



Northern Beaches Council

Library Strategic Plan

2023-2028



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Message from the Mayor



Every day, thousands of Northern Beaches residents choose to use their library service. From bringing little ones along to Story Time, using a computer or the Wi-Fi, attending an art class, studying for exams or simply borrowing a book, our libraries are important community spaces for learning, relaxation and connection.

Gone are the days that libraries are just books. They are now interactive hubs that provide safe, inclusive spaces, supporting literacy, social inclusion and community resilience.

Our Library Strategic Plan 2023-2028, Safe Inclusive Connected is Council's roadmap to making sure we continue to deliver leading and contemporary library services that meet our community's needs and aspirations, now and into the future.

We have heard from so many community members – those who are already library lovers, and those who aren't currently using the service. Thank you to all who contributed their views and ideas during this extensive community engagement period.

Your involvement has ensured that this Strategic Plan reflects our community's priorities and aspirations, and has provided the Strategic Plan's foundation including a strong focus on showcasing the unique history of the Northern Beaches, local stories, Aboriginal heritage and living cultures, and diverse dynamic programming that engages all ages and abilities.

I encourage everyone to visit their local library and see what is on offer.

Sue Heins
Mayor

Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of these lands and shows its respect to the Elders past and present.





Northern Beaches Libraries

The National Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries define the important role of public libraries in supporting a free, prosperous and democratic society.

“The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. The public library is a living force for education, culture and information. The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.”¹

This Library Strategic Plan 2023-2028, sets a vision for the future of public library services on the Northern Beaches and provides clear directions for development and delivery of community-focused services that meet the diverse needs of the people who live and work on the Northern Beaches.

The Strategic Plan acknowledges the legislative foundation for provision of public library services in NSW – the Library Act 1939 (NSW), the Library Regulation 2018 (NSW) – the public library standards and guidelines issued by the Library Council of NSW, and the support of the State Library of NSW in working in partnership with Northern Beaches Libraries and the public library sector on matters of policy, governance and funding.

Northern Beaches Council

Northern Beaches Council was formed in May 2016 through the merger of the former Manly, Pittwater and Warringah Councils. Its municipal population of 268,463 is the fourth largest in New South Wales.

The Northern Beaches Local Government Area (LGA) is bounded by Cowan Creek and Broken Bay in the north, the Tasman Sea in the east, Sydney Harbour and North Harbour in the south, and Middle Harbour and the Ku-ring-gai Council area in the west. The area is mainly residential and national park, with some commercial, industrial and rural areas. The LGA encompasses a total land area of about 250 square kilometres, including substantial areas of water frontage, coastal foreshores, beaches, islands, national parks, bushland, and reserves.² Stretching from Palm Beach to Manly, the Northern Beaches boasts more than half of all the beaches in Sydney.

¹Australian Public Library Alliance (APLA)/Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, December 2020 – referencing the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, <http://read.alia.org.au/apla-alia-standards-and-guidelines-australian-public-libraries-december-2020>.

²Profile ID, sourced February 2023, <https://profile.id.com.au/northern-beaches>.

Safe Inclusive Connected

This Library Strategic Plan is framed by, complements and will directly contribute to the achievement of Council's Community Strategic Plan 2040 and its Better Together, Social Sustainability Strategy 2040.

The Community Vision in the Strategic Plan encapsulates the aspirations of the diverse Northern Beaches community, which includes residents, businesses, stakeholders and visitors to the area:

“Northern Beaches - a safe, diverse, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment.”

The Community Strategic Plan sets a path forward for the Northern Beaches which:

- reflects community values
- takes into account environmental, social, economic and civic perspectives (a quadruple bottom line)
- takes into account fundamental social justice and sustainability principles – including the principles of access, equity and participation that are central to provision of public library services.

The Better Together, Social Sustainability Strategy 2040 supports achievement of the Community Strategic Plan. It is about creating inclusive and resilient communities that have the required skills, services, people and infrastructure to respond to and recover from social, political, environmental and economic change. The Strategy's three key directions – a safe community, an inclusive community and a connected community – explicitly focus on the Community and Belonging outcome, which is where the Plan's library-related actions are found.

The library connection is clear. Public libraries have a reputation within the community, among library users and non-users, for being safe community places – welcoming, trusted and non-judgemental. Northern Beaches Libraries are used by people of all ages, backgrounds, circumstances and interests and everyone is free to walk through the doors.

Similarly, Northern Beaches Libraries contribute to the Northern Beaches Resilience Strategy by being both active accessible public spaces and critical social connectors, nurturing a sense of belonging and mutual wellbeing.



The Community Strategic Plan 2040 also acknowledges the strategic line of sight between Council's local ambitions and relevant international, federal and state government strategies. It notes the vital role of civic institutions in achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In addition to the general contribution of public libraries to improve community outcomes against SDG 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and SDG 11 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable', Northern Beaches Libraries proudly shares the Australian Library and Information Association's (ALIA) strong commitment to SDG 16.10 'Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms'.

Northern Beaches Libraries also has a key role to play in supporting achievement of complementary Council strategies, notably the Children's Services Strategy, Arts and Creativity Strategy, Youth Voice Action Plan, and Community Centres Strategy.

Northern Beaches Libraries

Northern Beaches Council operates one of the largest, well-used and respected public library services in NSW. The library network has six physical branch libraries across the Northern Beaches – Manly, Warringah Mall (Brookvale), Dee Why, Forestville, Glen Street (Belrose) and Mona Vale. It offers outreach services in community locations and has an extensive range of digital collections and services accessible via the library website northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/library.

Northern Beaches Libraries is committed to leading the way in delivery of contemporary library services with NSW's first Creative Library established at Manly Library in 2022, and one of Australia's first libraries open 24/7 launched as a permanent service at Forestville Library in March 2023.

A unique aspect of Northern Beaches Libraries is the support it provides to predominantly volunteer-led and managed community library services in Avalon, Terrey Hills, Seaforth, Freshwater, and to the Booklovers Club. Our Community Libraries are valued social and community assets, providing engaging opportunities for

volunteering and contributing to community connectedness, social inclusion and resilience.

Despite the significant challenges and disruptions to service delivery brought on by the COVID pandemic, the Northern Beaches community continued to access their local libraries whenever and wherever possible.

Northern Beaches Libraries continue to be one of the community's most valued civic institutions with high levels of customer satisfaction. More than just a place for books, the libraries support learning, creativity, social and digital inclusion, community wellbeing and resilience.

"I really appreciate the extended hours. I love the library's space as it is effective and spacious at the same time. Overall, very happy with the cleanliness and quietness. A very nice modern library!" (Glen Street)

Figure 01
Northern Beaches Libraries Performance 2021-22.



What our community wants from their libraries

Figure 02
Northern Beaches Community (ABS census 2021).

Note: Comparisons are with the 2021 Greater Sydney average (profile id)



Our unique community

The Northern Beaches is unique – from North Head to Narrabeen, Belrose to Bilgola Beach, and Killarney Heights to Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. With golden sands and ocean pools, pristine parks and harbour views, it is a truly extraordinary coastal and bushland environment. Our story begins with ancient marine fossils, honours First Nations Australians, flows from First Fleet to early settlement, grazing and guesthouses, and families that span generations. Today, nearly 270,000 people proudly call the Northern Beaches home. This is where we live, work and play.

Every day, thousands of Northern Beaches residents choose to use their library service. With a varied service offering access onsite, online and in the community, the library has universal appeal across all community demographics.



The Northern Beaches community has a 2023 population of 268,463 and is expected to grow to around 309,000 people by 2041.³ This growth, wherever it occurs and whether those demographics be younger, middle-aged, or older, will bring increased demand for community facilities such as public library services.

The unique characteristics of the Northern Beaches population presents both opportunities and challenges in engaging the community and providing library services.

- The identified strengths of our community include high levels of community safety, a self-sufficient economy, relative socioeconomic advantage, access to open spaces, and thriving social and recreational opportunities. This means residents have options and the capacity to choose where and how they live their lives.
- The population is ageing at a higher rate than the Greater Sydney average,

a result of long-standing residents ageing, being a popular place to retire and young adults migrating to locations that offer greater access to education, employment, entertainment and affordable housing. The number of people aged 60 years and over will increase by 36% (22,000 people) by 2041.

- There are strong local ties and a sense of belonging, with 50% of residents living at the same address as five years ago
- Around 80% of people who work in the Northern Beaches LGA live in the LGA. In addition, more than 50% of Northern Beaches residents who work do so within the Northern Beaches (the highest 'local workforce' in Greater Sydney)
- Although there is a high average level of socioeconomic advantage, support is needed for the pockets of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations living within the community
- 17% of the population report being engaged in some form of voluntary work, compared with 12% across Greater Sydney.

How this strategy was prepared

The development of this Strategic Plan has been informed by research and consultation with the Northern Beaches community, external stakeholders, and Council staff. The consultation engaged library users and non-users, key stakeholders and community partners, allied Council business units and the library team. Engagement with different types of groups ensured a range of perspectives informed the strategy.

Community feedback

Community surveys in the past two years (which includes a significant period of COVID-related service disruption) have generated more than 4,000 responses. Feedback from library users has highlighted the many things that Northern Beaches residents love about their libraries. These include:

- **extensive collections** – both the physical collections and increasing e-book collection, and especially the children's collection

- **a widely distributed network** – with library branches spread across the Northern Beaches
- **light and colour** – especially at Forestville and Glen Street, with most branches offering a range of different casual, work and activity spaces
- **welcoming and helpful library staff** – whose personal approach to library users helps to create a sense of connection and belonging
- **a Northern Beaches feeling** – with the use of artwork and artefacts creating a sense of place and ownership of library spaces.



³Northern Beaches Community Strategic Plan 2040, Better Together: Social Sustainability Strategy 2040, and profile id <https://profile.id.com.au/northern-beaches>.

These surveys demonstrate the high level of customer satisfaction with the services currently provided by Northern Beaches Libraries, producing an average customer satisfaction score of 9.1 out of 10.

There were also many suggestions for improvement. Particularly, library users wanted:

- **expanded and more responsive collections** – with faster purchasing of new books, greater rotation of stock between branches, more e-books and e-audiobooks
- **fewer fees** – to encourage more active and sustained library use
- **more diverse programming** – with greater variety of content for users of all ages and interests, and more convenient program times
- **extended opening hours** – notably in evenings and on weekends, especially for people who cannot access the library during standard working hours
- **more flexible spaces** – including quiet spaces, dedicated study and remote working spaces, group meeting

rooms, and spaces for entertainment and community activities

- **greater promotion** of what's available and what's on at the library
- **more attractive, appealing and accessible buildings** – especially in comparison with other libraries in Sydney.

For current non-users of library services, issues of access (both location and timing) and awareness (of what services are available in a contemporary public library) were most relevant in planning for increased service reach.

Through the detailed comments, several key themes emerged:

1. The Northern Beaches community highly value their libraries for the services they provide. They love the collections, programs, the spaces, interactions and the experiences they have when they are at the library
2. Library users are proud of their libraries. They believe Northern Beaches Libraries provide an excellent service that connects them with and makes them feel part of a unique community

3. Innovation is key to the library's success. The community admires the fact that the libraries are continually striving to explore new ways of expanding access and delivering community-focused services, even during difficult times.

These broad themes have guided the framing of the library's future strategic directions more than specific suggestions for improvement, which have been incorporated as areas for attention and action.

“I have been using the library space to complete my work on my laptop. I like that there are powered workstations for private use in a quiet area.” (Manly)

External stakeholders

Throughout 2022, regular engagement with local community, education and cultural organisations, and industry partners strengthened our commitment to community and cross-sector partnerships. By working together we can:

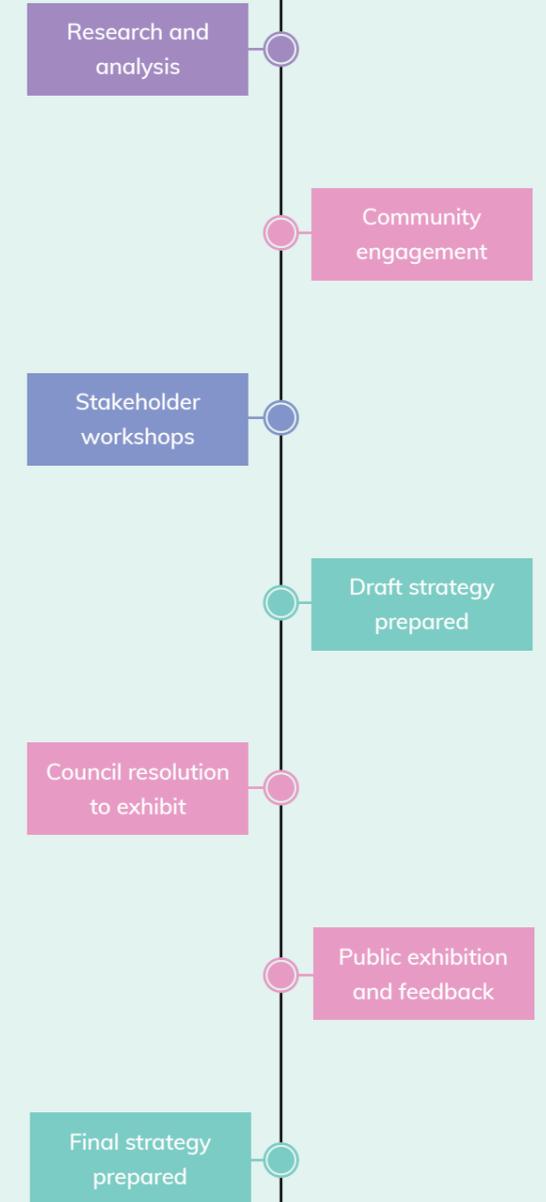
- better understand the needs and demands of our unique community
- expand service reach
- realise efficiencies in service delivery and achieve mutual benefits
- maintain connections with our community that inform and facilitate service planning.

These aspirations are also reflected in the library's future strategic directions.

Internal perspectives

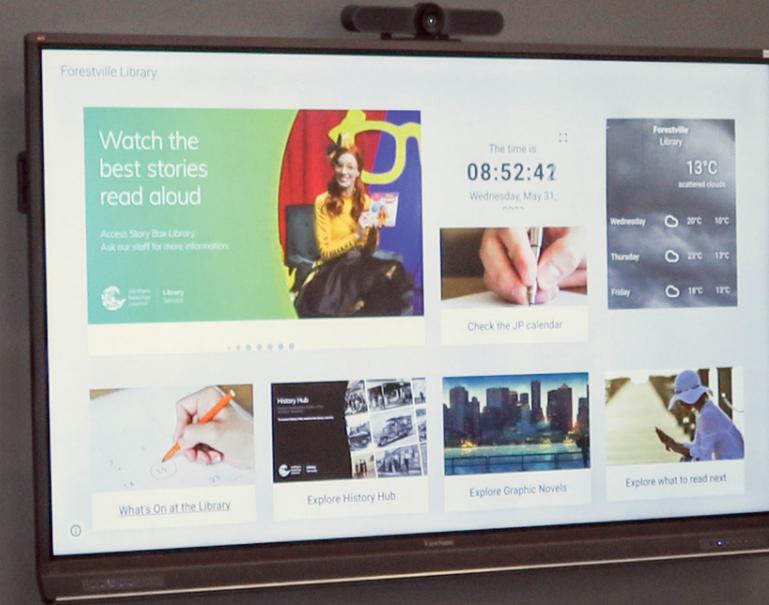
Internal consultation with Council stakeholders and library staff reinforced the perception of Northern Beaches Libraries as valuable community assets with broad community appeal and accessible locations. In addition to highlighting opportunities for stronger collaboration and integration in planning, programming and service delivery, these stakeholders saw potential improvements through:

- more flexible service models, especially through use of digital technology and outreach services
- more flexible library spaces that respond to the needs of different user groups
- targeted support for priority population cohorts (e.g. families, youth, older people, researchers, people experiencing homelessness)
- more innovative programming that supports literacy and lifelong learning, intergenerational activities, digital literacy and creative pursuits
- increased volunteering opportunities.



Forestville *Library* 24/7

Transforming library services to meet the demands of a fast-changing world



Transforming library services to meet the demands of a fast-changing world

Changing community context

Northern Beaches Libraries operate in a complex, dynamic and challenging environment, where the services offered and the capacity to deliver those services professionally and efficiently is influenced by a range of social, economic, environmental, technological and political factors.

An evolving population

The best public libraries reflect their local community. As demographics change, libraries need to adapt their collections, programs and services, and the way those services are delivered to the community. In the coming years, the Northern Beaches community will experience increasing:

- population growth – with an extra 40,000 people forecast to be living in the area by 2041
- ageing – with increased demand for access to support services and personal assistance
- cultural diversity – as families from diverse cultural backgrounds continue to move into the area

- single person households – with more people (especially older people) at risk of social isolation
- numbers of retirees – who will want access to social, leisure and informal learning activities, as well as volunteering opportunities.

Social inclusion, community wellbeing, resilience and capacity building

Public libraries have always had a role in supporting literacy, social inclusion and community resilience. Libraries support early years' literacy through provision of children's collections and Story Time activities that assist families to access resources and develop skills to support reading in the home. Libraries support vulnerable communities by providing free access to reading and information resources, learning programs, computers and Wi-Fi connections, and safe welcoming community spaces. Libraries are also connecting places, where people can come together to support one another to prepare, act, respond and recover from challenges – both individually and collectively.

An economy under stress

Rising interest rates and static wages growth increase the cost of living and place significant financial stress on homeowners, renters and people seeking to enter the housing market. These pressures are likely to increase the appeal of free lending, Wi-Fi services and activities at public libraries.

Exponential growth in the power and reach of technology

Technology has become integral to the way we connect, consume and learn. Public libraries play an important role in providing free access to computers and the internet, especially for people who might otherwise not have access because of cost (devices, data, printers and consumables) or a need to access specialist equipment (e.g. large format display and keyboards for people with print disability). People who lack skills and confidence in accessing and using technology can find assistance at their local library. Ongoing growth in the reach of technology through all aspects of everyday life, especially the impact of cybersecurity risks and the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, has the potential to widen the digital divide.

Climate change and environmental sustainability

Climate change is leading to more frequent and more severe weather events, with both rural and urban populations at increased risk from bushfires, heat waves, floods, drought, dry spells and torrential downpours. Public libraries can be used as places of refuge and recovery during climate and emergency situations. Through programming and information resources, libraries can also play a role in facilitating greater awareness of the impact of climate change and environmental sustainability.

“I enjoy coming to the library often and spending my time studying. I'm always warmly welcomed by staff when I arrive. It has a great range of books and comfortable chairs to read in.” (Forestville)

Tomorrow's libraries

Public libraries have always demonstrated a capacity to evolve in response to changing community needs, social trends and technological advancements. The library of 2023 is not the same as the library of 5, 10 or 20 years earlier. And the library of 2028 will be different again.

Core library services

A high-performing library engages its unique community in design, development and delivery of library services that support the community's recreational, learning, social, information and employment needs – across all life stages, cultures, interests and circumstances. These services include:

- physical and digital content and collections (including local studies and cultural collections)
- reading, literacy, learning, wellbeing, cultural and creative programs
- access to the internet, computers, printers and other essential technology
- places and spaces where people can relax, work, meet, learn, connect and create

- places of safety where people can be supported and connect with government information.

Northern Beaches Libraries will continue to deliver library services consistent with community feedback and best practice benchmarks for Australian public libraries.

New service models

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal order of Australian society. For a period, use of Northern Beaches Libraries declined by as much as 75%. However, COVID restrictions unleashed a latent innovation in the library sector which quickly pivoted to explore new service models that increased local access to library collections and services. Northern Beaches Libraries launched Library2U, an award-winning home delivery service, ensuring community members were served during COVID lockdowns.

The successful and ground-breaking launch of an open 24/7 library at Forestville demonstrates the way that Northern Beaches Libraries transformed its service approach to enable community members to access library services at a time and in a way that is convenient to them.

Emerging library trends

Beyond the transformation of library service models, Northern Beaches Libraries will continue to adapt to changes in its operating environment and the specific demands of the Northern Beaches community. In the next five years, the library service will be mindful of:

- changing demand for physical and digital collections and increased content creation
- increasing demand for access to library spaces for study, work and collaboration – driven by the off-siting of tertiary study, people engaging in ‘work from library’ where ‘work from home’ is not a viable option, and growth in microbusinesses
- reduced demand for fixed library PCs and increased demand for seating where people can access Wi-Fi from their own device and charging points

- learning and lifestyle programming opportunities offered through industry and community partnerships – especially for young people, retirees and the elderly
- the shift from transactional to transformational library services that support lifelong learning, social and digital inclusion, community resilience and mental health and wellbeing
- service efficiencies offered through industry and community partnerships and collaboration
- open (24/7) libraries becoming mainstream with secure user access to libraries outside staffed hours
- libraries as a ‘safe’ referral point for non-judgmental access to social and human services
- libraries being places for storytelling and celebration of local history and First Nations stories
- building the library workforce, qualifications and retention.

Library ‘as place’

For more than 30 years, librarians have been aware of the role of libraries as a ‘third place’, a place beyond the realms of home and work which hosts the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals.⁴ Libraries, shopping malls, coffee shops, bars and other ‘third places’ are believed to be central to local democracy and community vitality. This is especially the case where dwelling sizes are small, where people live alone, and where the communal aspect of work is diminishing, as is currently occurring with the rise of ‘work from home’. Unlike many other such places, Northern Beaches Libraries have the distinction of being casual inclusive places where people of all ages can spend time without spending money and just be without obligation.

⁴The Great Good Place, Ray Oldenburg, 1991.

Outcome focus

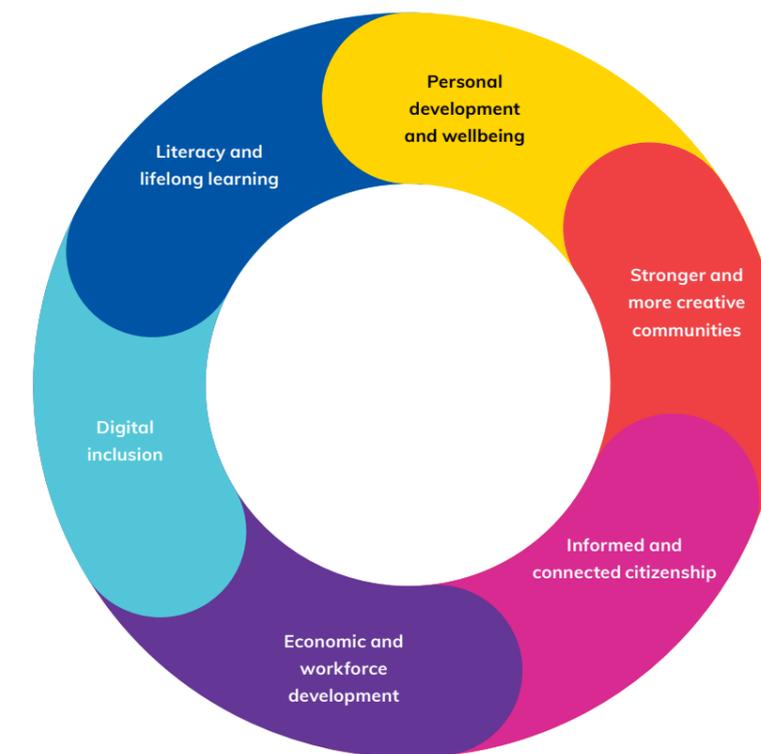
In service planning and measurement Northern Beaches Libraries will maintain its focus on delivering real and meaningful outcomes for our community. As defined in the National Library Standards,⁵ public libraries:

- help children to read, support adult literacy, help people improve their English language skills and provide people of all ages opportunities to study and learn
- enhance people’s ability to access and use technology to meaningfully engage in society

⁵APLA/ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, December 2020, <http://read.alia.org.au/apla-alia-standards-and-guidelines-australian-public-libraries-december-2020>.

- are safe, welcoming and accessible places that provide access to authoritative information on health and wellness, support reading for pleasure and provide social interaction
- strengthen community resilience, build social capital and support expression of creativity and cultural identity
- connect people with one another and with what is happening in their community
- support improved employment and productivity outcomes (e.g. job seekers, entrepreneurs).

Figure 03
Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries.



Library Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Figure 04
Strategic directions.



Our purpose

Northern Beaches Libraries – Safe, Inclusive, Connected.

Our libraries are safe, inclusive and connected. Wherever you are, we are close by. Whatever your point in life, we have something for you. When you need to connect or find a place to belong, we will be there.

Strategic directions

Northern Beaches Libraries provide access to onsite and online collections, programs and services that meet the reading, learning and information needs of our unique community. Over the next five years we will – through a targeted focus on four strategic directions – reinforce the strength of our service, strive for innovation and continue to push the boundaries of what it means to be a modern library. Together, we will create a library service that tells our unique stories and is the pride of the Northern Beaches community.

Outcomes and actions

Three key outcomes have been identified under each strategic direction. Priority actions have been listed against each outcome and will be progressively implemented and embedded in everyday library operations over the life of the Library Strategic Plan.

“The Northern Beaches Library is always offering innovative ideas and technology. Long gone are the days of hushed patronage. It is wonderful to see so many progressive ideas and services. The local community is fortunate indeed.” (online)



**Direction 1 – Experience:
Explore and engage**

Northern Beaches Libraries play a vital role in enriching people’s lives through our collections, literacy and lifelong learning programs, welcoming spaces and access to information, technology, leisure opportunities and cultural engagement. There is something for everyone at the library, and our team will strive to ensure that every library user, whatever they are seeking, can find what they are looking for – and maybe more.

Outcome 1.1 Community-centred collections

Deliver contemporary library collections and content that: are shaped by input from our unique and diverse community; support the community’s information, recreation and cultural needs; foster a love of reading; and enhance lifelong learning.

Action	Commencing ⁶
1.1.1 Implement a plan for the curation of our collections that supports and reflects evolving community needs and expectations	2023-24
1.1.2 Develop and implement a flexible and responsive collection purchasing model which reflects community needs and expectations	2024-25
1.1.3 Undertake a diversity audit of collections to benchmark and drive targeted collection development	2025-26
1.1.4 Explore and implement contemporary approaches to collection display and layout	2026-27

“Northern Beaches Libraries are wonderful. Our family visits often and there is absolutely no replacement for having a book that you can hold and touch. Libraries are essential for children and teenagers – no technology can replace them.” (Glen Street)

⁶Some actions will have discrete start and end dates. Others will, after a development phase, become embedded in everyday practice. For consistency, ‘commencement’ dates are shown against each action.

Outcome 1.2 Dynamic programming

Deliver programs, events and exhibitions (onsite, online and via outreach) that engage, inform and inspire our community, with a focus on community connection, learning, inclusion and wellbeing.

Action	Commencing
1.2.1 Increase delivery of programs, events and exhibitions that enhance community connection, learning, inclusion and wellbeing	2023-24
1.2.2 Increase a targeted range of program, events and exhibitions that reflect our commitment to inclusive and diverse programming	2023-24
1.2.3 Host innovative digital programs, events and exhibitions that provide opportunities for community connection	2023-24
1.2.4 Collaborate with allied Council business units on delivery of relevant programs, events and exhibitions.	2023-24

Outcome 1.3 Exceptional service

Provide the Northern Beaches community with library experiences that are personal and productive, encourage increased library use and create a sense of pride and belonging.

Action	Commencing
1.3.1 Review, assess and implement fee reductions and workflow improvements to enhance community experience	2023-24
1.3.2 Undertake long-term planning for Home Library Services in response to evolving community needs.	2024-25
1.3.3 Develop a Library Customer Service Charter that sets expectations of the library experience (for customers and staff) with a focus on encouraging return use of library services	2024-25
1.3.4 Review, and as necessary enhance, library infrastructure in line with Council’s Asset Management Plan	As required
1.3.5 Increase access to emerging technologies, spaces and platforms to support creative production	As required

**Direction 2 – Connection:
Belonging and pride**

People who live and work on the Northern Beaches are proud of their home, community, casual lifestyle and the unique natural environment. Northern Beaches Libraries are safe, diverse, inclusive and connected, and contribute to this sense of belonging by being accessible to all, showcasing the area’s unique character and history, and being a place where people come together to tell and create their own stories.

Outcome 2.1 Access and inclusion

Create and deliver safe inclusive library places and experiences that enhance service access for all people – so that no-one is left behind.

Action		Commencing
2.1.1	Develop and implement an Access and Inclusion Plan	2024-25
2.1.2	Review and re-design services, branch layouts and workforce approaches to remove or reduce actual and perceived barriers to access	2026-27

“Being very deaf, it would be very hard to entertain myself if I couldn't read. The library is a godsend. The courtesy, kindness and dedication of library staff is amazing.” (Home Library Service)

Outcome 2.2 Local stories

Document, preserve, share, showcase and celebrate Northern Beaches' unique local history, living cultures and First Nations heritage.

Action		Commencing
2.2.1	Continue the Local History digitisation program to expand access to community history and heritage collections	2023-24
2.2.2	Work alongside and collaboratively with First Nations peoples to facilitate sharing of stories, cultural heritage, language and knowledge	2024-25
2.2.3	Explore new ways to capture, conserve, exhibit and share local stories	2025-26

Outcome 2.3 Pride in place

Create and deliver welcoming and vibrant library places and experiences that engender a sense of belonging and pride in the Northern Beaches community.

Action		Commencing
2.3.1	Encourage and promote the use of libraries as creative and co-working spaces for the community	2024-25
2.3.2	Explore opportunities to showcase Northern Beaches' history, culture and vibrant lifestyle through exhibitions, presentations and events	2026-27



Direction 3 – Together: Partnerships and collaboration

Northern Beaches Libraries understand that meeting the diverse spectrum of the community's reading, learning and information needs cannot be met by working in isolation. It requires a strategically aligned and coordinated approach to working with different organisations⁷ in the Northern Beaches and community members themselves.

Outcome 3.1 Community and volunteers

Strategically engage with the Northern Beaches community to provide them with opportunities to shape their library service and support community access to library services.

Action	Commencing
3.1.1 Refine our marketing approach to foster community connection and interaction	2023-24
3.1.2 Support and grow our volunteers by finding new opportunities for them to connect with and support their community	2023-24
3.1.3 In collaboration with Northern Beaches' Community Libraries, plan for ongoing sustainability and service delivery	2024-25

⁷Potential partners and collaborators include kindergartens and schools, universities, vocational and community education providers, community service agencies, cultural organisations, business and tourism groups, Aboriginal organisations, other business units within Council, and state and Commonwealth government agencies.

Outcome 3.2 Community organisations

Seek out and foster community-based partnerships with education, welfare, cultural and business organisations that efficiently leverage library resources, build community capacity and celebrate local culture and heritage.

Action	Commencing
3.2.1 Strengthen and activate relationships between the library service and current community partners	2023-24
3.2.2 Seek out new community and/or commercial partnerships that provide opportunities to realise shared goals, enhance the user experience and improve community connections	2023-24

Outcome 3.3 Council partners

Work collaboratively with other Council business units to provide seamless access to Council services, improve community outcomes and maximise the return on Council investment in the Northern Beaches community

Action	Commencing
3.3.1 Strengthen and activate relationships between the library service and allied Council business units	2023-24
3.3.2 Pilot co-located and/or integrated Council service provision	2024-25
3.3.3 Explore, encourage and enable the use of libraries as centres for strengthening community resilience	2024-25

“My local library feels like home and has been a much valued resource for myself and my family since we immigrated 17 years ago. Thank you.” (Mona Vale)

Direction four - Leadership: Excellence and innovation

Northern Beaches Libraries has proved itself to be a leader in exploration of contemporary library service models. We will continue to invest in our people and innovation to ensure that the Northern Beaches community has convenient and efficient access to high quality public library services that are valued by the community and admired by our peers.

“24-hour library is literally the best thing that happened to the Northern Beaches since the B-line. I used to have to travel 1.5hrs to Macquarie Uni library to use a library after 8pm (when Dee Why Library closed). Now it’s only 30 minutes, which has improved my uni marks and really helped me manage my time.” (Forestville)

Outcome 4.1 Service transformation

Trial innovative and flexible service models – onsite and online – to increase and improve community access to, use of and satisfaction with library collections and services.

Action	Commencing
4.1.1 Explore and implement 24/7 service delivery across Northern Beaches library network where feasible	2023-24
4.1.2 Develop a new plan for outreach and flexible services, extending opportunities for our community to access and engage with library services	2025-26
4.1.3 Improve line of sight to outcome measures for library services and programs to inform service planning and improvement	2025-26
4.1.4 Pioneer and lead digital technologies and platforms for improved service delivery	2025-26

Outcome 4.2 Culture and capability

Develop, nurture and grow a library workforce and culture that is professional, high-performing and future-ready.

Action	Commencing
4.2.1 Develop and implement a Workforce Development Plan to build and/or acquire the skills needed to deliver library services into the future	2024-25
4.2.2 Design workforce tasks for purposeful alignment with strategic outcomes	2024-25

Outcome 4.3 Industry leadership

Monitor global industry trends and maintain strong connections with the national and NSW public library sector to inform strategic planning and service innovation.

Action	Commencing
4.3.1 Proactively contribute to and/or lead industry initiatives and forums that enhance public library sector capability	2023-24
4.3.2 Collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative performance and impact data to ensure library experience adapts to community expectations	2023-24



“I really liked my time at this library and I love coming here. I’m 11-years-old and I love coming to the library to study and have fun.” (Dee Why)

Implementation and evaluation

The actions listed in this Strategic Plan are presented against four strategic directions. Where applicable, more detailed actions will be documented each year in Northern Beaches Council's Operational Plan and the library service's annual Business Plan. Northern Beaches Council will monitor and review progress by keeping track of key performance indicators (KPIs) through monthly and annual reporting processes.

The APLA-ALIA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries form the basis of our KPIs. The standards and guidelines set expectations for provision of community-based public library services. Northern Beaches Council will use a range of activity and outcome indicators to measure performance.

Key performance indicators

- Active library membership (as % of the Northern Beaches population)
- Number of library visits per capita
- Number of loans per capita
- Collection turnover – number of loans per collection items
- Program participation per capita
- Customer satisfaction score
- Number of service innovations piloted in libraries
- Number of productive local partnerships with businesses, education or community organisations
- External and internal partner feedback
- Industry recognition and awards.

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The Great Good Place, Ray Oldenburg, 1991.

Data sources

Development of this Library Strategic Plan was informed by:

- Your Local Library survey results (2021, n=428)
- Your Say Northern Beaches ideas board (2022, n=180)
- social media comments (2022, n=102)
- library customer feedback forms (2021-2022, n=4,139)
- a library staff survey (2021) and a planning workshop (2022)
- workshops with three Northern Beaches Council's Strategic Reference Groups (2021)



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