

# LIBRARIES/BUILDING/COMMUNITIES

THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION OF VICTORIA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES – A RESEARCH REPORT  
FOR THE LIBRARY BOARD OF VICTORIA AND THE VICTORIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK

## Report Three: Bridging the Gaps



Library Board  
of Victoria



Libraries Building Communities is the first comprehensive Australian study of the value public libraries add to their communities. It includes all 44 public library services in Victoria and draws on the views and ideas of nearly 10,000 people.

The research aims to increase community awareness of the range of public library services and show government how public libraries can help achieve governmental policy goals. For library staff it:

- presents clear new data on the contribution libraries make to their communities;
- provides case studies that show how Victorian public libraries lead in innovation;
- identifies groups that are not currently well served by their libraries, and offers solutions;
- builds awareness of the critical social capital and community building role of public libraries.

Findings are presented in four reports with an *Executive Summary*:

- Report One: *Setting the Scene* covers the concept of community building, the Victorian Government's policy agenda, the Victorian public library network, project methodology, and relevant research.
- Report Two: *Logging the Benefits* outlines community views on the role and benefits of public libraries.
- Report Three: *Bridging the Gaps* provides socio-demographic profiles of library users and non-users and strategies for bridging the perceived gaps in public library service delivery.
- Report Four: *Showcasing the Best* gives over thirty examples of innovation and excellence in Victorian public libraries.

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1	Purpose of the report	7
1.2	The data	9
1.3	Structure of the report	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Who uses libraries? Who doesn't?</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	The characteristics of library users	11
2.2	Social inclusion: the quantitative data	13
2.3	Social inclusion: opinions and perceptions	16
<b>3</b>	<b>Libraries as a vehicle for social inclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1	A service that is highly accessible and well known	19
3.2	Resources and activities that meet people's needs	20
3.3	Services that are respected for their quality	20
3.4	A welcoming environment that engenders confidence	21
3.5	Reaching out to the community	21
3.6	Developing an understanding of the needs of the community	22
<b>4</b>	<b>Barriers to social engagement</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1	The main barriers to library use	28
4.2	Institutional barriers	30
4.3	Barriers related to perceptions and awareness	33
4.4	Barriers related to personal and social factors	33
4.5	Barriers related to infrastructure and environment	34
4.6	People who do not use libraries for lifestyle reasons	35
<b>5</b>	<b>Reducing barriers to social engagement</b>	<b>37</b>
5.1	Turning around the image	37
5.2	Communicating the right messages	38
5.3	Creating greater awareness	39
5.4	Making it easier and more comfortable for people to use the library	41
5.5	Encouraging disadvantaged social groups to use the library	41
5.6	Developing a better understanding of community needs	42
5.7	Using online surveys to understand community needs	44

<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>46</b>
6.1	Bridging the gaps	46
6.2	Realising the potential of public libraries	48

### Tables

<b>Table 1</b>	Library users and non-users by age group	12
<b>Table 2</b>	Employment status of library users and non-users	15
<b>Table 3</b>	Household type of library users and non-users	16
<b>Table 4</b>	Main barriers to the use of libraries	29

### **Attachment: Individual library service data from the online survey and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Housing and Population**

**53**

<b>Table A1</b>	Employment status of the local population and library users by library service	54
<b>Table A2</b>	Household income of the local population and library users by library service	55
<b>Table A3</b>	Household composition of the local population and library users by library service	56
<b>Table A4</b>	Occupation of the local population and library users by library service	57
<b>Table A5</b>	Proportion of the local population and library users by age	58
<b>Table A6</b>	Percentage who speak English at home in the local population and among library users	59

### **References**

**60**

# 1 Introduction

*In the context of other public services, Public Libraries rank with Australia Post and Pharmacies as the 'gold standard'. There is also a gathering body of evidence which suggests that this reflects a growing distinction in the public's mind between those services which are seen to have retained their old-fashioned, human touch (good) and those that have discarded these values in favour of new soulless ideologies of de-regulation, privatisation and market forces.*

QUANTUM MARKET RESEARCH, 2003

Public libraries in Victoria are open to all. The services they deliver are universally available and generally free – they offer a place that provides good access to information, entertainment and education for the entire community.

The results from the Libraries Building Communities (LBC) project show that public libraries reach a significant proportion of the population in Victoria – about 60% overall. This figure includes registered library users, as well as a significant number of people who make use of those library facilities, resources and services for which it is not necessary to be a registered user (e.g. as a quiet place to study or to read the daily newspapers). It includes a wide cross-section of people, including ethnic minority groups, people who are housebound, parents and children, and people living in remote areas. More than one in three Victorians over 15 years were found to visit their public library at least monthly. This is a high level of use of a community resource.

Public library staff place special importance on providing access to library services to people in the community who are least able to afford private alternatives. All public libraries in Victoria provide access to the Internet; this is especially important for people who cannot afford such a service at home.

Data from the LBC project shows that people on low incomes and those who are unemployed are well represented among library users. Job seekers are now using Internet facilities at their library as one of their primary sources of information, particularly in lower socio-economic areas.

Libraries often have collections that include a variety of material in languages other than English. Many strive to attract disenfranchised groups – using displays, entertainment and exhibitions to encourage them to visit the library.

*Libraries provide social connection for a section of the community who would otherwise run the risk of being isolated. (LBC participant)*

Public libraries have gone to great lengths to ensure access to library materials for people who are isolated and those in remote areas. The Annual Survey of Public Libraries shows that in 2002–03 home library services reached 559 institutions and 27,003 people. There were 30 mobile libraries and 549 mobile service points.

### Providing services to isolated areas

The Upper Murray Regional Library, which covers an area of 28,000 square kilometres and all types of terrain, has risen to the challenge of providing services to its most isolated regions through adoption of a mobile satellite solution, which allows its mobile libraries to provide users with live online access to the regional library system and free public Internet access.

However, while public libraries have made considerable efforts to ensure that library services are available to a broad cross-section of people, including those from disadvantaged social groups, the LBC study shows that the outcomes are uneven across Victoria’s municipalities and that some groups in the community, for example teenagers, are generally not as well represented among library users as other groups.

Most of the community leaders interviewed as part of the LBC project agreed that libraries are achieving an excellent result in reaching approximately 60% of the population. Despite this, many felt that the figure indicates there are still far too many people on the outer and not using this important service.

*There are still some people who never go inside a library and work is clearly needed to understand why they don’t use the service and consequently how these people can be encouraged to use this valuable public service. (LBC participant)*

The concern is that, among the 40% not using libraries, there are people who are hard to reach but who would benefit enormously from what the library has to offer. LBC data indicates that about 13% of Victorians fall into this category. These include:

- people who are educationally disadvantaged, live in isolation from wider society and who often don’t think libraries are relevant to their lives or needs;

*These are the people you would like to use the library who don’t. They may see the library as elitist – being surrounded by books may remind them that they do not have good literacy skills – or maybe they have bad memories of the library from their school life. (LBC participant)*

- people who lack knowledge of library facilities and services, and how to use them;
- people for whom public libraries do not cater well (e.g. those with visual impairment);
- people who face physical barriers to accessing the library.

Community leaders are keen to see library services used by these broader groups. They pointed to the potential benefits for individuals, for the community and for the nation if these groups could be engaged.

*Public libraries can help us develop a more inclusive society.*

*The role for libraries and their staff is fundamental to the core of the work that needs to be done both culturally and educationally in our communities.*

*The role of public libraries as key players at a community level in building learning communities, and helping to form skilled and information-literate communities, is fundamental to the future wellbeing of Australian society. (LBC participants)*

There was also strong acknowledgement among the people interviewed as part of the LBC project that libraries experience significant constraints in delivering these opportunities to the public. It is noted that libraries throughout Victoria are experiencing an increasing demand for information to be delivered in a number of formats, and by more varied means than ever before – without commensurate increases in resources.

*Tension exists between providing traditional library services and providing the space for the new technologies – IT is seen as an add-on which has not had corresponding funding from state and local governments. (LBC participant)*

There is evidence that libraries are struggling with resource constraints to fully meet the needs of current users. At the focus groups run by the LBC project, librarians raised the issue that, even with the current number of users, there are groups they are not able to service as well as they would like.

It is thus recognised that if libraries are to be more successful in meeting the needs of their communities – and especially the needs of those who are disadvantaged – additional resources will be required. One community leader called for further research to understand the potential of libraries to increase the number of people using them and the financial resources that would be required to support this.

This report contributes to this important discussion by providing quantitative and qualitative data from the LBC project that identifies who is using public libraries and who is not. The report also examines the factors that make libraries a successful vehicle for social inclusion and considers the types of barriers that prevent some people using libraries. A range of options is provided for how these barriers could be reduced. The concluding

section of the report identifies the key issues facing public libraries as they seek to develop strategies for enhanced social inclusion and looks at how this agenda can be progressed.

## 1.1 Purpose of the report

This report explores the extent to which public libraries in Victoria connect with their communities. It is specifically concerned with issues of social exclusion and how libraries engage with residents who are harder to reach – people who are often from the more disadvantaged social groups in the community (e.g. people on low income, those who are unemployed) and people who face special difficulties in using the library (e.g. people who are housebound or living in remote communities).

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### Defining social exclusion

The Social Exclusion Unit in the United Kingdom defines social exclusion as ‘a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown’. They note that key risk factors include low income, family conflict, being in care, school problems, being an ex-prisoner, being from an ethnic minority, living in a deprived neighbourhood in urban and rural areas, mental health problems, age and disability.

Janie Percy-Smith from the Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University provides a broader definition that includes those who are disempowered on grounds of social class, race, gender and sexual orientation; those discriminated against and marginalised by mainstream society; and those deprived of life chances. She notes that it includes some of the most stigmatised people in society who are often viewed with hostility by their local community. These are some of the most difficult people to cater for effectively.

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This analysis complements and extends the analysis in the earlier LBC report *Logging the Benefits*. The focus of Report Two was on demonstrating the many ways in which public libraries strengthen their communities – by enhancing social networks and links, encouraging and providing opportunities for lifelong learning and making it easier for people in the community to access the information they need. One of the factors identified in Report Two as making public libraries an effective contributor to community building is their capacity for social inclusion; that is, their capacity to reach out to and include diverse members of the community – including people who are often excluded from other local services.

Report Three: *Bridging the Gaps* explores this social inclusion issue in more detail. It presents quantitative information to illustrate how well represented different groups are among library users and qualitative information that tells in people's own words what encourages them to use their public library or, alternatively, what barriers exist to using the library.

It should be noted that the data presented in this report pertains only to the 43 public library services offered by Victoria's municipal councils. It does not include the National Information and Library Service, a special public library for people with print disabilities, which brings the total number of public library services in Victoria to 44 (see Report One, page 28).

The report presents detailed profiles of library users for each of the 43 municipal public libraries across Victoria. Comparison of these profiles with demographic data for each area helps to indicate the extent to which differences in user characteristics across libraries is a sign that they are responding to the varying needs of their communities or, alternatively, have adopted a different approach to social engagement.

The information presented in this report is only a starting point for examining these issues. While the LBC data is able to throw light on who is using library services and who is not, it has a focus on looking at these issues across a specific range of variables:

- family type
- age group
- income level
- employment status
- occupation
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations.

In particular the report has not examined in any detail issues related to disability, learning disadvantage, people in institutional care, mental illness or homelessness.

The information in the report is intended to assist public libraries in Victoria to:

- identify how well they are engaging with their communities;
- identify segments of the population that are not well served through current models of public library service delivery and the barriers to using the library that exist for this group;
- develop strategies for better engagement with communities – focusing particularly on the needs of people who do not currently use libraries but might be attracted to do so and who would benefit from the services on offer.

It is also intended to get policy makers, especially those involved in community strengthening activities, thinking about the role of libraries as vehicles for social engagement. As this report shows, public libraries can play a crucial role in bringing people together from across

the social strata, forging greater understanding of other perspectives and other cultures. Libraries can provide a connection into the community for people otherwise excluded from local services. And for many they provide that first important link to government information and services.

## 1.2 The data

Several phases of the Libraries Building Communities project have fed into this report, namely: the focus groups, the telephone survey, the online survey and the in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders and key influencers, including community leaders, politicians and members of CALD communities.

The methodologies used in collecting this data have been described in detail in Report Two – and are summarised below.

### Focus groups

Twenty-four focus group sessions were conducted with library staff, library users and non-library users. Library users were ‘self-selected’ by advertising the study on library notice boards and asking interested users to take part. Non-library users were sourced via random telephone contact. Focus group recruitment aimed to access a wide range of groups and was, on the whole, successful in this. Participants included people from various CALD groups, age groups and socio-economic groups.

### Telephone survey

A telephone survey sourcing a random sample of 400 residents was conducted across Victoria. The survey was designed to capture information from both library users and non-users. For this survey, users were defined as those who had visited a public library in the past twelve months and non-users were defined as those who had

not visited a public library in the past twelve months. Non-English-speaking households were largely excluded from the telephone survey. The findings from this survey have been used in this report to provide a quantitative picture of users and non-users.

### Online survey

An online survey was used to collect information from every public library in the State. This survey was designed to capture benchmark data relating to library use, importance of and satisfaction with library services and resources, social capital information and demographic data. CALD library users were surveyed using paper-based copies of the online survey. The survey and accompanying advertising material were translated into six languages. These were deemed as the largest CALD groups in the library user population. The complexity and length of the questionnaire meant that only a small number of library users under the age of 14 years completed the survey.

### Interviews with key influencers

Thirty-five interviews were conducted with key influencers such as local councillors, bureaucrats, business people, school principals and teachers, and people working in key community organisations such as maternal and child health and religious groups. Key influencers from the CALD community were included specifically because this group had been under-represented in the focus groups and telephone survey.

## 1.3 Structure of the report

Report Three is structured into five sections.

### Who uses libraries? Who doesn't?

- Provides empirical data on the characteristics of current library users and non-users. Examines the representation of particular social and occupational groups among library users.
- Presents qualitative findings from the focus groups on which groups in the community are considered to be well represented among library users and which are not.

### Libraries as a vehicle for social inclusion

- Looks at the reasons why public libraries are so successful in engaging a large section of the population and reports on the approaches used by libraries to understanding the needs of their communities.

### Barriers to social engagement

- Examines the barriers that stop people from using public libraries and prevent current users from realising the full potential of library services. These issues are discussed under the following headings:
  - Institutional barriers
  - Barriers related to perceptions and awareness
  - Personal and social barriers
  - Barriers related to infrastructure and environment.

### Reducing barriers to social engagement

- Presents the views of focus group participants and community leaders on how barriers to the use of libraries can be reduced.

### Conclusion

- Draws out the key conclusions from the report and draws on overseas experience to suggest steps for moving the social engagement agenda forward.

## 2 Who uses libraries? Who doesn't?

*It is one of the little recognised achievements of Australia that through public libraries, rural school housed public libraries and outback and other outreach services, virtually every person in our vast island continent now has free and fast access to the total print and electronic resources of Australia's libraries.*

BUNDY, 2003

Data from the Libraries Building Communities project helps us to develop a clearer picture of who uses public libraries and the extent to which libraries are successful in reaching out to the more marginalised and socially excluded groups in the community.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was collected through the LBC project. The online survey and telephone survey provide a statistical picture of library users. This data was collected in a format consistent with that used in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing and thus allows comparison to be made between the characteristics of the overall population and the characteristics of those using libraries. Feedback from the focus groups and the interviews with key influencers presents more subjective information on the views of users, non-users, library staff and community leaders regarding who in the community is using library services and who is not.

### 2.1 The characteristics of library users

A profile of library users was presented in Report Two from the LBC project, *Logging the Benefits*. In summary this shows that:

- Public library usage is widespread across metropolitan and regional Victoria. The telephone survey indicates that around six in ten English-speaking Victorians over the age of 15 years are current public library users (i.e. have used a local public library in the past twelve months).
- About 27% of Victorians do not use public libraries for lifestyle reasons (e.g. they have independent access to books and other resources, they may be working full-time with access to the Internet and library services at work or they might have different priorities for using their recreational time).

- On the other hand, there are about 13% of Victorians who are currently not using public library services who stand to gain significantly from this service. This includes people who are socially or economically disadvantaged, face physical barriers to accessing the library, or are not well catered for by the library.
- Young children and their parents form the backbone of library users (the telephone survey indicates these families make up just over half of all library users).
- While not the most typical group, single people are also commonly patrons – presumably reflecting their available time and life interests. The telephone survey indicates that they represent about 14% of library users.
- Public library use is correlated with life stage and access to alternative information and/or entertainment resources.
  - There are high rates of library usage by females in the age range 30–49 years. Typically these users are born in Australia, tertiary educated, with dependent children and either not in the labour force or employed on a part-time basis.
  - There is a low level of library use by full-time working parents of dependent children – being ‘time poor’ was identified as a major barrier to use for this group.
  - Couples without children are the least likely type of household to be using library services. This group includes a proportion of ‘empty nesters’ and low use for them may relate to having ample financial resources to buy reading material or source information online.
- The age groups where there tends to be more library users than non-users are 40–49 years, 60–69 years and the 70-plus years (see Table 1).
- The age group ‘under 30 years’ has proportionately more non-users in it – possibly because people in this age group tend to create their own networks and sources of information (such as the Internet at home or work) and are thus less likely to be users of public libraries.
- A library user is unlikely to be a male teenager.

**TABLE 1: LIBRARY USERS AND NON-USERS BY AGE GROUP**  
SOURCE: TELEPHONE SURVEY

		Group				Total	
		Users		Non-users			
		n	%	n	%	n	%
What is your age?	15–19	12	5	6	4	18	5
	20–29	30	13	32	19	62	16
	30–39	54	23	38	23	92	23
	40–49	53	23	25	15	78	20
	50–59	34	15	37	22	71	18
	60–69	26	11	16	10	42	11
	70 and over	24	10	12	7	36	9
Total		233	100	166	100	399	100

Note: People under the age of 16 years were not included in the survey.

- About one-quarter of all library users are currently studying. This figure is higher among CALD users (31%). A significantly higher proportion of female library users (41%) are attending a university or other educational institution than are male users (34%). A significantly higher proportion of CALD patrons are studying at a technical or further educational facility compared with English-speaking patrons.

## 2.2 Social inclusion: the quantitative data

Comparison of the characteristics of library users in each of Victoria's 43 municipal public library services with the profile of the overall population in the area served by each library allows assessment of the extent to which different groups in the community are well represented among library users and which groups are less well represented. For example, a group that represents 10% of the population but 15% of library users is said to be well represented among library users. A group that represents 10% of the population but only 2% of library users is said to be under-represented.

The following data on the characteristics of library users was obtained through the online survey. Data on the overall population within each area was sourced from the ABS Census 2001. This data was obtained for the relevant Statistical Division (SD), Statistical Subdivision (SSD) or Statistical Local Area (SLA), depending on the best match to the library service's area.

The findings from this data are summarised below under the key headings of:

- Income
- Employment status
- Family type
- Occupation
- Age
- Language spoken at home.

The detailed data supporting these findings is included in the tables in the Attachment to the report.

### Income

- Households on low incomes (i.e. incomes of less than \$400 per week) are well represented across the great majority of library services. In a small number of libraries the proportion of library users with low incomes is at least twice as high as the representation of this group in their community.
- The reverse is true for high income earners (i.e. households with incomes in excess of \$2,000 per week). In the great majority of libraries the proportion of users from this group is well below their representation in the population.

### Employment status

- People who are unemployed are well represented among library users. In nearly all library services the proportion of library users who are unemployed is at least twice the proportion of people in the community who are unemployed. For example, in the area covered by Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation the proportion of unemployed people in the community is 4% while the proportion of library users who are unemployed is 16%.
- Overall, there is lower representation of those in full-time employment among library users compared with their representation in the community. In about one-third of libraries the proportion of library users who are in full-time work is as low as half the proportion of full-time workers in the community. However, this is not true for all library services. As Table A1 (in the Attachment) shows, there are a small number of library services where full-time workers are well represented among users.
- People who are employed part-time are more likely to use the library than full-time workers. Across the great majority of library services the proportion of users

who work part-time is considerably higher than the proportion of part-time workers in the community.

- The category ‘not in the labour force’ brings together a range of groups, including those who are retired, people caring for children and students in further education. As shown in Report Two from the LBC project, *Logging the Benefits*, about 40% of library users are from this category. This report also shows that, compared with non-users, there is a significantly higher proportion of library users in this category. However, data on usage patterns for the 43 municipal public library services across Victoria shows that this is not a consistent story across all libraries. At some library services (about one-third) this category is well represented among users while at others it is not. It would be useful if future data collections were to glean more detailed data on people not in the labour force by breaking this group down into its constituent parts.

### Family type

- Couples with dependent children make up a significant proportion of users across all public library services in Victoria – largely reflecting the preponderance of this family type within the wider population.
- However, examination of the detailed data for each library service shows that couples with dependent children are well represented in the library user population in just over half the library services. However, in the other half this group is under-represented (i.e. the proportion of library users from this type of household is lower than their representation in the population).
- Couples with non-dependent children are consistently well represented among users across all library services.
- Couples without children are less well represented among users in most library services.

- One-parent families represent 10% of library users and 11% of households in Victoria. With the exception of seven library services, one-parent families with dependent children are under-represented among library users. In a handful of services the proportion of users from this category falls below one half of their representation in the population (e.g. in one library service the proportion of one-parent families in the area is 10%, yet only 2% of users identified themselves as being from this group).

### Occupation

- People categorised by the ABS as professionals are extremely well represented among library users. In some library services they represent almost half of all users.
- Managers and administrators are also well represented among users but there are about ten services where the proportion of users who are in this category falls below their representation in the community.
- Tradespeople on the other hand constitute an occupational grouping that appears to have a much lower use of public libraries. In most services the proportion of users who are tradespeople is well below their representation in the community.
- Labourers and related workers are also under-represented among library users. However, several library services stand out as having a higher proportion of users from this category.

### Age<sup>1</sup>

- In many libraries, people in the age group 15–19 years are poorly represented in the user population in comparison with their presence in the community. Several of the larger metropolitan libraries stand out as having particularly low representation – the proportion of users aged 15–19 years falls below one half of their

<sup>1</sup> It needs to be recalled that the complexity and length of the questionnaire meant that only 4% of library users under the age of 14 years completed the survey.

representation in the population. Six libraries stand out for having a higher proportion of users from this group than their representation in the community. Two of these libraries are well known for the priority they place on access to technology and this may be a factor attracting younger people to them.

- While aggregate figures for public libraries show that for those aged less than 30 years there tends to be proportionately more non-users than users, a small number of libraries appear to be servicing this section of the community well.
- People aged 40–69 years appear to be well represented in all but two or three libraries.
- People over the age of 70 years are also well represented in a majority of libraries. But there are a larger number of libraries, including large metropolitan libraries, where people in this age group are not well represented.

### Language spoken at home<sup>2</sup>

- Data from the online survey indicates very poor representation among library users of people who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home. However, this may reflect the methodology used to

collect the data rather than represent an accurate picture of library use by these groups.

- The data, however, does indicate that libraries that operate in areas with a very high proportion of people in the community who speak a LOTE at home have a higher proportion of users from these groups. For example, in Maribyrnong, census data shows that about 52% of the community speak a LOTE at home and LBC data indicates that about 53% of library users come from this group.

Data from the telephone survey can be used to examine the different characteristics of users of libraries and non-users – allowing us to draw some conclusions about groups who are better represented in the user population. The results presented below reinforce many of the findings from the online survey, but in some instances provide a slightly different picture.

The telephone survey confirms the finding that unemployed people and those who are working part-time are well represented among library users (see Table 2). However, it also suggests that overall libraries are servicing those ‘not in the workforce’ very well.

**TABLE 2: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF LIBRARY USERS AND NON-USERS**  
SOURCE: TELEPHONE SURVEY

		Group				Total	
		Users		Non-users			
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Would you classify your employment status as ...?	Full-time employment	64	27	90	54	154	39
	Part-time/casual employment	64	27	29	17	93	23
	Unemployed	12	5	7	4	19	5
	Not in the workforce (i.e. retired)	94	40	40	24	134	34
Total		234	100	166	100	400	100

<sup>2</sup> CALD library users were surveyed using paper-based copies of the online survey that were translated into six languages. The extent to which CALD users were encouraged to complete the survey varied between libraries.

The data on library use by family type (see Table 3) is consistent with data from the online survey showing that couples with dependent children and those with non-dependent children are well represented among library users, and that couples without children are not as well represented. However, it provides a more positive picture regarding one-parent families with dependent children, suggesting that this group is well represented among library users.

The discrepancies between the results from the online and telephone surveys may be partly explained by the different data collection methods used and the fact that the surveys used different sampling techniques. The sample size for sole parents was very small in the telephone survey and this may have influenced the results. Future surveys of library users should seek to clarify findings in these key areas.

### 2.3 Social inclusion: opinions and perceptions

During the focus group sessions participants were asked their opinions on which groups in the community are well represented among library users and which are not. These qualitative findings complement the quantitative findings described above.

#### Groups in the community who are regarded as well represented among library users

When asked which groups they perceived to be the main users of libraries, focus group participants most frequently mentioned the following:

- mothers and children
- females rather than males
- elderly and retired people
- students
- primary school children
- people who are unemployed
- some migrant groups.

This is surprisingly consistent with what the quantitative data tells us about library users.

**TABLE 3: HOUSEHOLD TYPE OF LIBRARY USERS AND NON-USERS**  
SOURCE: TELEPHONE SURVEY

		Group				Total	
		Users		Non-users		n	%
		n	%	n	%		
Which of the following best describes your household?	Couple family with dependent children	97	50	41	31	138	42
	Couple family with non-dependent children	44	23	40	31	84	26
	Couple family without children	22	11	32	24	54	17
	One-parent family with dependent children	18	9	5	4	23	7
	One-parent family with non-dependent children	4	2	4	3	8	2
	Other family	10	5	9	7	19	6
Total		195	100	131	100	326	100

## Groups in the community who are regarded as not well represented

The key groups identified as not well represented among library users were:

- working people
- people without transport
- people who find the thought of using a library intimidating
- teenagers
- minority CALD groups
- people who are housebound or living in some form of residential care
- older people and people with disabilities who experience physical restrictions – including those with vision impairment
- Aboriginal people.

### Working people

People working full-time are seen as a ‘time poor’ group who are less likely to use libraries – especially if confronted with other barriers such as limited opening hours or having to travel a distance to their local library. This group tends to want Sundays and later weekday opening hours for libraries.

Among working people, the groups specifically mentioned as less likely to be library users were:

- those who work in industrial/commercial suburbs without a library within walking distance that they could use during lunch hours;
- people who work full-time outside their municipality (it was incorrectly thought by some that they would not be allowed to visit libraries outside where they lived);

- people with long working hours (e.g. farmers, for whom library hours conflict with their working commitments).

### People without transport

Some libraries were said to be very difficult to reach without a car, especially those that are not in a main shopping area or not on regular public transport routes. This was thought to specifically impact on:

- people who are infirm and would find the weight of books hard to carry;
- single mothers who cannot push a pram all the way to the library;
- those who cannot walk far and are not on a public transport route;
- disabled people with mobility problems.

### People who may be intimidated

Several non-users who attended the focus groups talked about being too intimidated to use a library or knowing other people who felt this way. They specifically mentioned their lack of confidence with technology as a barrier to using the library.

*Older people that have never been to a library before may be scared they won't know how to use the computer to find the book – they are scared to ask for help.  
(LBC participant)*

### Teenagers and young adults

Teenage boys were seen as a group less likely to use libraries. Three key reasons were given for low usage levels:

- the lack of ‘brand appeal’ of public libraries to this demographic;
- the availability of school library resources;

- the lack of library-based seminars or activities that appeal to this demographic.

*We need to engage them in libraries more ... just the habit of getting them into the library regularly might be a good thing. (LBC participant)*

### **Minority CALD groups**

Small first-generation CALD groups were seen as having low usage rates because of their limited English, perceived lack of library resources available in their languages and their lack of awareness of support available through libraries.

### **Nursing home residents and the housebound**

In areas without a home library service people who are housebound were perceived to be under-users of libraries.

### **Frail and disabled people**

Some of the library staff who attended the focus groups felt that their library did not attract elderly or disabled people due to physical problems in accessing the library, shortage of large print books, poor shelf access, and/or lack of transport options for this group.

# 3 Libraries as a vehicle for social inclusion

*It is fair to say that people interact more with local government through public libraries than through any other service. Public libraries are already delivering a wide range of service to local communities and are well placed to develop this further in the strategic areas of 'joined-up' government and 'joined-up' service delivery. There is a need to make sure councils are aware of libraries' potential and to bring libraries more into mainstream local government operations rather than working alongside local government.*

DIGBY, 2003

As the data presented above shows, usage of public libraries in Victoria is very strong. On average libraries are able to attract 60% of the population – many on a regular basis. This section of the report explores how libraries are able to achieve this result.

## 3.1 A service that is highly accessible and well known

Analysis of library data by John Binnion, Chief Executive Officer of the Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation, highlights the reach and accessibility of public libraries in Victoria. This shows that public libraries have:

- 820 physical points of service delivery in the community – many of these being mobile library sites in rural and regional areas;
- a presence in just over one in four 'named' communities – of which there are 2,930 in Victoria.

Not many other services have this kind of community penetration.

The LBC project shows that the reach and accessibility of public libraries is complemented by a high level of awareness of libraries and the services they provide. A significant majority (92%) of respondents to the telephone survey (which included users and non-users) were aware of free public library services in their community. Only 6% did not know of such services and 2% said no services of this type existed. Only 7% of non-users did not know the location of their nearest public library.

For many this awareness extended beyond books and other information resources to the less traditional services. Among both users and non-users there was remarkably high awareness of the availability of computers and computer facilities, and audiovisual resources (including CDs, DVDs and videos).

The understanding of public libraries was not limited to its functional roles in terms of providing books and resources but extended to a good appreciation of the social and community role of the library. An overwhelming majority of library users and non-users who took part in the telephone survey saw the library as an important part of the community. Eighty-eight per cent of users and 80% of non-users agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that public libraries make a positive contribution to their local community.

### 3.2 Resources and activities that meet people's needs

Libraries provide users with more than books – and this is reflected in the high level of usage of the range of services provided by public libraries.

Responses to the online survey showed that:

- nearly all users had borrowed books from the library;
- almost two-thirds of users had used audiovisual lending material;
- half the users had borrowed a magazine;
- almost half had used computing services, including Internet access;
- a third of users had used the Internet to access catalogues and databases;
- workstations had been used to find and apply for jobs, for school and university assignments and for emailing friends.

*Sometimes they are the main source of material for those with special needs (e.g. hearing, language, physical and mental disabilities).*

*For people with mental illnesses, libraries provide information and a place for contact.  
(LBC participants)*

Usage of some other library services is also reasonably high. More than 10% of users had participated in:

- children's and young adults' services
- school holiday programs
- story time
- regular programs of talks and cultural events
- local history services.

A third of respondents to the online survey had made use of the community information and one-sixth of respondents had used information about council services. Holdings in languages other than English had been used by 14% of the sample.

More than two-thirds of respondents (67% of users and 66% of non-users) to the telephone survey felt that the library is a good place to find out about what is going on in their local community. Both users and non-users regarded the distribution of community information as a key benefit.

Community leaders noted that libraries play a crucial role in providing access to books, DVDs, music, foreign language material, magazines and newspapers for those who cannot afford to buy these in volume, and are thus a good source of recreation for this sector of the community.

### 3.3 Services that are respected for their quality

When library users who took part in the telephone survey were asked to rate how well they thought public libraries performed on a range of activities, they rated these all highly – with average performance ratings all above 4.0 (corresponding to 'good'). Three variables emerged as significant predictors of overall satisfaction: variety of books, customer service, and Internet access and other

computer facilities. These attributes all have very high current performance ratings, as does overall satisfaction with library services – 94% of the respondents rated overall library performance as excellent or good.

Users who attended the focus groups were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with library services. Their responses showed high satisfaction ratings, with average ratings of 8.2 on a 1 to 10 scale. Without being prompted over a third of library users mentioned customer service as an area in which their library excels.

### 3.4 A welcoming environment that engenders confidence

*Libraries are a great leveller – a place where all sorts of people can gather.*

*Libraries are an important part of their day-to-day routine for many people in the community.  
(LBC participants)*

Many of the people who spoke to the LBC project commented that libraries provide a safe, neutral space for people to meet. The fact that library services are generally free was mentioned frequently – and was seen as communicating the message that everyone has right of access regardless of their circumstance or background.

Results from the focus groups and telephone survey emphasised that library staff are a critical asset to the public library system – doing much to nurture the warm and welcoming environment in libraries. Caring and patient library staff were seen as an important factor in ensuring that marginalised groups felt welcome.

*For people with mental illnesses, libraries provide information and a place for contact. (LBC participant)*

AustraliaSCAN is an annual monitor of social values carried out by Quantum Market Research. In 2003 it found that Victorian public libraries rank highly in the public mind. They note:

*There is ... a gathering body of evidence which suggests that this reflects a growing distinction in the public's mind between those services which are seen to have retained their old-fashioned, human touch (good) and those that have discarded these values in favour of new soulless ideologies of de-regulation, privatisation and market forces.*

### 3.5 Reaching out to the community

Best practice case studies from across Victoria demonstrate many of the ways in which public libraries are reaching into their communities to attract and support a wide group of users. These include examples of libraries:

- providing exhibitions of local groups' products (e.g. art and woodwork);
- running mothers' groups, which inform mothers of the support and activities available to them through the library;
- promoting their service to traditional non-users through programs that celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community;
- providing a venue for Indigenous groups to hold learning circles, workshops and regular meetings;
- running homework programs for young people;
- distributing book kits to new parents to encourage them to read to their babies and foster early literacy development;
- attracting residents to come in to the library for other services (e.g. local tourist information, local council information, and information regarding social and support groups);

- using entertainment programs to demonstrate that libraries are more than just a place to pursue books or information. Such social events can attract residents who would not generally use the library.

*Libraries can better connect to their communities by offering a greater focus on art and entertainment – they need to develop a strategy which seeks to influence a long-term behavioural change to make libraries a part of people’s regular activities – people must feel as though libraries are a valuable place to spend a few hours.  
(LBC participant)*

### Attracting new users

Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation ran a high profile launch of their new collection of Chinese materials, offering snacks and entertainment, which included Chinese dancing and an introduction to Tai Chi.

The library branch manager observed that ‘many of the Chinese people who attended the launch still come in every Tuesday night – it has become a family ritual. They have started borrowing the DVDs. Patronage is growing through word of mouth in the Chinese community.’

Other ways in which libraries extend their offerings to wider groups is through initiatives such as:

- outreach to local shopping malls with registration forms, book selections and other displays;
- outreach to kindergartens;
- outreach to CALD groups to increase awareness of resources;
- presentations to clubs, societies and other groups.

The LBC focus groups suggested that key predictive factors of how well libraries are connected to their communities are:

- the time put into informal and formal community consultation (this relates closely to staff commitment to marketing and community development);
- how well community consultation data is actioned by library management;
- whether libraries offer home library services (this predicted closer connections with elderly people);
- whether libraries offer and effectively promote non-English language resources and activities;
- whether staff develop relationships with local groups (e.g. by sub-letting or providing meeting rooms free of charge);
- how innovative staff are in organising events and providing information of interest to their communities;
- levels of staffing allocated to community outreach/marketing;
- levels of staffing allocated to customer service (low levels mean inadequate time to connect well with user needs).

## 3.6 Developing an understanding of the needs of the community

*Libraries are often the first to know what’s going on in the community, especially when staff live locally.*

*Libraries are more in touch with local issues than they are often given the credit for.*

*(LBC participants)*

Over the course of the LBC project it was argued by many people, including library staff, that libraries can only engage with their communities effectively if

they understand them. This includes understanding the demographic composition of the community, the information and social needs of the different segments of the community and the profile of current library users.

Discussion with library management and staff throughout the LBC project highlighted the variety of mechanisms used by libraries to understand their communities and involve residents in library decision making. Some examples are provided below. While these describe the approaches of specific library services they reflect similar methods being used across public libraries in Victoria.

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#### **Yarra Plenty Regional Library: responding to Best Value**

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) sees its key purpose as to inform, educate, inspire and connect.

In response to Best Value, YPRL is undertaking continuous review of the library service in accordance with Best Value principles and is looking at the following areas:

- Quality and cost standards;
  - Assessment of value for money including reviews of service;
  - Past financial and operational performance;
  - Consulting with and reporting back to the community;
  - Undertaking benchmarking in the areas of
    - Service function, provision and access
    - Community demand – monitoring YPRL position relative to other services and identifying gaps between performance and best practice
    - Cost and productivity – based on the dominant measures of loans and visits
    - Collection – expenditure and comparisons of the service to general industry levels
    - Industry profile – which ranks YPRL services against other libraries using data from an annual regional library survey.
- 

#### **Responding to Best Value**

As part of local government, public libraries are obliged to undertake continuous review of their service in accordance with Best Value principles. These establish requirements for how libraries conduct their business and interact with their communities. They specifically require public libraries to:

- be responsive to the needs of the community;
- have a program of regular community consultation;
- report regularly to the community, at least once a year, on achievements against the Best Value principles.

Many councils help their departments implement Best Value by providing guidelines for community consultation and related processes. Libraries have also initiated their own activities of review, performance assessment and benchmarking.

#### **Participation in local council research and surveys**

Public libraries can develop a better understanding of their communities and changes occurring in them by participating in research activities and surveys being run by other areas within the council.

For example, at Boroondara the Community Planning department has a research analyst whose main tasks are to analyse demographic data and health and welfare data relating to the Boroondara community. The library manager is able to tap into this and other key information through membership of the Community Planning Committee, which ensures that knowledge is shared between departments.

Similarly, Darebin Council employs a part-time research analyst who is attached to the Strategic Planning area, and is available to assist all areas of council with research and statistical data.

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## Surveys undertaken by the City of Darebin

### Household survey

This survey is conducted every two years (since 1999) and is designed in the style of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing survey. It is the major source of demographic and socio-economic information on residents of the City of Darebin for inter-censal periods. The major objectives of the survey are:

- to provide a regular update to the demographics of the census;
- to provide an opportunity to measure the service delivery requirements of residents;
- to provide access to raw data, which allows cross-tabulation between any of the variables in the survey;
- to provide a time series dataset at the local level from which more detailed statistical analysis can be undertaken as necessary for specific issues and projects.

The household survey is a paper-based, self-assessment survey delivered to 1,100 households randomly selected across the municipality, with households drawn from precincts in numbers proportional to that precinct's relative population.

Council-specific questions are included, with departments/areas of council encouraged to include questions about their services, particularly in relation to future demand, such as: 'Do you anticipate using the home library service within the next two years?'

### Ad hoc surveys

These surveys include one-off type surveys such as a new resident's survey. An example of this type of survey is that conducted following the establishment of new residential development at Gresswell Grange and Mount Cooper. This survey, like the household survey, covered demographic and socio-economic data and included residents' expectations and requirements for the future.

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## Syndicated surveys

Since 1997 a syndicate of regional library corporations has commissioned an annual market research survey. Initially the syndicate comprised the metropolitan regional libraries (which between them provide services to more than half of Melbourne's population) but in recent years it has expanded to include a number of the larger rural regions as well.

The survey is conducted by telephone by a professional research company and includes users and non-users of the libraries. Three hundred randomly selected households from each area are surveyed each year.

The questionnaire covers areas such as awareness of services, services used, level of satisfaction and reasons for non-use. It also looks at Internet use and whether this has impacted on library use.

The survey results have built up a large body of information, which allows comparisons between regions and over time.

## Individual library surveys

Some Victorian libraries conduct random telephone or self-completion surveys to profile residents and their library usage habits. At several libraries, these surveys include non-English-speaking users. Funds for such studies often come from council budgets. Some libraries have, or are currently developing, user-profile questionnaires for online library users.

Several libraries spoke to the LBC project about their experience and intentions regarding community profiling.

- Moreland's library service undertakes extensive surveys of its users. Since 1997 a survey has been mailed out annually to 1,850 users selected at random. Final results are compared with previous

years and a detailed analysis undertaken of all comments. As well, a separate annual survey of Internet users is undertaken and comments regarding the library service are included in the council's annual survey of residents.

- The Hobsons Bay Library Service carries out an annual survey of users, including CALD users, with help from the Friends of the Library group. This is translated into eight languages. In 2003 they achieved a sample of 229, including 80 CALD users. Staff commented that the current survey works well and input from CALD communities facilitates translation of the survey. However, they noted that it is difficult to get large numbers of people to complete the survey. Also, the survey is costly to undertake and would be impossible without the help of the Friends of the Library group.
- Darebin Libraries, under Best Value, are committed to conducting both a user and non-user survey in alternate years. These surveys are additional to their input to the council's household survey.

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#### **Profiling users of Port Phillip Library Service's website**

**A new function is to be introduced at Port Phillip Library Service for obtaining profiles when users visit the website (either when at home or in a branch library). By providing a profile and email address the library will be able to send targeted information to patrons on recent additions to the library's collection. A similar profile is already obtained for the home library service. Profiles of users are obtained via interview and include numbers and types of books sought.**

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#### **Library reviews**

A number of libraries have undertaken reviews of their service by independent consultants to examine issues related to their operations and customer satisfaction with services.

Major reviews of Moreland's library service were undertaken by external consultants in 1996 and 2001. Although costly, the findings of the reviews formed the basis for strategic planning, which included changes to the hours of opening, provision of specific collections and services, the organisation of technical operations and a staff restructure.

#### **Resident-based advisory groups**

Many libraries have recognised the importance of involving local residents in library decision making as a way of ensuring that library services are relevant to the local community.

The Moreland Library Advisory Committee meets quarterly and consists of nine residents and two councillors. The committee considers issues such as the service charter and roles and priorities of the library service, library policies and user surveys.

The Yarra Melbourne Regional Library Community Advisory Committee (RLCAC) is an advisory committee to the Regional Library Board, and aims to provide input from library users and community representatives into the library service. It also nominates one representative to the board. Members of the committee represent Friends Groups and community groups. The RLCAC meets monthly at libraries throughout the region. Meetings are open to community observers.

## Linking with other community organisations

Librarians who attended the focus groups noted that the ability of libraries to understand their communities is enhanced by their relationships with other community organisations.

*The library is reasonably well connected to the community through relationships with several local groups and through many activities aimed at enhancing community interaction, such as regular talks, programs for children, which bring parents together, and showcasing of the work of several local groups. (LBC participant)*

Librarians said they believe that their relationship building has been successful through:

- providing meeting rooms free of charge or for a small charge;
- speaking at local group meetings including meetings of support networks such as young mothers' groups;
- arranging displays for promoting local groups;
- networking in the community to arrange a regular program of talks for adults and children.

*Sometimes we have three groups a day using our meeting rooms, e.g. church groups, education, tutoring, weight loss, family history group. (LBC participant)*

Examples were given of libraries learning about and responding to community needs through these relationships. For example, a number of libraries have introduced new collections based on the knowledge they have gained about the changing demographics in their community and the specific needs of CALD communities.

Others are linking into specific local institutions such as schools and using these links to promote the diversity of services the library has to offer.

*We mail our newsletter to all public schools in our region.*

*We send the schools our School Holiday Program every holiday period (four per year) and they mail it out to each household in their newsletter to parents. This is effective because these school holiday events fill up very quickly, especially if we have a presenter or entertainer coming. (LBC participants)*

## Administrative data collections

Most libraries collect basic data on users via membership forms. In addition some information may be collected about use of core library services, such as book lending and computer use. This data supports library operations and is also required by the Department for Victorian Communities as part of the annual collection of library performance statistics. These statistics are compiled in the *Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries* to allow comparison across the 43 municipal library services in the public library network.

Although useful at an aggregate level, some librarians commented that this data provides only a sketchy picture of how libraries are engaging with patrons and is not always put to good use within individual libraries. Some libraries noted that the data they collect on users may not be analysed at all due to privacy considerations and the refusal of a significant proportion of members to divulge demographic information.

Other libraries stated that only minimal information is gathered at membership due to time restrictions and that there is little to no collection of such data from CALD patrons due to language difficulties and cultural issues.

Those libraries with a home or mobile library service

collect user-profile information from their housebound populations, but tend to focus the collection of information on types of books preferred by each customer rather than demographic or social engagement information.

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### Collecting basic data on library users

When new members register for their library card at the Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation data is collected regarding gender, age group, whether materials are required in a specific language, birth date, residential address, email address and telephone numbers.

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### Customer feedback

Most library staff consulted, as part of this project, said that their branch had a suggestion box but noted that users are more likely to make suggestions verbally to staff – these tend to be about improvements to the library or recommendations regarding new titles and so forth.

*We find out what subject matter the community wants by asking them for suggestions on feedback forms.  
(LBC participant)*

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### Customer feedback

Darebin Libraries conducts ongoing customer feedback exercises including paper-based feedback forms, online feedback (via website) and consultation with specific groups, such as the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council.

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## 4 Barriers to social engagement

*It is ... important to understand the barriers that prevent many from using the library and information services we provide. This is not simply about opening hours or appropriate physical access, but also about culture, the nature of services and the manner in which they are delivered.*

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 1999

For most people in the community public libraries are highly accessible and provide services that meet their needs. However, for a smaller group of people there are barriers that prevent them from using libraries altogether or restrict the benefits they can obtain when visiting their local library.

Discussion at the focus groups and interviews with community leaders explored views and opinions regarding these barriers and canvassed suggestions for how they might be reduced. These questions were addressed to both users and non-users; differences emerged between the views of the two groups, as discussed below.

In considering these findings it needs to be kept in mind that many of the non-users of the library have never used a library (11%) or have not visited a library for a significant period of time (11% had not visited a library for more than 20 years and 7% had not visited for between 10 and 20 years). Their perceptions may thus be based on an outmoded image of the library. Other perceptions may be based on experience of a particular library service and may not reflect the operations of other public libraries in Victoria.

Nonetheless it is important to consider what people are saying as, whether they are right or wrong, their perceptions create real barriers to library usage for these individuals.

### 4.1 The main barriers to library use

Table 4 summarises what people regarded as the major barriers to access. As the table is constructed from the focus group phase of research it should be seen as identifying key themes rather than providing hard evidence.

As Table 4 shows, the main barriers to a socially inclusive use of libraries tend to be:

- institutional – related to resources and activities;
- related to perceptions and awareness;
- personal and social;
- related to infrastructure and environment.

Both users and non-users regarded collection issues as key barriers to library usage, with non-users identifying insufficient holdings of popular titles and users pointing to collections that are out of date. Similarly there were aspects of the library environment that provided barriers

to both groups. However, for non-users this focused on poor proximity to transport and unfriendly buildings, while users identified more specific issues in relation to difficult-to-reach shelves and lack of a quiet study area.

Poor image was a significant issue for non-users but not users – possibly indicating that once people visit their library and can assess it for themselves any negative images disappear; but also suggesting that some people in the non-user group come from a section of the community who do not see themselves, or their lifestyle, reflected in the image they have of the library.

**TABLE 4: MAIN BARRIERS TO THE USE OF LIBRARIES**  
SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP

		Non-users	Users
Lifestyle preferences	Irregular readers, time poor, instant gratification	✓	
Communication	Limited/no awareness of library services	✓	✓
	Lack of attempt to attract non-users	✓	✓
	Poor image	✓	
Resources	Lack of talking books/large print books		✓
	Insufficient numbers of popular titles	✓	
	Restricted opening hours	✓	✓
	Lack of up-to-date collections		✓
	Servicing small, emerging language groups	✓	✓
	Insufficient Internet availability		✓
Infrastructure	Difficult shelf access for elderly/disabled		✓
	Poor proximity to bus stops/transport	✓	
	Poor car parking facilities	✓	✓
	Lack of quiet study areas		✓
	Unfriendly buildings/lack of space for users to interact	✓	
	Lack of resources in languages other than English	✓	

✓ Denotes that the issue was raised by significant numbers in the focus groups conducted as part of this project.

## 4.2 Institutional barriers

### Lack of appropriate material, equipment and activities

#### Not offering up-to-date material

There is a strongly held view among some users and non-users that the books held by public libraries are old and that new releases take an extended time to get on the shelf – most believed it took between 18 and 24 months before a book would make it into the library.

*I have the perception, rightly or wrongly, that the library probably isn't going to have what I want.*

*It shouldn't take longer than six months for new releases to reach the library shelf.*

*I find if I look for the latest Tim Winton book, it's not there.*

*(LBC participants)*

#### Poor access to relevant material

Comment was made regarding the small multicultural collections held by most libraries. People who belong to language groups that make up a small proportion of the Victorian population were specifically identified as missing out, with very few collections and activities catering for their needs. It was noted that members of some CALD communities may have read everything a library has in their language and have no reason to make return visits as it is unlikely that new materials would have been added.

Libraries were also said to have inadequate adaptive technology for the disabled – with only a few touch screens, frequently no Braille keyboard and few headphones for interactive technology. Lack of Braille books and a small range of talking books were also mentioned.

*My mum is blind. She couldn't use the library. What's the point? There's very little for her, so she uses the RVIB talking book library but she's finding she's heard a lot of them ...*

*There is a disability Internet PC; however, regular able-bodied users are often seated at this PC, making it difficult for disabled people to gain access.*

*(LBC participants)*

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The Australian Library and Information Association adopts in principle the right of people with a disability to equitable access to information through all library and information services, and promotes the observation of current Commonwealth, state and territory disability discrimination legislation.

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It was also felt that students' needs were not always well met because public libraries do not provide a good stock of technical, academic and other textbooks.

Concern was expressed that some public libraries are not well attuned to the reading tastes and needs of local residents and that this can result in some groups, such as the gay community, being overlooked.

#### Poor access to information technology (IT) and audiovisual resources

Insufficient access to the Internet was identified by library users as a barrier to library use. While the IT resources in libraries continue to expand, the demand for these services in most locations still exceeds supply. There is said to be strong competition for these resources – with groups such as backpackers also wanting access.

Audiovisual resources in libraries were seen as often being of poor quality – partly because they are old and partly because borrowers do not take care of the resource.

*I remember my son borrowing a video, but the quality was very, very poor and he decided it was better to pay a few dollars at the video shop.*

*The fact that they were free [at the library] meant you didn't rewind them ...*

*(LBC participants)*

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### Successful IT program trialed at Footscray Library to be exported to the Solomon Islands

During the last three months, the Footscray branch of the Maribyrnong Library Service, in partnership with Computer Bank Victoria, has been trialing and developing an innovative Thin Client network of public access computers using a Linux operating system.

Computer Bank Victoria (<http://www.computerbank.org.au/victoria/>) is a not-for-profit volunteer-based organisation dedicated to bridging the digital divide by making technology more accessible to low income individuals, community groups and disadvantaged schools.

By using recycled legacy computer hardware and free and open source software, a small network of four computers, plus one server, was set up in the Footscray Library as additional public Internet and office application workstations. Using Mandrake Linux as the operating system, with the Mozilla web browser (similar to Netscape) and Open Office word processor and spreadsheet applications, the trial showcased the viability of Linux as an efficient low cost alternative for public access computers. The system has proved to be very stable and reliable, and the program has received positive public feedback.

Having successfully developed and tested the network structure at Maribyrnong, Computer Bank Victoria has now been engaged to deploy similar networks in the Solomon Islands as part of the People First Network (<http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/>).

In addition, Maribyrnong Library Service will shortly be offering introductory classes to the public on using Linux for home computing.

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### Not offering appropriate activities

Many participants at the focus groups pointed to the fact that there are no, or limited, activities available for older people or disenfranchised groups at the library. Libraries were seen as needing to put more effort into discovering activities and community involvement that will appeal to wider sections of the community.

*My older son did a cartooning seminar here once and that was great, but it was a once off. But it's very rare that I can get the boys to be involved other than they'll come in and get armfuls of books and disappear again.*  
*(LBC participant)*

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### Graphic novels

When Boroondara Library introduced graphic novels into four of its branches it was assumed that the audience for these would be teenage boys and science fiction/fantasy readers. While these groups have been major users, graphic novels have also attracted groups of intellectually disabled people who are more comfortable with graphic forms of literature rather than all written word. Many of these are new users to the library.

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### Careers Resource Centre

The Mount Evelyn branch of the Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation has worked in partnership with local community group Morrison House to provide a Careers Resource Centre in response to the needs of people looking to return to work or make a career change.

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## Fines/charges

Fines for late books or those that had been misplaced were mentioned by library users many times as a disincentive to use the library.

*There should be an amnesty every two to three years so that long overdue books can be returned without fear.*

*It's a hassle if you don't remember to ring and extend. Getting the books together from all the kids to return was really hard. They kept calling and I was embarrassed when I finally brought them in. (LBC participants)*

CALD community leaders also mentioned the current fines system as a major disincentive to ethnic communities, particularly for people who are not accustomed to the way the system works. They suggested that rather than penalise people, staff need to work with new users to help them sort out any 'teething problems'.

*The big stick approach will only scare users away. We need a carrot – it doesn't need to be a big one because our people are eager to learn. (LBC participant)*

Where charges are made for library services this can have a significant impact on usage. Some parents said they were reticent to order books for their children from other local branches given the \$1 charge each time.

*When your child says I need this book, this book, this book and this book [from another library] ... we haven't got that sort of money. (LBC participant)*

## Opening hours

*When you are going out for breakfast, or socially, libraries are closed.*

*When we have got recreational time, that's weekends, after hours, that's when libraries are not open.*

*When it's open and when you're home may not coincide so often.  
(LBC participants)*

Opening times act as a barrier to many working people using the library. The best time for working people to go to the library is on the weekend; however, this is when the hours tend to be very short.

CALD community leaders talked about opening hours a great deal, commenting that these need to be well thought through and research should be undertaken to identify the needs of each community.

*Casualisation of the workforce, particularly by workers in the CALD sector, means the hours that they have available to access public facilities are less predictable.  
(LBC participant)*

## Staff attitudes and structure

While comments from the focus groups generally indicated a high regard for library staff, a number of instances were raised where staff attitudes formed a barrier to use. Several people said they had observed a reluctance of library staff to engage with 'high maintenance' groups, such as male teenagers. The lack of staff able to speak the language of the customer was also seen as creating barriers for specific groups in the community. It was suggested that libraries consider employing people from smaller ethnic minorities.

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### Mohamed's story

Mohamed started visiting Carlton Library on a regular basis to use the Internet. He would often be at the centre of any trouble that erupted in the library and the librarians' hearts used to sink when they saw him approaching. Over time, we managed to engage him in conversation. We greeted him by name, asked him how he was and took an interest in him. At first, we were met with grunts or smart comments or were simply ignored. Gradually, he began to return our greetings and even made small talk with us.

When the time came for his primary school graduation, I was sent a personalised invitation to the event. Each invitation was signed by a Grade 6 student. Mine was signed by Mohamed. I put the invite on the wall above my desk. After a particularly challenging shift, when the teenagers are being more 'teenage' than usual, I look at it and am able to think that it is always worth it.

Shirley Prescott  
Acting Carlton Branch Coordinator

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## 4.3 Barriers related to perceptions and awareness

### Culture

A crucial barrier to using the library for some groups is that they do not perceive it as being 'for people like us'. In the eyes of some members of the community, public libraries continue to be associated with a middle class, intellectual culture – a service for scholars and those who are well educated. A small number of community leaders expressed the view that the library system needs to debunk its elitist status and get closer to the grassroots and deal with 'bread and butter' issues.

### Image

For some sections of non-users public libraries lack a modern and welcoming image and this presents a barrier to use. This is especially true for younger people,

particularly males. To them libraries were typically regarded as conveying a 'high school feel' rather than an inviting contemporary feel. They were also seen as having a strong focus on discipline.

Compared with commercial bookstores, public libraries were said to lack inviting displays and facilities (such as coffee shops) and section signage. The windowless nature of many older library buildings was also identified as a barrier to conveying an inviting image.

*I think there's a stigma attached to libraries. Quiet booky types or elderly people come here. It's not an 'in' place to be seen, especially for young people.*

*None of my mates come to the library.*

*Libraries create a perception that they exist for those people who have a real love of reading.*  
(LBC participants)

However, one young person at the focus groups commented:

*I don't think it's as bad as it used to be, the quiet thing.*

### Lack of awareness

*A lot of people forget it's here. (LBC participant)*

The lack of awareness of the full range of library services is a key barrier to access for some sections of the population. This was mentioned by a significant number of non-users, as well as a proportion of users.

*I was not aware of all their services. I was surprised when I read the survey and saw all they had to offer. Libraries tend to have an image of being 'old musty places', without modern collections/recent bestsellers. (LBC participant)*

*They are not advertising public libraries through the schools enough. The only reason my children went is because I took them there. There was never anything about [public libraries] in the school newsletter.*  
(LBC participant)

However, a librarian who participated in the focus groups commented:

*There is difficulty getting many schools to visit as they say their curricula are too busy to fit it in ... School excursions are increasingly difficult to arrange given parental permission requirements.*

#### 4.4 Barriers related to personal and social factors

Personal reasons for not using the library included being an infrequent reader and fear of asking for help. It was commented that many elderly and housebound residents would love to use the library but find the barriers insurmountable. They are afraid to ask for help (e.g. transport) from family or council as they feel that they are already receiving help from these sources with other things.

Some participants at the focus groups said that noise levels in the library mean that they do not use the library or restrict their use to particular times. Noisy schoolchildren mean that some adults do not go to the library after three in the afternoon.

*Students talking mean there is no peace and quiet.*  
*I was put off by the noise near designated reading areas e.g. people speaking on mobiles.*  
(LBC participants)

#### 4.5 Barriers related to infrastructure and environment

##### Physical design

The appropriate physical design of a library was identified as enhancing its capacity to attract users. It was said that libraries need to be friendly and colourful venues if they are to attract both people and events, especially in metropolitan locations where they compete with so many other facilities.

The importance of locating libraries in an area where people are going about their normal day-to-day activities such as shopping was emphasised again and again.

*When you go to Borders or whatever, you have a mixture of shops you can go to ... but when you go to libraries, it's just like one stop, you can't go anywhere else.*  
(LBC participant)

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##### Enhancing library buildings

Living Libraries, the state-funded Public Library Infrastructure Program, has provided resources to local councils to develop and enhance existing library buildings. This has assisted libraries to address some of the barriers to library use related to infrastructure identified by the participants in the LBC focus groups.

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##### Poor signage

Poor signage in libraries is seen as a particular problem for CALD groups. It was noted that at one library, while resources were provided in several languages, the signs directing patrons to these were presented in English only.

Community leaders felt that libraries can be difficult to navigate and said that signage needs to be clear, more obvious and easy to understand, particularly for those with visual problems. Signage also needs to be presented in languages other than English.

## Transport

It was observed that the public transport system does not service libraries well – with major transport routes not going close to several libraries. This creates a barrier for the elderly, the mobility impaired and those who do not have access to their own transport.

## Parking

A major obstacle for some users is the lack of well-lit parking facilities close to library entrances. This prevents many females visiting libraries at night and causes specific problems for patrons who bring disabled or elderly users to the library.

*They amalgamated small branches and they have ended up in areas where parking is not available.*  
(LBC participant)

## Physical barriers

Libraries can present a number of physical obstacles for elderly or disabled users.

*One library is on two levels, which does not cater for the physically disabled.*

*Top shelves are too high for the elderly to reach and bottom shelves too low for many to bend down.*

*A lot of the elderly take titles straight off the trolley because it's physically too difficult to reach up or down.*  
(LBC participants)

The layout of libraries for physically and intellectually disadvantaged people tends to be appropriate in newer libraries but often deficient in older ones.

*There are often poor facilities for the disabled, such as heavy toilet doors preventing wheelchair access, a slope up to the library making wheelchair access difficult, inadequate disabled parking facilities, etc.*  
(LBC participant)

## Lack of enclosures and security for children

Some parents at the focus groups said their use of the library was limited by the fact they could not be sure their children were safe while they were browsing the shelves.

*At many of the libraries, automatic doors mean children need constant supervision or they can be out on the street while your back is turned.*

*Particularly at different stages (of their development) I haven't been able to come down with my children because they run out the doors ... I can't take my eyes off them for a second.*  
(LBC participants)

## 4.6 People who do not use libraries for lifestyle reasons

One group of people identified by the focus groups as not using libraries are those who make a choice not to use the library because they do not have a need for it – often because they have access to alternative resources.

Access to widespread and cheap Internet facilities – at home, at work, at Internet cafés, coffee houses, airports and even via hand-held organisers and mobile telephones – has opened a whole world of information and entertainment to this group.

These findings are backed up by the following results from the telephone survey:

- Among those who had never been to a public library, or those who had not been for over 20 years, 40% stated their reason for this as no time/too busy, followed by 30% stating that they preferred to buy their own resources.
- A higher proportion of non-users have access to the Internet at their home, work, or both, than do library users.

A profile of those who gave time pressures as the main reason they do not use public libraries was developed by assessing the demographic data for this group from the telephone survey. Those who do not have time to use the library tended to be:

- female (60%)
- aged 30–59 years (40%)
- in a household of two people (48%) or in a couple family unit with dependent children (39%)
- married (58%)
- in full-time employment (66%)
- managers and administrators (30%)
- earning \$1,200 – \$1,499 a fortnight.

It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of non-users of libraries fall into the category of not using libraries for lifestyle reasons. This equates to about 30% of the population.

Libraries are unlikely to attract these people to the library – and it would be an ineffective use of resources to try to do so. They are able to satisfy their needs for information through private means. While they do not use public libraries, many are strong supporters of libraries and perceive them as desirable core institutions in a healthy society.

# 5 Reducing barriers to social engagement

*All libraries need to work to establish programmes that will engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them and establishing what are their particular needs and then by redesigning services when necessary so that there are no barriers to inclusion.*

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT, 2004

Some of the barriers to library use mentioned above are physical – that is, they are associated with library infrastructure and are difficult to change in the short term. Others are resource-oriented or communication-oriented and are more immediately open to change.

The focus groups and interviews with community leaders gathered suggestions for how libraries can reduce some of these barriers. These are summarised below. It should be noted that many of these suggestions are already being trialed in libraries. Some snapshots of initiatives taken by libraries to engage their communities are included here to demonstrate the awareness and responsiveness of library staff to potential barriers to social engagement.

## 5.1 Turning around the image

*Old perceptions are being erased and this needs to be continued.*

*There is still too much of the 'Volvo' image in the system.  
(LBC participants)*

Some people do not use their public library because of the image they have formed of it: that it is not a place for them, that it is for quiet scholarly types, that it is difficult to use, that it won't have what they are looking for – images that generally don't match reality.

Participants in the LBC project emphasised the importance of turning around this image. They made the following suggestions for doing this:

- Show photos of local personalities using their library.
- Use colourful advertising with unusual settings and perhaps famous people – given that these tend to arouse attention and stay with people.

- Portray a different image of the library than that which is commonly held among non-users (the ‘traditional’ image of the library as a stuffy place where people read books and have to be quiet).

One participant at a focus group described the image of three kids, all reading Harry Potter in different languages, to promote the multicultural and educational nature of the library.

- Show that the library can be a fun place.

*Target the fun side of the library, not a nerdy image campaign, show the Internet, CDs and videos you can borrow. (LBC participant)*

- Provide a bright and colourful feel to overcome the staid old image of libraries.
- Use images to communicate that the library is innovative and up to date, as many non-users still see the library as being ‘back in the dark ages’.
- Have teen idols such as Nathan Buckley promote the library.
- Show younger ‘cool’ people using the library.

### Altona Library’s Teenage Corner

Altona Library has created a corner especially for teenagers in order to attract this group. Couches and a round table were set up in order to allow teenagers to socialise in the library. The library has seen an increase in library use since this was established and several teenagers have commented that they love it. One boy shook the hand of a librarian and thanked her for creating a place where he and his friends could read and play sci-fi games without worrying about making too much noise.

## 5.2 Communicating the right messages

Creating a new image also involves giving the community the right messages. Some of the messages suggested through the LBC project are described below.

### There is a diverse range of resources available at your library

- Staff should take steps to ensure that people recognise that libraries can fulfil their information, education and some entertainment needs.
- Publicise unexpected services such as up-to-the-minute new releases; show how comprehensive they are.

*You would be surprised at what the library offers, take a look inside. We are not just books. (LBC participant)*

- Promote technical and specialised books that the library holds, which are expensive in bookstores.

*We’ve got the same books/CDs/video as the bookstores, for free. (LBC participant)*

- Your library offers the latest technology.
- Emphasise that there is no (or little) cost in using the library – you can discover new things at libraries without having to commit to a formal course or purchase a book.

### The public library is a community resource and place of social interaction

- Emphasise the capacity of the library to support community groups; for example, through the promotion of art work.

- Show how the library is integral to providing a sense of community through the resources it offers.
- Talk about the social aspect of the library.

*They could emphasise to parents that their children are growing up without enough social interaction due to computers and the Internet and the library is a place they can be educated as well as get important social interaction. (LBC participant)*

- Position the library as a meeting place to attract community groups and to show those who still see the library as a place to get books that there is now a social aspect to the library.

*Illustrate the new/modern aspects of the library – the library has traditionally been a collection of knowledge, but as people are now accessing these resources elsewhere libraries need to emphasise the social and community aspects of the library and its services. (LBC participant)*

### **Libraries offer excellent customer service**

- Show that libraries focus on providing good customer service.

*The library has all the books you need and a supportive, helpful atmosphere.*

*We are experts at helping you source information.*

*Our staff make an effort to help – we actively pursue the needs of clients.*

*(LBC participants)*

- Show the staff being really helpful.

*Come to the library for good old-fashioned customer service. (LBC participant)*

- Tell people about it being a really friendly, warm environment where people are welcomed.

### **Libraries are for everyone**

- Libraries offer something for everyone.
- Libraries cater for different groups in the community.
- Libraries cater for cultural groups.
- Libraries cater for people who are not readers of novels (e.g. libraries have car manuals).

### **Show that libraries are dynamic places**

- Public libraries must be seen as actively improving their services.
- Show that they are constantly changing – something different all the time: fishing week, then an arts and craft week, a science fiction week, and so on.

## **5.3 Creating greater awareness**

Lack of awareness of public library services emerged as a barrier for a group of people in the community. Focus group participants had many ideas on how awareness could be improved – including more appropriate marketing, use of word-of-mouth and encouraging people to come into the library to have a look for themselves.

These are a few of their suggestions and comments:

- In the local paper publish a list of the new books that are available.
- Tell people about reference books, encyclopedias and technical books that are too expensive for them to purchase.

- Use shopping centre displays.
- Go direct to the community groups and advertise the range of services on offer.
- Try to get to leaders of community groups and organisations – go to their meetings to present information about the library. They can then spread the word.

*People see advertisements for the library, but they forget what is there. The library needs to get people to visit the library and see for themselves. (LBC participant)*

Some of the ideas for attracting people into the library included:

- Offer tours of the local library – it was suggested that tours could be offered to mothers when children are at school.
- Have a new release night – get coffee and biscuits and talk about the latest books.
- Have an aged care week when library staff visit all retirement places, or pick up residents and bring them to the library.

*I have never been given a tour of the local library and (told) 'this is everything that's available to you'. I find out by accident.*

*If someone offered me a complete guide of this library I would sign up and come and join.  
(LBC participants)*

- Provide 'how to' seminars and introductory courses of interest to males (e.g. talks on cars, woodwork, football or computers). This will encourage fathers to attend with their sons.

*You can't go past sport [to interest boys].*

*Boys have to 'do', not just read.  
(LBC participants)*

- Introduce a 'library day' to showcase the services and resources available.
- Do theme nights on different topics, like a mystery book night, then science fiction, classic literature or favourite popular author nights.

*Provide a program of speakers and authors [on a topical subject] that attract people to come in. Not speakers on 'how to make a million', but something of local interest.  
(LBC participant)*

- Encourage community groups to use the library's meeting rooms. It was noted that finding a meeting room can be very difficult for non-profit groups so this would provide a useful service to them and have the added benefit of exposing their members to the library. It was suggested that meeting rooms could be made more attractive if they had audiovisual facilities and a tea and coffee area.
- Make the library a place to vote during elections. This would draw in people who would not usually go there; they could see first hand what is available.
- Emphasise partnership and collaborative approaches.
- Go to local schools and find out what subjects the teachers are covering and then tell the young people what books the library has available on that topic.

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### Shopping centre presentations

One staff member was involved in shopping centre presentations at a library service where she used to work. A stall was set up showing the latest books, CDs/DVDs and all the services and activities that the library provided. Staff wore uniforms in order to present a professional image. People were allowed to become library members then and there and were even allowed to borrow material from the stall. This was a very successful activity which resulted in many new library users. People commented that they were not aware of the wide range of services available and would never have gone into the library to find out. This was not an expensive exercise as the shopping centre gave the library discounted rates, as it is a community group.

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their desire for a quiet place to study, while other user groups, mainly younger people and mothers' groups, are looking for greater social interaction – but these issues can be resolved. Public libraries are faced with a challenge to reconcile these differences while still providing a welcoming environment for all.

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### Librarylink

Gannawarra Library Service has been running a program called Librarylink for those in the community who have difficulty in visiting the library but still wish to retain their independence in choosing books. Every two weeks they send a shire vehicle to bring people to the library for an hour or so and then return them home. So far it has been used by elderly people, who also gain great benefit from the social contact it brings.

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## 5.4 Making it easier and more comfortable for people to use the library

- Place a library book return chute in supermarkets.
- Extend customised home delivery to the general population on a user pays basis.

*There's a diet system called 'Lite n' Easy' where they deliver you the meals. The library could deliver you a diet of books over the year and you could pay for that service. (LBC participant)*

- Provide a café facility as a part of the library including comfortable lounges to encourage people to sit and browse in libraries (this is seen as especially important for those without a comfortable lounge at home).
- Review rules, procedures and charging policies to ensure that these do not create barriers to tackling social exclusion.
- Design spaces so they reflect the needs of different users. There is a divergence between the needs and desires of different user groups. Some groups voiced

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### The Frankston Library Express

The Frankston Library Express enables commuters travelling on the Frankston train line to browse and borrow books. It was initiated in response to the needs of 'time poor' commuters who are unable to attend a library service in normal opening hours.

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## 5.5 Encouraging disadvantaged social groups to use the library

*Use mentors to bring non-users in and get started within the system. (LBC participant)*

People at the focus groups suggested some specific ways in which libraries might be able to reach disadvantaged segments of the community. These included:

- posters and letterbox drops in areas with a high concentration of disadvantaged people;
- pamphlets left in doctors' surgeries, newsagents and fast food outlets;

- through primary school newsletters;
- including pamphlets in communications from council (e.g. rates notices);
- advertisements on Triple M radio and similar stations for adolescents;
- local cinema advertising – to keep messages local;
- advertisements in many languages on LOTE radio stations.

*Newsletters? That wouldn't present the library in a modern sense. That is exactly what I would expect from a library. I want to see something that's a bit innovative, e.g. ads on radio. (LBC participant)*

It was thought that the best way to target specific minority groups was through the community groups that represent them.

*These groups will know the best ways and places to advertise libraries and the most effective messages to communicate.*

*Use groups such as counselling centres who will recommend to their clients that the library is a good place to go for support and socialisation.*

*Provide information via the welfare and literacy groups that service disadvantaged people. (LBC participants)*

It was felt that public libraries need to communicate some specific messages, such as:

- Highlight that the library is a non-judgemental environment and that the intellectually and physically disabled are welcome.
- Illustrate support network aspects of the library.
- Highlight the services most relevant to disadvantaged

groups, namely:

- community bus for picking people up
- material in other languages
- flexible hours for people with limited time
- home library service
- provision of information such as newspapers to assist in job searching and preparation.

It was also suggested that mentors from community agencies could be used to help train library staff in the needs of disabled and ethnic people.

*Library staff need to be trained in the nuances of groups such as disabled, housebound and CALD people so they can present to these groups in a way that is meaningful to them.*

*Disabled people feel more comfortable or welcomed at community centres rather than libraries. There is a need to shift this perception by forming effective working links with social service providers throughout the community. (LBC participants)*

## 5.6 Developing a better understanding of community needs

*Libraries are responsive to the needs of communities but they need to be 'ahead of the game' – they need to keep pace with the changing demographic.*

*Libraries deliver on their potential as community catalysts when they actively and imaginatively seek out the views of users and, crucially, non-users, and translate those views into new services. Successful library services invariably work in a network of alliances and partnerships with schools, social services, the police, museums and leisure services. (DCMS, 2004)*

Among the library users and non-users who attended the focus groups and the community leaders who were interviewed as part of the LBC project there was general agreement that greater understanding of communities by library staff would aid better social engagement.

*Libraries need to understand better what percentage of the community is using their resources, particularly IT services – how well are they used, who is using them, are they accessible to disadvantaged groups? More research is needed on how best to deliver outreach programs.*

*Staff must understand the context and the needs of the community, e.g. youth employment, domestic violence, suicide etc.*

*(LBC participants)*

Community leaders from the CALD sector observed an improving awareness of ethnic issues by library staff and greater efforts being made to understand the ethnic mixes that make up communities. However, they emphasised that this must continue to grow.

The following suggestions were made for how libraries could gain a better understanding of their communities.

### **Understanding information needs**

There should be a review of the informational and social support needs of those segments of the community who are not well represented among library users (e.g. teenagers). It is too often assumed that these groups do not use the library because they do not need it – but in many cases it may be that libraries are just not well tuned to what these needs are.

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### **Maribyrnong City Council Illicit Drug Strategy: cross-team approach to tackling a major community problem**

The City of Maribyrnong, in particular the suburb of Footscray, has had a long history of illicit drug use and trafficking. In recent years the problem of public drug use and dealing has escalated in the municipality as well as in a number of other areas of metropolitan Melbourne. The consequent harms, including deaths from overdose, have also escalated. The importance of programs that will prevent people taking up drugs is well recognised at all levels of government, and local government can play an important role in planning and integrating local action within the initiatives developed at the state and federal level.

The Maribyrnong Library Service participated in the development of Maribyrnong City Council's Illicit Drug Strategy 2001–2003 and is currently participating in its revision. The Advocacy Branch led the development of the strategy and took a cross-team approach, recognising that community wellbeing is achieved when all parties, including external agencies and the community, are involved in the development and implementation of policies and strategies.

The Library Service took a lead role in the following objective included in the strategy:

To deliver accurate, accessible, well-balanced information to the community about all aspects of drug use.

A drug information collection has been established at the Footscray Library, which includes books, videos and pamphlets from local drug and health service agencies promoting prevention and harm minimisation approaches. In addition drug information sessions are held in the library, including one in the Vietnamese language, for families affected by illicit drug use. The drug information collection experiences a high number of loans and the local drug and health agencies ensure that pamphlet information is replenished on a regular basis.

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## Consulting the community

There should be greater consultation with the community. In order to improve their understanding of community needs libraries must implement a range of actions, including consulting ethnic minority users and non-users to identify changing needs and examine the underlying factors that influence library use.

It was suggested that focus groups be held in the community to discover what residents want their library to be. The comment was made that in most regions, city or country, there are many not-for-profit groups that would like to be involved.

It was seen as especially important that libraries consult with and involve socially excluded groups in order to ascertain their needs and aspirations.

### Active participation of residents in library decision making

It was felt that the community should be more actively engaged in defining the services and supports they require from their library. Libraries should provide opportunities for members of the community to have an active role through advisory and working committees. It was acknowledged that some libraries are already doing this.

### Partnerships with other community organisations

There is a need to build stronger two-way lines of communication between library management and relevant groups within the community (e.g. neighbourhood houses, senior citizen groups, maternal and childcare centres, health centres and education centres). Through these strategic linkages libraries can help community groups to better understand what services the library has that are relevant to their clients, and community groups can help library staff to better appreciate the needs of the people they service.

## 5.7 Using online surveys to understand community needs

A particular issue discussed with library staff during the focus groups was the use of online surveys to collect information about library users.

Staff identified the main problems with this method as being related to the difficulties in getting a representative sample of library users:

- An online survey would exclude groups such as the elderly and CALD groups. Paper versions would be required for these groups.

*Many people who walk in are very scared to touch the computer, whether it's to look for a book or do Internet searching. (LBC participant)*

- It would be difficult to capture certain groups such as working parents, as they come in briefly to borrow or return books and then leave.
- Lack of time on weekends for users to complete as they are in a rush – this means weekend users will tend to be harder to obtain.
- We will only get people who are willing to help the library out, which would not be an accurate reflection of the library user population.

Other issues that were raised include:

- Staff would not have the time to help those who are not computer literate fill out the survey.
- People would feel reluctant to provide personal information such as income if staff were helping them fill out the survey.
- Using a computer would reduce the time that the terminal is available for Internet use, which is a popular activity at the library.

However, ways were also suggested for increasing the number of people completing an online survey, such as:

- Staff members could actively encourage library users to complete the survey.
- Provide an incentive, even if it is small, to complete the survey.

*Details should include what the patron would like to borrow, so that appropriate future information can be sent to the patron. (LBC participant)*

- Use a touch screen so as not to exclude any groups who cannot use a mouse.
- Provide a link on the website so people can do the survey from home – this would help capture less-regular users and those who have limited time.
- Keep it very short (a few minutes).

*If there is too much writing and too much reading and too many choices, no, they won't do it. (LBC participant)*

- Staff could complete an online profile on behalf of the public when checking out books.

In general, library staff thought that use of an online survey was preferable to their current methods of collecting information from library patrons – and was also something that would become more accepted over time as the number of computers in the library increases and users become more familiar with the technology.

# 6 Conclusion

*We do not assume that everyone who experiences exclusion has to be 'rescued' from that experience. But we do hold the view that a responsible society will give all its members opportunities to become connected to others and to the benefits that society offers, should they wish to take advantage of them. In this, the principle of social justice is brought to life by specific actions to reduce inequalities in society. We further maintain that libraries and information services have a fundamental role to play in that provision, particularly because they operate directly at the level of people's literacy, information literacy and communication choices which we take to be keys to inclusion.*

## 6.1 Bridging the gaps

Public libraries face enormous and growing expectations from different segments of their communities. They have to balance meeting the general needs of the community against catering for the needs of groups who have specific and more complex information requirements (e.g. CALD populations, people with disabilities and people who are unemployed). They have to moderate tensions between users who have different preferences. For example:

- Younger users may like a bright and busy environment, while older users may look for a quieter experience in the library.
- Some users may be keen to access and use new technologies while others have a preference for print resources.
- Parents may seek greater physical security for young children while disabled people look for improved physical access.
- People who are not employed may want the library open 9 to 5, while those in full-time work would like to use it late in the day or at weekends.

In the face of limited resources public libraries have to make difficult decisions about service priorities and where resources are most effectively allocated. Libraries located in disadvantaged areas experience special challenges in meeting the needs of their communities. They are often struggling to meet the information needs of people from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, single-parent families, people with low literacy, people with low computer skills and experience, people without permanent housing, those with less education and those on lower incomes. Often these libraries are the least well resourced in the State.

Within current constraints, the evidence is that Victorian public libraries overall are meeting these challenges in a creative and largely effective manner. Public library services have been successful in:

- Ensuring that their services embrace as wide an audience as possible. Services are reaching about 60% of the population and this includes people from many walks of life: people from different ethnic groups, from across the generations, those who are unemployed, professionals and managers, people in remote areas and those in large cities.
- Being aware of potential barriers to library use and actively seeking to reduce these.
- Forging links with other community organisations to gain a better understanding of their community and work with them to tackle specific social, economic and environmental problems in the community.
- Supporting development of social capital in their communities by bringing together people from across the social strata, different generations, and various cultural groups.
- Playing an active role in community strengthening by providing an environment in which, among other things, users can connect with other people, and gain better information about their community and government services etc.
- Responding flexibly to the needs of their communities. Public libraries have not adopted a ‘one size fits all’ response to service provision but have actively sought to understand and respond to the needs of their community.
- Actively promoting their services to the community.
- Collecting data that assists them in planning and helps ensure that their collections and services are appropriate to the community. More and more are involving their community in library decision making.

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The term ‘social inclusion’ may be a recent one, but in practice public libraries have been addressing the needs of the socially disadvantaged since the nineteenth century, and services offered to a range of special groups have long been a standard part of their stock in trade. In recent years, the role of public and other libraries within the larger social inclusion agenda has been increasingly highlighted, with the growing political emphasis on building inclusive communities. Libraries are having to review their roles within the communities they serve, adapt to new pressures and demands from new user groups while retaining the loyalty of their existing customers. This can involve some difficult management decisions.  
(Artemis Consulting, 2003)

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As the data in this report shows, there are wide differentials in the extent to which public libraries have succeeded in engaging their communities. A number of libraries have been particularly energetic and creative in their approach to social engagement. This is reflected in their user profiles – which show high levels of patronage and strong representation of groups who are socially disadvantaged. Other libraries have been less successful – possibly due to low levels of resources, location of the library or the existing culture of the library.

Despite these successes, the potential of libraries to engage with their communities and the people who live in them is by no means fully exploited. Data from the LBC project shows that even within current users there are groups that libraries feel they do not serve as well as they would like. Additionally, it is estimated that about 13% of the Victorian population currently miss out on library services from which they have a lot to gain. This includes some of the most marginalised groups in our society – people who, among other things, experience a severe deficit in their access to information and other resources libraries have to offer.

## 6.2 Realising the potential of public libraries

*A regenerated and proactive library sector can help both individuals and communities to develop skills and confidence, and help improve social networking. It also supports community, adult and family learning. Against this background, it is important that the services libraries offer should be readily accessible to all who need or would benefit from them. (DCMS, 1999)*

The information collected through the LBC report emphasises the importance various stakeholders place on public libraries being socially inclusive and, more specifically, the high priority they place on libraries offering services to people who are socially marginalised and ‘information poor’. This stems not just from a concern for the wellbeing of individuals but recognition that public libraries have an extremely important role to play in developing the social capital within their communities. The capacity of public libraries to reach out to a broad group of people in their communities and create bridges between them is one of the most important contributions libraries can make in the area of community building.

Discussion of social engagement and inclusion issues has only recently come to the fore in Australia and much thinking remains to be done, both at a theoretical and practical level, regarding its implications for government and non-government services.

Some ideas for how this discussion may play out in the context of public libraries comes from countries such as the United Kingdom, where government intervention has been a major force driving libraries to examine more carefully how they can actively engage excluded groups.

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Vincent (2004) identifies a range of factors, apart from government policy, which are driving action on social exclusion in the United Kingdom. These include:

- consideration of legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act;
- local authority policies;
- funding that is tied to working with marginalised groups (e.g. funding through Neighbourhood Renewal programs);
- good practice ‘bubbling up’ through the system and influencing others;
- concern with the moral issues regarding people’s right to library and information services.

These could equally be drivers for change in Australia. And while Commonwealth and state government in Australia have not provided the same clear guidelines for social inclusion practices in public libraries, the community building agenda of governments at all levels places an emphasis on social justice, citizen engagement and local democracy, and potentially offers a framework within which libraries can work.

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Recent policy reviews within the United Kingdom make the observation that while public libraries in that country are innovative in their attempts at making library services more accessible to marginalised groups, these approaches have often been patchy, uneven and of limited duration.

In considering approaches that will translate into more strategic and sustainable solutions they identify a number of options.

### **Developing a clear and practical definition of what social exclusion means**

One of the major blocks to developing ways of tackling social exclusion has been the lack of consensus over the definition of this term (Re:source, 2002).

*Doing definitions isn't about being pedantic – it's about trying to confront the confusion that's been caused by the range of terms used, all of which have very different meanings. (Vincent, 2004)*

*A lack of clarity and consensus has encouraged inertia and perhaps served the purposes of those who may wish to preserve the status quo. (DCMS, 1999)*

*... a common understanding of this is essential if national as well as local objectives are to be achieved. (The Library Association)*

The Policy Advisory Group of the UK Library Association recognises conceptual differences between social inclusion, exclusion, cohesion, equal opportunities, neighbourhood renewal and anti-poverty, but takes the view that a library and information sector response to social exclusion should be pragmatic and include them all. Action, they say, should be based on a commitment to social justice, and a practical approach to identifying the causes and facts of exclusion and developing strategies to confront them; and to dealing with divides in information, learning opportunities, health, economic activity and quality of life.

Similarly, Vincent (2002) notes that tackling social exclusion is different from other initiatives:

- Equal opportunity policies have tended to focus on providing more of the same, and assuming that this will inevitably increase take-up.
- Access policies have tended to focus on physical access to buildings and their contents.
- Audience development has tended to look at developing existing users and looking at bringing in non-users.

He concludes that all of these are vital, but notes that work to tackle social exclusion also means changing

entire working policies and practices, looking at ways of overcoming barriers, how to reach non-users and how to work with all users.

### Setting service priorities

Public libraries need to stand back and examine which groups in the community they already identify as a service priority and then analyse which other groups might also be given priority status. In the United Kingdom it was found that 82% of the authorities that responded to a survey had housebound people as a service priority, whereas only 5% put homeless people into this category.

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**Leicester City in the UK used a review of the library service to re-focus on tackling social exclusion, and, based on this, have made major changes to the delivery of the service, as well as obtaining a greater financial commitment from the council. Their forward planning has just received praise from the Audit Commission as part of the Best Value Review process. (Vincent, 2002)**

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The Library Association (1999) suggests that planning of library services should be based on accurate and thorough assessment of community needs through activities such as community profiles, consultation, community processes and the use of modern management information techniques.

### Establishing what works and what doesn't

*All libraries need to work to establish programmes that will engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them and establishing what are their particular needs and then by redesigning services when necessary so that there are no barriers to inclusion. (DCMS, 2004)*

The sector needs to share and celebrate achievements, to disseminate good ideas, and provide increasing confidence to those considering the need for more innovative service changes. As part of this, greater emphasis needs to be placed on adoption of more rigorous evaluation techniques that can assist in identifying what works, what doesn't and why.

### Removing barriers to library use

One of the keys to tackling social exclusion successfully is to identify and remove barriers to library use. Some useful suggestions regarding actions public libraries could take to reduce barriers came out of the focus groups and interviews held as part of the LBC project. Section 5 of this report summarises these under the following headings:

- Turning around the image
- Communicating the right messages
- Creating greater awareness
- Making it easier and more comfortable for people to use the library
- Encouraging disadvantaged social groups to use the library
- Developing a better understanding of community needs.

Further work is needed to develop a more in-depth understanding of the barriers to use facing specific groups such as disadvantaged young people, people with disabilities, and people who are educationally disadvantaged.

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The involvement of people who experience exclusion must be a key component in any strategy to address that exclusion – if they feel excluded then the nature of their exclusion and ways of overcoming it will need to be explored with them.

Action should be based on an underpinning commitment to social justice, and a practical approach to identifying the causes and facts of exclusion and developing strategies to confront them, dealing with divides in information, learning opportunities, health, economic activity and quality of life.

Report of the Policy Advisory Group on Social Exclusion, UK (The Library Association, 1999)

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### Forming partnerships within council and the community

*It is essential that the social inclusion activities of library services are not considered in isolation. They must be integrated within the local authority's wider strategy for improving social inclusion, and the library services must connect effectively with other local authority services. (DCMS, 2004)*

Public libraries are not alone in responsibility for tackling social exclusion. It is highly likely that other bodies in the community, including other parts of council and agencies working in health, community services, youth services and the arts, will already be addressing these issues. Working in partnerships with these groups and in multi-disciplinary teams enables combining of knowledge, skills and resources to address issues of social exclusion in a more coordinated and effective way.

*Much may have to be done in partnership with community groups representing particular excluded groups of people. (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2004)*

## Providing staff with appropriate training and support

*The skills and motivation of staff are crucial if quality services are to be provided to marginalised groups and communities. Specific knowledge and skills may be required to meet the needs of some groups who are socially excluded and each public library service will have to develop appropriate training strategies to meet those needs. (The Library Association, 2000)*

The types of skills required by library staff in dealing with issues of social exclusion have been identified by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the United Kingdom and include skills in:

- consultation and engagement with excluded groups
- community profiling
- partnership working
- learner support/information mediation/reader advisory work
- coping with change/managing or leading change
- advocacy.

Vincent (2002) notes from his training work in libraries in the UK that it is clear that some middle and frontline staff see social exclusion as not being anything to do with them: 'We're already busy', 'It's all a Government scheme – what's it to do with me?', even 'We don't want these sorts of people coming in.' While such views might not be as prevalent in Victorian public libraries, it is important to be alert to situations in which staff attitudes could lead to barriers to inclusive services.

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Library authorities are encouraged to adopt a strategy based on the following six-point plan:

- Identify the people who are socially excluded and their geographical distribution. Engage them to establish their needs.
- Assess and review current practice.
- Develop a strategy and prioritise resources.
- Develop the services, and train the library staff to provide them.
- Implement the services and publicise them.
- Evaluate success, review and improve.

(DCMS, 2004)

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### A long-term agenda

The issues identified above need to be discussed, not only within the library community but between public libraries and their stakeholders including local and state government.

While some public libraries have already adopted, and will continue to adopt, short-term measures that provide some quick gains for those who are socially excluded (see *Showcasing the Best*, Report Four of the LBC project), a more significant contribution lies in the development and appropriate resourcing of a long-term social inclusion strategy that includes measures that are sustainable.



# **Attachment: Individual library service data from the online survey and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Housing and Population**

TABLE A1: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION AND LIBRARY USERS BY LIBRARY SERVICE

Library service	Employed full-time		Employed part-time		Not in the labour force		Unemployed		Not stated	
	% LGA** popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users
Bayside	38	23	21	24	36	46	3	6	2	-
Boroondara	40	37	21	30	35	24	3	9	1	-
Brimbank*	36	47	16	19	39	16	7	16	2	3
Campaspe	38	19	19	29	38	45	3	7	2	-
Casey-Cardinia	43	36	20	24	31	30	4	9	2	1
Central Highlands	34	13	19	28	40	44	5	15	2	-
Corangamite	39	16	20	18	36	55	4	11	2	-
Darebin	35	23	16	28	42	37	5	11	2	1
East Gippsland	31	12	19	23	43	56	5	9	2	-
Eastern	42	27	22	31	31	26	4	16	2	-
Frankston	39	17	19	22	35	51	5	10	2	-
Gannawarra*	40	30	18	27	40	32	3	11	2	-
Geelong	34	30	21	36	39	25	4	9	2	-
Glen Eira	40	21	20	34	35	34	3	11	2	-
Glenelg	37	19	19	24	38	35	4	22	2	-
Goulburn Valley	38	24	18	37	37	29	4	10	2	-
Goldfields	34	16	20	27	40	47	5	10	2	-
Greater Dandenong	34	25	14	22	43	31	6	21	2	1
High Country	39	12	21	30	34	47	4	11	2	-
Hobsons Bay	39	38	16	21	38	27	5	13	2	-
Hume Global Learning Village	38	24	17	30	37	28	5	18	2	-
Kingston	40	20	18	24	36	42	4	13	2	-
La Trobe	32	21	19	41	41	29	7	9	2	-
Maribyrnong	35	22	15	30	41	30	7	18	2	-
Melton	44	27	18	27	30	29	5	17	2	-
Mildura	38	20	18	23	38	49	4	9	2	-
Mitchell*	40	14	18	32	35	32	4	23	2	-
Monash	38	20	19	28	38	35	4	17	2	-
Moonee Valley	40	24	18	24	37	40	4	13	2	-
Moreland	35	20	16	28	42	35	5	18	2	-
Mornington Peninsula	34	14	20	30	41	43	4	13	2	-
Murrindindi	36	19	22	23	37	47	4	11	2	-
Port Phillip	50	34	18	29	27	25	5	13	1	-
Stonnington*	41	60	21	16	33	24	3	-	2	-
Swan Hill*	40	50	17	10	38	30	3	10	2	-
Upper Murray	39	12	20	29	35	49	4	10	2	-
Wellington*	34	43	19	57	41	-	5	-	2	-
West Gippsland*	34	21	19	29	41	36	4	14	2	-
Whitehorse Manningham	39	37	20	17	37	35	3	11	2	-
Wimmera*	38	16	18	43	39	30	3	11	2	-
Wyndham*	43	16	19	34	32	31	4	19	2	-
Yarra Plenty	41	50	20	28	34	17	4	5	2	-
Yarra-Melbourne	45	36	18	28	31	22	5	13	1	1

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area.

**TABLE A2: HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF THE LOCAL POPULATION AND LIBRARY USERS BY LIBRARY SERVICE**

Library service	Household income less than \$400 per week		Household income more than \$2,000 per week	
	% LGA** population	% Library service users	% LGA population	% Library service users
Bayside	16	23	18	9
Boroondara	15	18	21	11
Brimbank*	20	27	6	3
Campaspe	24	39	4	1
Casey-Cardinia	13	24	7	3
Central Highlands	25	39	4	2
Corangamite	25	29	5	2
Darebin	25	33	6	4
East Gippsland	29	37	3	-
Eastern	15	30	9	3
Frankston	20	33	5	2
Gannawarra*	28	38	3	3
Geelong	23	22	6	3
Glen Eira	18	20	12	3
Glenelg	27	33	4	4
Goulburn Valley	25	36	4	2
Goldfields	26	32	4	3
Greater Dandenong	25	33	4	3
High Country	30	44	3	2
Hobsons Bay	21	24	8	4
Hume Global Learning Village	15	38	6	1
Kingston	20	31	8	2
La Trobe	28	33	4	9
Maribyrnong	26	31	6	3
Melton	14	28	7	2
Mildura	26	34	4	-
Mitchell*	20	37	5	5
Monash	17	26	12	4
Moonee Valley	24	35	11	4
Moreland	24	39	6	3
Mornington Peninsula	23	33	6	3
Murrindindi	24	27	3	3
Port Phillip	19	38	15	8
Stonnington*	14	28	21	12
Swan Hill*	27	20	3	10
Upper Murray	21	30	4	2
Wellington*	26	0	4	0
West Gippsland*	28	50	4	0
Whitehorse Manningham	17	19	13	7
Wimmera*	28	30	4	0
Wyndham*	12	31	8	0
Yarra Plenty	15	17	10	11
Yarra-Melbourne	20	27	16	7

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area.

**TABLE A3: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF THE LOCAL POPULATION AND LIBRARY USERS BY LIBRARY SERVICE**

Library service	Couple with dependent children (may also have non-dependent children)		Couple with non-dependent children		Couple without children		One-parent family with dependent children (may also have non-dependent children)		One-parent family with non-dependent children		Other family	
	% LGA** popn	% LSU#	% LGA popn	% LSU	% LGA popn	% LSU	% LGA popn	% LSU	% LGA popn	% LSU	% LGA popn	% LSU
Bayside	42	27	7	23	36	27	8	3	5	3	2	16
Boroondara	44	54	7	12	34	21	7	5	5	2	3	7
Brimbank*	44	47	13	11	25	5	11	16	6	5	2	16
Campaspe	38	33	7	29	41	26	9	4	4	1	1	
Casey-Cardinia	48	51	9	15	27	16	11	8	4	3	1	6
Central Highlands	38	36	7	21	36	18	12	11	5	6	1	8
Corangamite	39	30	7	30	38	19	9	7	4	6	1	7
Darebin	32	38	12	12	35	17	10	8	8	3	3	22
East Gippsland	36	11	6	23	43	54	11	6	4	3	1	4
Eastern	44	45	10	21	31	12	10	7	5	8	1	7
Frankston	38	29	9	29	33	21	13	10	6	6	1	7
Gannawarra*	37	7	7	32	44	7	7	-	4	8	1	16
Geelong	40	42	7	16	41	27	8	7	3	4	1	3
Glen Eira	39	33	8	13	37	31	8	5	5	3	3	15
Glenelg	39	38	7	18	41	18	9	7	4	4	1	8
Goulburn Valley	38	40	8	31	39	10	10	12	4	2	1	5
Goldfields	38	39	7	24	37	21	12	6	4	3	1	7
Greater Dandenong	39	41	12	15	28	13	12	10	7	5	2	16
High Country	36	38	7	23	42	22	10	9	4	3	1	5
Hobsons Bay	39	54	10	22	34	15	10	2	6	2	2	5
Hume Global Learning Village	48	52	11	15	23	15	12	8	5	3	1	8
Kingston	38	29	10	21	35	22	9	8	6	6	2	14
La Trobe	38	45	7	20	35	24	14	5	4	0	1	3
Maribyrnong	33	44	9	10	34	12	13	13	8	2	4	19
Melton	48	45	10	30	25	11	12	5	4	7	1	2
Mildura	39	36	7	25	38	26	11	6	4	1	1	6
Mitchell*	44	42	8	21	32	11	11	16	4	0	1	11
Monash	37	43	12	16	36	13	7	5	5	3	3	17
Moonee Valley	36	37	11	23	34	17	9	7	6	4	3	12
Moreland	33	38	11	15	35	15	9	8	7	4	3	19
Mornington Peninsula	35	34	7	21	42	27	10	13	4	3	1	2
Murrindindi	37	33	6	37	43	17	9	6	4	0	1	8
Port Phillip	23	22	5	20	53	37	9	6	5	2	5	12
Stonnington*	42	33	8	17	36	22	7	11	5	11	3	6
Swan Hill*	39	43	8	14	40	43	9	0	4	0	1	0
Upper Murray	41	24	6	52	37	20	12	0	4	2	1	2
Wellington*	39	43	6	29	40	14	10	14	4	0	1	0
West Gippsland*	36	40	7	40	43	20	10	0	4	0	1	0
Whitehorse Manningham	40	53	11	19	35	16	7	6	5	2	2	4
Wimmera*	37	44	7	37	43	11	8	0	3	0	1	7
Wyndham*	48	54	9	18	26	14	12	4	4	0	1	11
Yarra Plenty	45	59	12	12	28	17	9	2	5	5	1	5
Yarra-Melbourne	23	33	5	12	49	26	10	9	5	3	8	17

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area. # LSU = Library service users.

**TABLE A4: OCCUPATION OF THE LOCAL POPULATION AND LIBRARY USERS BY LIBRARY SERVICE**

Library service	Managers and administration		Professionals		Tradespersons		Labourers and related workers	
	% LGA** popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users	% LGA popn	% Library service users
Bayside	16	26	29	55	7	3	3	2
Boroondara	13	14	36	58	5	2	3	2
Brimbank*	3	14	9	38	14	10	15	14
Campaspe	20	22	12	29	12	8	14	10
Casey-Cardinia	7	11	11	39	16	9	11	9
Central Highlands	10	26	17	35	14	5	10	7
Corangamite	21	16	13	32	12	7	12	17
Darebin	6	17	22	43	11	3	9	6
East Gippsland	14	9	15	26	13	13	10	26
Eastern	8	15	16	47	15	2	8	4
Frankston	6	12	13	40	16	7	9	9
Gannawarra*	30	25	10	6	10	-	12	19
Geelong	19	10	19	47	15	9	8	5
Glen Eira	10	13	29	33	9	8	4	0
Glenelg	18	32	13	34	13	11	11	5
Goulburn Valley	17	15	13	35	12	0	14	0
Goldfields	10	14	17	36	14	7	10	8
Greater Dandenong	4	9	9	28	15	15	16	22
High Country	14	20	16	27	12	9	10	9
Hobsons Bay	7	19	17	41	13	4	9	7
Hume Global Learning Village	5	9	11	23	15	8	10	15
Kingston	8	18	17	36	13	4	8	8
La Trobe	7	10	14	49	16	6	9	8
Maribyrnong	6	11	21	24	10	8	10	20
Melton	6	23	11	18	15	0	9	9
Mildura	15	12	14	29	11	5	15	12
Mitchell*	8	11	12	44	18	11	11	11
Monash	8	13	24	49	10	3	6	4
Moonee Valley	8	11	24	39	10	5	6	5
Moreland	6	13	23	35	11	6	8	14
Mornington Peninsula	9	11	16	37	17	7	8	6
Murrindindi	15	15	15	30	14	20	12	0
Port Phillip	13	13	34	53	5	3	3	0
Stonnington*	14	17	34	56	5	0	3	0
Swan Hill*	24	17	12	0	11	0	13	17
Upper Murray	11	32	16	37	14	0	11	5
Wellington*	16	20	14	20	14	0	9	0
West Gippsland*	18	17	14	17	13	0	10	17
Whitehorse Manningham	10	20	26	44	9	0	5	2
Wimmera*	22	17	14	28	12	0	11	6
Wyndham*	7	0	12	36	15	7	9	7
Yarra Plenty	7	28	19	44	13	2	7	2
Yarra-Melbourne	12	16	36	49	4	4	3	4

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area.

TABLE A5: PROPORTION OF THE LOCAL POPULATION AND LIBRARY USERS BY AGE FOR EACH LIBRARY SERVICE

Library service	0-14		15-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-69		70-plus	
	% LGA** popn	% LSU#	% LGA popn	% LSU												
Bayside	20	1	6	2	10	9	14	11	16	18	13	18	8	18	12	23
Boroondara	18	3	7	5	15	15	14	20	15	22	12	22	7	8	12	6
Brimbank*	22	6	8	6	15	19	15	19	15	23	12	16	7	6	6	3
Campaspe	23	5	7	4	10	7	14	12	14	14	12	20	9	19	11	19
Casey-Cardinia	26	2	7	2	13	19	18	26	15	28	10	12	5	8	5	4
Central Highlands	22	7	8	7	12	6	14	18	15	20	12	20	8	10	9	13
Corangamite	23	2	7	6	11	6	14	11	15	14	12	15	8	20	10	25
Darebin	16	4	6	5	17	15	18	22	13	22	10	13	9	7	11	12
East Gippsland	22	-	7	1	9	3	13	9	15	13	13	21	10	31	11	21
Eastern	23	2	8	4	13	8	16	15	16	36	12	21	6	10	7	5
Frankston	22	3	7	5	13	9	16	14	14	16	12	17	7	19	9	17
Gannawarra*	22	-	6	11	9	8	12	19	14	8	13	14	10	30	13	11
Geelong	22	3	7	3	10	14	14	20	16	21	13	24	9	10	10	5
Glen Eira	17	-	6	6	14	16	17	19	15	15	11	16	7	13	13	15
Glenelg	22	4	7	17	9	10	14	6	15	19	12	22	9	11	11	10
Goulburn Valley	23	8	7	10	11	2	14	6	15	27	12	29	9	10	10	8
Goldfields	22	3	8	7	11	10	13	13	15	19	12	19	8	16	10	13
Greater Dandenong	19	1	7	7	15	17	15	18	14	19	12	16	8	12	8	9
High Country	22	10	8	9	11	6	14	10	15	20	13	16	8	20	10	8
Hobsons Bay	20	6	6	2	14	8	17	25	15	25	11	17	8	10	9	8
Hume Global Learning Village	26	5	8	13	14	25	17	14	15	24	10	9	6	6	4	4
Kingston	18	2	6	5	14	13	16	18	15	15	12	15	8	16	11	16
La Trobe	23	1	8	7	12	9	14	19	15	23	12	22	7	9	9	10
Maribyrnong	17	10	6	5	17	9	19	23	14	22	9	15	7	10	10	7
Melton	26	2	8	10	16	13	16	13	16	15	11	21	4	15	3	10
Mildura	24	3	7	4	11	8	14	12	14	17	11	13	8	17	10	26
Mitchell*	26	9	8	9	11	14	16	14	15	32	11	9	6	5	6	9
Monash	16	4	7	7	16	14	14	21	12	21	13	12	10	11	10	9
Moonee Valley	18	3	6	7	16	13	16	20	14	18	11	16	8	12	10	11
Moreland	17	6	5	8	17	18	18	21	13	17	9	12	9	8	11	9
Mornington Peninsula	21	4	7	6	10	9	13	14	14	18	12	16	10	16	12	15
Murrindindi	22	-	7	3	9	2	14	15	16	13	13	26	9	24	10	18
Port Phillip	10	-	4	1	23	22	24	25	14	19	10	14	7	9	8	9
Stonnington*	18	4	6	4	16	12	15	16	15	20	12	36	7	8	10	-
Swan Hill*	16	-	5	10	7	50	9	10	10	10	8	20	6	-	8	-
Upper Murray	24	4	8	2	12	4	14	10	15	24	12	29	7	22	8	6
Wellington*	23	-	8	-	11	-	13	43	16	29	12	29	8	-	10	-
West Gippsland*	22	7	7	14	9	7	13	7	15	7	13	43	10	14	12	-
Whitehorse Manningham	11	4	7	9	15	8	16	17	15	19	14	19	10	16	11	8
Wimmera*	22	3	6	-	9	5	13	14	15	19	12	32	10	22	12	5
Wyndham*	26	-	8	9	14	6	18	13	15	31	10	28	5	6	2	6
Yarra Plenty	22	3	8	3	14	22	12	30	15	22	12	13	7	3	7	5
Yarra-Melbourne	10	4	6	4	27	19	20	26	12	21	10	16	6	8	8	3

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area. # = Library service users.

**TABLE A6: PERCENTAGE WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME IN THE LOCAL POPULATION AND AMONG LIBRARY USERS**

Library service	% LGA** population	% Library service users	Library service	% LGA population	% Library service users
Bayside	84.5	95.5	Kingston	72.8	88.5
Boroondara	76.7	89.7	La Trobe	88.8	96.8
Brimbank*	41.2	46.9	Maribyrnong	47.6	46.6
Campaspe	93.1	100	Melton	78.3	98.1
Casey-Cardinia	77.6	78.5	Mildura	87.5	98.2
Central Highlands	92.2	99.0	Mitchell*	90.6	100
Corangamite	94.2	99.4	Monash	62.2	70.1
Darebin	53.7	82.9	Moonee Valley	63.8	81.7
East Gippsland	91.1	96.7	Moreland	52.8	74.4
Eastern	86.1	93.3	Mornington Peninsula	89.9	97.8
Frankston	87.8	94.9	Murrindindi	91.0	98.4
Gannawarra*	93.7	97.3	Port Phillip	70.7	92.2
Geelong	91.9	95.8	Stonnington*	76.8	100
Glen Eira	69.6	93.5	Swan Hill*	88.9	100
Glenelg	94.5	96.6	Upper Murray	92.5	96.1
Goulburn Valley	88.2	98.0	Wellington*	90.2	100
Goldfields	93.0	98.5	West Gippsland*	91.1	100
Greater Dandenong	42.1	54.3	Whitehorse Manningham	68.7	83.0
High Country	89.9	97.7	Wimmera*	94.5	100
Hobsons Bay	65.8	90.4	Wyndham*	77.1	100
Hume Global Learning Village	60.6	76.3	Yarra Plenty	70.0	84.4
			Yarra-Melbourne	64.1	74.9
			Victoria – statewide	75%	85%

\* Survey sample too small to be reliable. \*\* LGA = Local government area.

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