENTS REPORT be noted.

Purpose

To provide information for noting on our major events delivery against the events strategy.

Connecting and Thriving

The Report demonstrates how we deliver against our Purpose:

A thriving public library service that boosts our communities' health, prosperity, connectedness and specifically against actions under each of the four pillars including *1.1.1 Lead the development of community growth, arts, literature, and culture initiatives across the region, through existing and new strategic partnerships* and *4:3 Providing a home for critical thinking, imagination and civic participation*.

In 2021, aligned with the new Library Plan, a strategic action plan was developed to rebuild our program, post the cessation of in person events during the pandemic. This included a particular socio-economic focus on supporting local creatives and place activation as we considered the lead time and investment required to reimagine and grow a sustainable program relevant to a new and more diverse audience. This was also in recognition that our traditional author events had an ageing demographic, and that the audience numbers had been in decline even prior to the pandemic.

We also introduced a cost recovery approach, for major events only, all events had been free with an unintended outcome of many seats booked but empty the night. This includes strategic partnerships and sponsorship as well as the introduction of ticket price, where appropriate.

Statistics – by Financial Year (major events program only)

Total Attendance - 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024	2,783
Total # Events	83
Average # per event	33.5

Total Attendance - 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023	1,156
Total # Events	50
Average # per event	23.1

As we continue in our post Covid-recovery phase, our total audience attendance figure has more than doubled over the past financial year to 2,783 people (an increase of 141%). We have offered an additional 33 programs for the same period and also increased our average attendance figure from 23.1 people per program to 33.5. This year in particular is showing signs of strong recovery, particularly in the earlier, warmer months of the year.

Income from Paid Events

In the past financial year, the major events program has generated income of just under \$19,000 from 15 events, including the 2023 Local Word Festival which generated almost \$7,000 in ticket sales.

Ticket prices have remained at their introductory price of \$20 or \$10 for GRLC Members (and membership is free and available immediately online) for panel discussions and author talks, or \$30 / \$20 for GRLC Members / \$10 for Concession holders for workshops.

Approximately 55% of ticket purchases are made using the GRLC Membership discount.

Feedback & Results from Recent Post-Event Surveys:

- Recent surveys show an increase in younger attendees, with 22% of May 2024 survey respondents aged under 40 years of age.
- 30% of May 2024 survey respondents indicated this was the first time they had attended a major event at GRLC – indicating the success of our partnership events strategy in building new audiences.
- The majority of respondents (71%) listed the Library website, social media and the e-newsletter as their source of information about major events.
- Survey respondents gave an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars for the events they attended (Q: How would you rate the event you attended?)

Individual Comments:

- *I like to hear the voice of the author(s), as it helps me to understand how they feel about what they write, and gives me a small glimpse of who they are.*
- *A very informative event, highlighting many aspects of aboriginal culture. A wonderfully conversational atmosphere*
- *Loved the interview re Black Duck and its authors. It was warm, informative and sensitively handled by Joel Carnegie*
- *A thought provoking, emotional and overall impactful event. Thanks to the library for hosting such a critical event.*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Julie speak. I travelled from Ballarat and the evening was well worth the trip. I appreciated being able to have a quick chat, photo and autograph.*

YouTube Channel

For those unable or unwilling to attend our major events program in person, we have continued to build our [YouTube Channel](#) catalogue of recorded events, with over 350 views of the seven events we have posted there so far this year.

Program for 2nd Half of the 2024 Calendar Year

Well-known authors are continuing their return to the publishing tour circuit in 2024, creating more opportunities for our major events program to host high profile authors in Geelong and the broader G21 region.

On Thursday 12 September we will host Australian and international storyteller Markus Zusak. He is best known for *The Book Thief* and *The Messenger*, two novels that became international bestsellers.

Our major events team is currently in discussion with publishers for two other key events with well-known authors/personalities Virginia Trioli (ABC presenter) and Rosalie Ham, author of international bestselling novel, *The Dressmaker*, which was adapted into a film starring Kate Winslet.

On Thursday 24 October, Wurdi Youang at the Dome will host perhaps Australia's best known and best loved author, Tim Winton, for a discussion on his new book, *The Juice* (we have at time of writing already sold 80 tickets for this event, announced a week ago).

And in late November, we will once again host best selling perennial favourite, Peter FitzSimons, for his latest book, *The Legend of Albert Jacka*.

Stay tuned to receive your invites as these events draw closer!

Local Word Writing Prize – Winner Announced

Our annual World Poetry Day event on Thursday 21 March saw the announcement of the prizes for the second annual Geelong Regional Libraries and Deakin University Local Word Writing Prize, which was won by Carolyn Leach-Paholski for her work titled “Hokusai in the Antipodes - Thirty-Six Love Letters to a Mountain”. Carolyn was able to attend the event in person to receive her prize, as were two of the other three finalists and their families.

The shortlist was selected from a longlist of 24 entries by our judging panel comprised of myself, Professor David McCooley of the Faculty of Arts and Education in the School of Communication & Creative Arts at Deakin University, and Geelong Regional Library’s Virtual Writer in Residence, Alice Eaves (from the United Kingdom). All judging was carried out anonymously.



L-R: Vanessa Schernickau, Highly Commended entrant Penne Thornton (“The Air Gap”), Winner Carolyn Leach-Paholski (“Hokusai in the Antipodes - Thirty-Six Love Letters to a Mountain”), Highly Commended entrant Hannah Duffus (“Premiership Quarter”) and judge David McCooley, Deakin University.

We received a total of 536 entries to this year’s competition, which was a fabulous response! All four works have now been [published on our website](#), where everyone can read and enjoy these wonderful short stories.

In some other good news, last year’s inaugural 2023 Local Word Writing Prize winner, Dani Netherclift, will have her first book published with Upswell in November.

Dervla McTiernan

On Wednesday 24 April, 2024 we hosted number one internationally bestselling author, Dervla McTiernan in conversation with JP Pomare at Wurdi Youang, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre.

This event was presented in partnership with The Wheeler Centre, Melbourne, with a joint marketing and promotions campaign which resulted in an audience of over 170 people.

Dervla is the critically acclaimed author of five novels, including *The Murder Rule*, which was a New York Times thriller of the year. She has won multiple prizes, including a Ned Kelly Award, Davitt Awards, a Barry Award, and an International Thriller Writers Award.

Dervla was discussing her latest book, *What Happened to Nina*, with book sales provided on the night by Torquay Books.



Family Violence Candlelight Vigil Launch



A panel discussion on family violence was held on the evening of Wednesday 1 May at Wurdi Young to launch the annual Geelong Candlelight Vigil, in partnership with the Geelong Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre and MELI.

An audience of 215 community members and key stakeholders listened to the lived experience of Simone O'Brien, a family violence survivor and activist, in addition to a panel of expert local speakers sharing how our workforces can learn, navigate, prevent and support staff. I was very honoured to be asked to share the important role that we play for our community and reflect on how

we continue to create a safe workplace for anyone experiencing family violence. We do reflect our community and as a largely female workforce I am glad that those needing help can confidentially access our Family Violence Leave and other support through our EAP.

Audience members introduced themselves to me afterwards to tell me they didn't realise we do so much for community fleeing family violence through our safe spaces and access to online services without needing to provide ID.

Partnerships such as this, established through our annual call for [Expressions of Interest for Partnership Events for Adult Audiences](#), enable us to support community organisations in the delivery of key educational and community support information, and at the same time expand and diversify our audience for major events and build awareness of our broader library services.

Julie Goodwin in-conversation with Adrian Richardson

We were delighted to host an event with Australia's first MasterChef, Julie Goodwin at the Geelong Library & Heritage Centre on Tuesday 7 May, for an audience of over 160 people.



Julie was discussing her memoir, *Your Time Starts Now*, which is her soul-baring account about food and fame, failure and freedom, including her own struggles with mental health.

Julie appeared in conversation with fellow celebrity chef Adrian Richardson, who last year brought his acclaimed culinary talents to Geelong, as the Executive Chef and "Maestro of Meat" at the 'Maestro at Geelong Quarter' restaurant at the new Holiday Inn Geelong.

Bruce Pascoe and Lyn Harwood

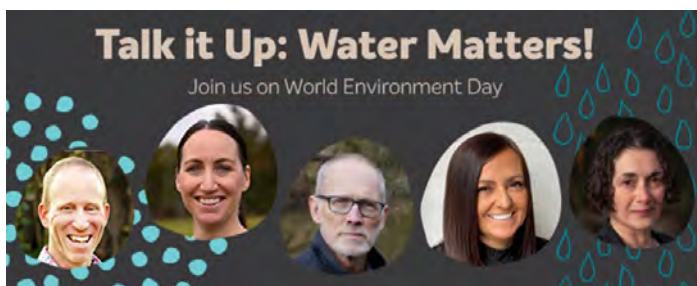
One of our biggest audiences for the year so far was for our Bruce Pascoe and Lyn Harwood event on 13 May, with 178 people attending the Dome on a Monday evening. Hot on the heels of their appearance at the Melbourne Writers Festival, Bruce and Lyn were discussing their new book, *Black Duck: A Year at Yumburra*.

Bruce Pascoe is a Bunurong, Yuin and Tasmanian Aboriginal writer of literary fiction, non-fiction, poetry, essays and children's literature. He is best known for his work *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture*. Lyn Harwood has been reading stories for over sixty years and for many of those years she co-edited *Australian Short Stories* with Bruce.

The event was the result of our ongoing partnership with The Book Bird bookstore at Geelong West, which jointly promoted the event and provided book sales on the night.



Talk It Up – Water Matters!



We are continuing our Talk It Up current affairs event series, this year in partnership with Barwon Water. On Wednesday 5 June, World Environment Day, we presented a panel discussion featuring one of Australia's leading climate scientists, author Joelle Gergis. Joelle was joined by Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Corrina Eccles, People for a Living Moorabool's Cameron Steele and Deakin University's Zoe Roloff.

Barwon Water's Managing Director, Shaun Cumming, facilitated the discussion about the challenges facing our rivers and environment, with a focus on how to secure our water future in the face of population growth and unpredictable rainfall.

Our "Talk It Up" event series provides us with an opportunity to partner with leading community and business organisations, to hear from regional community members and leaders directly impacted by global issues, coming together to find local solutions.

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Stay tuned to receive your invites as these events draw closer!

The Local Word Writers Festival 2024

For the third year in a row, Geelong Regional Libraries will host a local author's showcase, The Local Word Writers Festival 2024.

This year's Festival will be held over three days from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 August, featuring eight writers workshops held at libraries across the G21 region on Friday 23 and Saturday 24 August; an evening showcase event featuring local authors, Stereo Stories and the words and music of Nick Cave on Saturday 24 August; and five panel discussions at Geelong Library & Heritage Centre on Sunday 25 August, on topics ranging from coffee table books to self publishing to local crime writing.

For the first time this year, due to popular demand, we will be offering an early bird festival pass, and a new part of the program will be a popup event in conjunction with Deakin Library, showcasing Rare Australian Fairytales at Deakin Waterfront Campus.

Featuring 34 local writers as presenters at various stages of their careers, and 14 individual events, we are aiming to increase significantly on last year's booking rate of 57% of capacity, which in turn was more than double that of the previous year.

Once again BorrowBox/Bolinda has committed \$5,000 in sponsorship support for the event, with potential for further funding through various community events grant programs currently being explored.

The program will be announced in full in early July, with tickets on sale simultaneously.

HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT (CONFIDENTIAL)

Skye Wilson, Director, People, Culture and Strategic Engagement

Recommendation:

That the HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT be noted.



OTHER BUSINESS

Next meetings **15 AUGUST, 5.30pm**

Location **GRLC Boardroom, Level 4**



MINUTES

MEETING OF THE GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARY CORPORATION

Thursday 18 April 2024
Board Members and Officers only

The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nations as the Original Owners of the lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.



SECTION A - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

At 5.32pm GRLC Chair, Cr Liz Pattison (Mayor) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was held in person and via MS Teams. It was closed to the public and opened and closed in camera.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Cr Pattison acknowledged the Traditional Owners of this land and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

'The Geelong Regional Library Corporation acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nations as the Original Owners of the lands on which our library services operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.'

2. ATTENDEES

		Attendance		
Name	Council	In person	Online	Apology
BOARD MEMBERS				
Cr Liz Pattison (Chair)	Surf Coast Shire, Mayor	X		
Cr Melissa Cadwell (Deputy Chair)	City of Greater Geelong	X		
Cr Ross Ebbels	Borough of Queenscliffe, Deputy Mayor	X		
Cr Belinda Moloney	City of Greater Geelong		X	
Cr Marg White	Colac Otway Shire, Mayor	X		
Cr Owen Sharkey	Golden Plains Shire	X		
Cr Trent Sullivan	City of Greater Geelong, Mayor	X		
Cr Anthony Aitken	City of Greater Geelong, Deputy Mayor	X		
COUNCIL OFFICERS				
Damien Waight	General Manager, Community Life, Surf Coast Shire	X		
Gayatri Baskaran	Finance Coordinator, CoGG	X		
Ian Seuren	General Manager Development & Community Services, COS			X
Martin Gill	CEO, Borough of Queenscliffe			X
Tamzin McLennan	Manager Healthy Active Communities, COS		X	
Leanne Wilson	Acting Director Community, Planning & Growth, Golden Plains Shire		X	
Dean Bushell	Acting Manager, Community Programs and Venues	X		
Anthony Basford	Executive Director, City Life CoGG	X		
GRLC OFFICERS				
Vanessa Schernickau	Chief Executive Officer	X		
David Semmens	Director, Community Experience	X		
Skye Wilson	Director, P&C and Strategic Engagement		X	
Vanessa Rechichi	Executive Assistant		X	
GUESTS				
Lee Blashki	VAGO		X	
Anoja Bassa-Hewayalaya	VAGO		X	

The Chair acknowledged and welcomed:

- Damien Waight, new General Manager of Community Life
- Anthony Basford first GRLC Board Meeting
- Dean Bushell first GRLC Board Meeting
- VAGO guests, Anoja and Lee – great to have you both online to present to the Board.

3. INTERESTS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Nil

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES DATED 15 FEBRUARY 2024 (ATTACHMENT 1)

Recommendation:

That the draft minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 February 2024 be confirmed.

Mover: Cr Owen Sharkey
Seconder: Cr Ros Ebbels
Carried: unanimously.

5. Presentations

VAGO – Draft Audit

Lee Blaski & Anoja Bassa-Hewayalaya

GRLC Employee Opinion Survey 2024 Insights

Skye Wilson, Director of People and Culture

SECTION B – REPORTS

1. DRAFT BUDGET 2024-25 AND STRATEGIC RESOURCE PLAN 2024-2028 (CONFIDENTIAL)

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Mover: Cr Melissa Cadwell
Seconder: Cr Ross Ebbels
Voted: All in favour

2. MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT (CONFIDENTIAL)

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation

That the MONTHLY FINANCE REPORT be noted.

Mover: Cr Anthony Aitken

Seconder: Cr Owen Sharkey

Carried: unanimously

3. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD OFFICE BEARERS (CONFIDENTIAL)

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation:

That the APPOINTMENT OF BOARD OFFICE BEARERS be noted.

Mover: Cr Anthony Aitken

Second: Cr Trent Sullivan

Carried: unanimously

4. CEO REPORT

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation:

That the CEO REPORT be noted.

The CEO highlighted to the Board the report shows how truly diverse our communities are across our five member councils.

Saving Family Stories helps close the digital divide, as do modern electronic sewing machines. It's all about helping people interact with the digital world through online learning resources whilst building social connections.

Crafting for Carers in partnership with Barwon Health, demonstrating we offer safe and welcoming places that are a credit to our teams.

Mover: Cr Marg White

Seconder: Cr Melissa Cadwell

Carried: unanimously

5. ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN (CONFIDENTIAL)

Skye Wilson, Director People and Culture

Recommendation:

That the ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN 2024 – 2028 be endorsed.

Mover: Cr Aitken
Seconder: Cr Ross Own
Carried: unanimously

**6. HEALTH SAFETY AND WELL BEING REPORT FOR APRIL
(CONFIDENTIAL)**

Skye Wilson, Director People, Culture and Strategic Engagement

Recommendation:

That the HEALTH SAFETY AND WELL BEING REPORT be noted.

Mover: Cr Mel Cadwell
Seconder: Cr Ross Own
Carried: unanimously

Other Business:

The meeting closed at 6:52pm.

Next Meeting

Thursday 20 June 5.30pm at GRLC.

Signed: _____
Cr Liz Pattison
Chair

Date of Confirmation: / / 2024