

DAREBIN LIBRARIES and LEARNING STRATEGY

2020–24



"A whole world opens up as soon as I step into the library."

Library customer, March 2019



City of DAREBIN

Darebin Libraries

“I’m amazed every time I come that my local community has such a wonderful free resource that allows everyone to participate in learning and sharing. I’m an immigrant and my local library has been central to my sense of belonging to my local community – from reading material when I had no money for books, to mum and bubs sessions when my son was young. Thank you.”



Library customer, March 2019

Acknowledgement

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Council also pays respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin.

Council recognises and pays tribute to the diverse culture, resilience and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and the right to self-determination in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

MAYOR'S FOREWORD

We're incredibly proud of our libraries in Darebin and have seen them grow to become an integral part of our community. Over the past five years, we've provided more than 6 million loans, welcomed more than 3.1 million visitors, and delivered nearly 44,000 items to our housebound customers including 12 aged care facilities.

No longer just a place to borrow books, our libraries are welcoming, safe places for anyone to read, study, work and relax. In the past five years, we delivered close to 3,000 events for almost 160,000 attendees, hosted 417,811 computer sessions, and supplied resources in more than 70 community languages. Our events and programs support lifelong learning, promote the benefits of reading, celebrate our diverse community, and encourage connection with others.



At Darebin Libraries, our mission is to inspire and enable our diverse community to learn and grow, and we have designed our *Darebin Libraries and Learning Strategy 2020–24* to do just that. Darebin is fortunate to have a wide range of formal and informal learning organisations for people of all ages and stages of life – from schools to neighbourhood houses, community learning organisations to small businesses with a learning focus. We look forward to partnering with our learning community to achieve shared goals and outcomes.

In developing the Strategy, we asked our community what they wanted and needed from us, and how we could support their lifelong learning. We also considered how our population is growing and how the way we live, work and learn is changing. We looked at the challenges facing all of us, including the climate emergency, the recovery from COVID-19, increasing income inequality and social isolation.

I, on behalf of Council, would like to sincerely thank the following community members for their contribution to the development of the *Darebin Libraries and Learning Strategy 2020–24* through their participation on, and commitment to, our Reference Groups:

- Lifelong Learning Strategy: Amrita Chandra, Annette Davis (U3A), Basis Papageorge (Melbourne Polytechnic), Colleen Duggan (Darebin Neighbourhood House Network), Donna White, Elizabeth Branigan, Georgia Symons, Graham Stevenson (Department of Education), Dr Katherine Bussey, Millie Law, Neridah Baker (La Trobe University), Peter Bartley, Sandro Serio, and Shanthi Anthony (East Preston Islamic College)
- Darebin Libraries Strategy: Anne Thoday, Bev White, Bill Swannie, Daniel Pintado, Maddy Maitri, and Rod Jones

Our Strategy reflects our commitment to responding to those challenges and harnessing the opportunities they present. Our Strategy has four goals:

- To improve equity of access
- To support our thriving and resilient community
- To create welcoming, safe, inclusive and flexible spaces
- And to deliver responsive services

These goals put our community at the heart of our decision making and will guide our efforts over the coming years.

We look forward to seeing you in our libraries in the future.

Cr Susan Rennie, Mayor, City of Darebin

INTRODUCTION



Darebin Libraries provides welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces for our community members to connect, discover and learn.

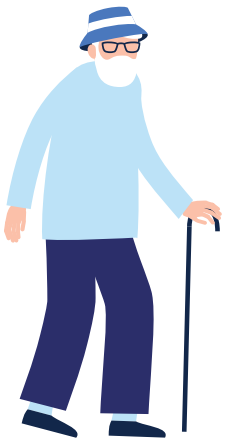
Our libraries provide equitable and easy access to information support, facilities, technology and programs that range from improving wellbeing and meeting life's challenges to tackling climate change and educating the community about the safe use of technology.

We aim to enrich the lives of our community and create opportunities for lifelong learning.

For every $1 invested in Darebin Libraries, $5.60 is returned in community benefits according to *Libraries Work! The socio-economic value of public libraries to Victorians*. This is higher than the Victorian average of $4.30. Community benefits include:

- Access to services, programs, information technology and safe public spaces.
- Opportunities for social interaction.
- Contribution to language and digital literacy.
- Complement to education services.
- Contribution to community health and wellbeing.
- Environmental savings through use of shared resources.

Darebin Libraries helps deliver Council's goals as outlined in the Council Plan 2017–21, the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017–21, the Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019–29, the Age Friendly Darebin report, the Youth Services Strategy 2019–21 and Darebin Climate Emergency Plan 2017–22.



To help us continue to provide services that benefit our community, we will use a community-centred approach and focus on four key goals that were developed together with the Darebin community:

1. Equity of access
2. A thriving and resilient community
3. Welcoming safe spaces
4. Responsive services

Vision, mission, values



Our vision

By engaging with Darebin Libraries, our community will:

Connect. Discover. Learn.

Our mission

Our mission is to inspire and enable our diverse community to learn and grow.

- Our libraries are welcoming, inclusive and safe places where anyone can read, study, work, relax and share.
- We provide easy access to library collections, programs, services and resources that meet the needs of our community.
- We understand, respond to and support the lifelong learning goals of our community.

Our values

Darebin Libraries staff are guided by the following values:

- **Collaborative:** We are united by a common purpose to serve the community. We work together, connecting within our teams and across the organisation. We are inclusive and collaborative. We are one.
- **Integrity:** We act with integrity and transparency in conversations and decision-making. Through open and clear communication, we build trust. We're honest. We walk the talk.
- **Accountable:** We are empowered to own and take responsibility for our actions. We follow through on our commitments and deliver on our promises. We make it happen.
- **Creative:** We are bold, courageous and innovative. We try new things, experiment and continuously improve. We are open-minded, creative and forward-thinking. We are leaders.
- **Respect:** We are diverse, inclusive, respectful and caring. We encourage everyone to have a voice and we listen to each other. We recognise one another's contributions and treat people fairly. We look after each other.
- **Make a Difference:** We are driven by our desire to make a difference for the people we serve. Our work is purposeful and creates a positive impact for the community. We are proud to work here. Our work matters.



"Information and knowledge are crucial to a decent society. Libraries are a social haven to allow everyone to learn, read and research. I love their availability and accessibility."

Library customer, March 2019

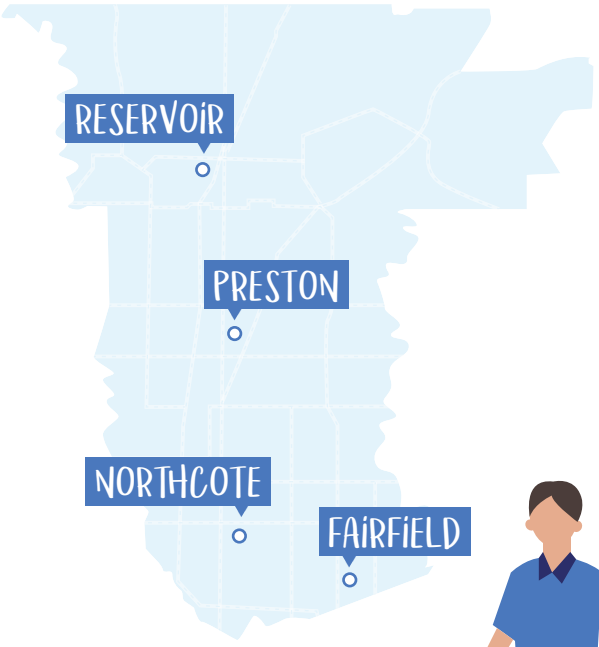
DAREBIN LIBRARIES

A SNAPSHOT

Darebin Libraries has four branches in Melbourne's northern suburbs. They are in Fairfield, Northcote, Preston and Reservoir.

We also offer digital resources and collections on our website (darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au) and our mobile app.

A home delivery service is available for Darebin community members who are unable to visit our libraries because of age, illness or disability.





Access to information and services

We are a trusted community resource and we offer equitable, easy access to information and services.



Diverse collections

Our collections include a variety of materials and formats to reflect the diverse needs of the Darebin community.





eResources

Our digital collections are always growing and include books, audiobooks, comics, newspapers, magazines, movies, music, learning platforms, local history resources and our own Darebin Libraries app.

Resources in community languages

More than 70 community languages are represented in our Languages Other Than English (LOTE) collections. We also provide access to language learning resources.



Free events and programs

Every week, we hold free events and programs to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and social connection, and to support the wellbeing of our community. Our Events Framework ensures we support those communities that need it most and helps address social isolation.



Digital access and support

We provide access to digital devices, including computers, laptops and tablets, and offer digital skills training. This helps our community access the internet and fully participate in social and economic life.



Lifelong learning

We provide a range of lifelong learning opportunities through our events program, our focus on digital literacy and our collections.

Reading and literacy development

We provide programs and resources to help reading and literacy development. Our Early Years Literacy program supports the development of foundational skills for the youngest of Darebin's community members.





Spaces to work, learn, create, relax and play

Our libraries provide free, safe and inclusive spaces for communities and individuals.

Opportunities for collaboration

We work with our communities to explore different ways to meet their needs. Partnerships help us deliver a broader range of information and activities to new audiences at our libraries and other places in Darebin.



WHAT IS LIFELONG LEARNING?

Lifelong learning is the ongoing process of developing a person's knowledge and skills throughout their entire life for personal growth, social and civic participation, and employment.

Darebin Libraries supports and encourages lifelong learning because it helps improve social inclusion, community engagement, personal development and employability.

Our approach to lifelong learning focuses on:

- Delivering individual, community and economic benefits.
- Learning for people of all ages and all life stages.
- Embracing formal education, structured learning and informal learning.

Victorian public libraries have committed to embedding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our planning. The SDGs provide a framework to showcase the impact libraries achieve by providing access to information and helping our community transform their knowledge into life-enhancing opportunities.

Lifelong learning and libraries play an important role in:

- Goal 1: No poverty.
- Goal 3: Good health and well-being.
- Goal 4: Quality education.
- Goal 5: Gender equality.
- Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.
- Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure.
- Goal 10: Reduced inequalities.
- Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities.
- Goal 13: Climate action.
- Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals.



THIS IS DAREBIN



- Our **population is growing**. Darebin is currently home to over 160,000 residents and this number is forecast to grow by 39 per cent to more than 230,000 by 2041. It is likely that housing demand will be met by high-density housing, particularly in Preston and Reservoir.
- The proportion of **older people** in our community continues to grow. People aged 65 years and over make up 13.7 per cent of the Darebin population. By 2041, this percentage is expected to rise to 14.7, meaning 33,846 people will be 65 years and over.
- **Children** (aged 0–17 years) make up 19 per cent of Darebin's population and this percentage is expected to remain constant until 2041. This means an additional 12,956 children will be living in Darebin by 2041.



- We are **culturally diverse**. In Darebin, 33 per cent of residents were born overseas, almost half of all residents had both parents born overseas, and 37 per cent of residents speak a language other than English at home. 138 languages are spoken in Darebin households.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** make up 0.8 per cent of Darebin residents. Darebin recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of this country.
- People with **disability** continue to face problems accessing services and information. Six per cent of our population reports needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.
- Council recognises the world is in a state of **climate emergency**. Climate change is making weather more severe, which impacts human health and wellbeing as well as our natural environment.

- Darebin's **economy** is changing. Once driven by manufacturing, the main growth industries are now in the service and knowledge sectors. The number of small, home-based businesses is growing, and technology, including automation, is transforming work.
- **Income inequality** has widened in Darebin. Three of Darebin's northern suburbs rank among Victoria's most disadvantaged suburbs, while our south-eastern suburbs rank among the least disadvantaged. Older people, people for whom English is a second language, and single parents are more likely to be in the lowest 20 per cent of income earners.
- In Darebin, 26 per cent of households contain only one person. **Social isolation** is a growing issue and has a significant negative impact on physical and mental health. Poverty, unemployment, and poor relationships are also associated with social isolation.

Sources

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2016*, compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts (2016). Available at profile.id.com.au/darebin
- ACOSS and University of NSW, *Inequality in Australia 2018*, (2018). Available at acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Inequality-in-Australia-2018_Factsheet.pdf

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAID

When developing this Strategy, it was important for us to understand and meet the needs of the Darebin community.

To reach as many people as possible, we used a variety of communication methods, which included:

- A survey of more than 1,800 library customers to evaluate the success of the Darebin Libraries Strategy 2014–19.
- Workshops and interviews.
- An online survey of more than 1,060 community members.
- Consultations with almost 250 community members in a variety of settings to understand problems accessing services and information, particularly for non-library users.
- Attending 20 Council Advisory Committee meetings.
- Community focus groups.

The results of these activities highlighted the positive impact of Darebin Libraries on our community and showed that we are seen as a valued and trusted community resource.

> "I love EVERYTHING about the library! I love how it is a village, with everyone from teeny-tiny babies to savvy senior citizens there. I love how libraries provide access to 'the whole world'... especially now that it is not just books but the internet, and especially for people who are on low incomes."

Library customer, March 2019



GOALS, OUTCOMES AND KEY ACTIONS

To develop our goals, outcomes and key actions for the Darebin Libraries Strategy 2020–24, we considered the make-up of Darebin's population and how it is expected to change in coming years.

We also:

- analysed the findings of the community consultations;
- reviewed Council priorities, strategies and frameworks;
- conducted a literature review;
- analysed data including event surveys, membership data and digital analytics; and
- incorporated responses to address the impacts of COVID-19.

> "It's given my children and I a weekly excursion that doesn't cost money but we can have fun selecting books, borrowing and returning."
>
> Library customer, March 2019



> "The library enabled me to find employment by way of being able to use the computers."
>
> Library customer, March 2019

Goal 1: Equity of access

We will provide services, resources and facilities that enable all community members to access our libraries.

Everyone has a place at our libraries. We support our communities by providing free and equitable access to information, resources, programs and spaces, to connect, discover and learn. We particularly support community members who are at risk of exclusion because of social isolation and/or limited access to technology, information and resources.

Outcomes	Key actions
Collections that meet the needs of the Darebin community	» Consult with our community to better understand their evolving needs and preferred collection formats. » Increase the number of community languages in our collections. » Balance the transition from physical to digital collections in line with community use and need, responding to the evolving COVID-19 impacts.
Increased library access	» Review library fines and charges to reduce barriers to use. » Review library opening hours. » Expand the reach of the home library service to include socially isolated groups.
Increased awareness and use of library services, especially by communities at risk of exclusion	» Collaborate with our partners, community and other Darebin City Council departments to raise awareness and use of Darebin Libraries services, especially with communities at risk of exclusion.





"I love that it's a community hub – as an LGBTIQ community member I feel completely safe and welcome at Preston Library. I love the people catching up for chats... it's such a great space. Staff are always cheery and helpful."

Library customer, March 2019

Goal 2: A thriving and resilient community

We will promote and support the wellbeing and resilience of our community through increased opportunities for lifelong learning and social connection.

Darebin Libraries helps build the strength of our community by providing opportunities to participate, learn, discover and connect.

Outcomes	Key actions
Events that meet diverse community needs	» Revise the Events Framework to increase the number of events that focus on the needs of communities at risk of exclusion and delivered in partnership with other Darebin City Council departments and community organisations and groups. » Increase the number of events delivered in community languages.
Opportunities to participate in lifelong learning	» Expand programs that foster lifelong learning, using digital delivery in response to COVID-19 impacts. » Increase digital literacy support across a variety of online platforms in partnership with community organisations. » Implement volunteering opportunities within the library. » Provide opportunities for communities to connect with Darebin's local history and culture. » Consult local businesses to identify their learning and development needs and implement collections, events and programs to support them.
Help the Darebin community meet the challenges of the climate emergency	» Collaboratively develop services, collections and programs to increase community understanding and knowledge to meet the challenges of the climate emergency.
Help the Darebin community meet the challenges of the COVID-19 recovery	» Work with the Darebin Community and Business Recovery Taskforce and other Darebin City Council departments to implement services, collections and programs to help communities understand and meet the challenges of the COVID-19 recovery.

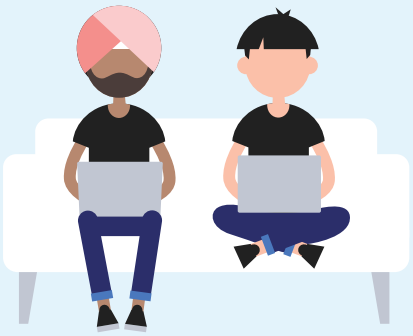
> "Great range of resources, excellent online access, pleasant, helpful staff... offers something for everyone in our community... happy to pay my rates for this kind of service!"
>
> Library customer, March 2019

Goal 3: Welcoming safe spaces

We will create welcoming, safe, flexible and inclusive physical and digital spaces.

Darebin Libraries are shared, safe and welcoming spaces that host a variety of activities. We want everyone to feel they belong, regardless of their age, size or ability. Our libraries need to be larger and designed to respond to the many and changing needs of our communities and the rapid projected population growth.

Outcomes	Key actions
Enhanced welcoming, safe, flexible and inclusive spaces to meet diverse and changing community needs	» Investigate the feasibility of new/refurbished libraries. » Work with communities to co-design spaces that are welcoming, safe, flexible, comfortable, inclusive and accessible for all. » Explore and implement ways to provide both quiet and collaborative spaces.
Appropriate technology to safely meet changing needs	» Upgrade the Darebin Libraries website. » Upgrade the Darebin Libraries app. » Improve access to digital resources and use technology to support the delivery of services, responding to evolving COVID-19 impacts.



> "We arrived in Australia a little over two years ago. I attend storytime with my child and previously attended rhyme time. These sessions played a major role in helping us to integrate into the community. We thoroughly enjoy them. They are really well run and an excellent service to the community."
>
> Library customer, March 2019

Goal 4: Responsive services

We will continue to build Darebin Libraries' capacity to provide services to meet our community's needs.

To meet the needs of the Darebin community, we will take a community-centred approach to the design and delivery of our systems and services.

Outcomes	Key actions
A community-led approach to the design and delivery of library services and resources	» Implement Darebin Community Engagement Strategy and Framework. » Identify, encourage and support opportunities for community-led initiatives in libraries.
Continuously improving customer service	» Reinvent library service delivery and customer service models in response to evolving COVID-19 impacts. » Provide staff with customer service and engagement training and support their ongoing professional development.
Knowing our impact	» Consult communities to identify how they are using libraries, what we are doing well and where we can improve.

Evaluation and reporting

This Strategy will be a 'living' document and we will develop annual service plans to ensure that Council delivers on community priorities and responds to emerging issues and community feedback over the next four years.

We will develop key performance indicators to measure our performance and will publish an annual progress report on the Darebin Libraries website.



DAREBIN LIBRARIES STRATEGY 2014–19 IN REVIEW

We are pleased to report some of the highlights and successes of our previous strategy.



KRA 1 Welcoming places and spaces

- ✓ A new library was opened at the Reservoir Community and Learning Centre.
- ✓ All Darebin Libraries branches benefited from physical improvements:
  - » Courtyards were opened at Northcote and Preston Libraries.
  - » The layout of the Northcote Library was revamped and a quiet room and dedicated youth space created.
  - » Furniture was upgraded to make meeting, lounging and study spaces more comfortable.
  - » The customer service and borrowing kiosks area at Fairfield Library were reconfigured.
  - » Lighting and seating outside Preston Library were enhanced.
- ✓ PlayStations were installed at all branches to support youth at risk of exclusion.
- ✓ Opening hours at Fairfield, Preston and Reservoir Libraries were increased by nine hours per week, including two hours on Thursday evenings for Libraries After Dark.
- ✓ Outreach activities were increased, which raised awareness of library services, collections and resources.
- ✓ Accessibility and Express computers were made available at all branches.



KRA 2 Dynamic collections

- ✓ A device-lending kiosk was introduced at Reservoir Library.
- ✓ Digital collections were expanded to include items in more than 70 community languages.
- ✓ Darebin Libraries was accredited against State Library Victoria's Reading and Literacy for All Early Years Checklist.
- ✓ The 1,000 Books Before School program and our Summer Reading Challenge supported early years literacy.

KRA 3 Strengthening our community

- ✓ A CALD Framework, a Literacy Framework and an Event Framework were developed to guide our work with Darebin's diverse community.
- ✓ We significantly increased the number of events focused on community learning, literacy and reader development, along with celebrations of cultural diversity and community engagement.
- ✓ The Conversation Café program was expanded to run twice per week across two library branches. We also delivered bilingual storytimes and the National Simultaneous Storytime in Woi-Wurrung and Spanish.
- ✓ Community language modules were installed on all public computers.

- Bookmark artwork and Book Art competitions celebrated our community's creativity and love of libraries.
- The home library service was expanded to reach even more Darebin community members who are unable to visit our libraries because of age, illness or disability.

KRA 4 Innovation

- We released a new Darebin Libraries App and were the first library in the world to release the Planet Library App for young people.
- New and faster borrowing kiosks with EFTPOS payment were installed in all branches.
- Faster wifi, wifi printing and easier wifi access were launched in all branches.
- The Darebin 'Houses of Northcote' collection and exhibition was digitised.
- Libraries After Dark hours were extended and programming and marketing boosted to reduce social isolation.
- Darebin Libraries received eSmart accreditation which connects library customers with the skills and information they need for smart, safe and responsible use of technology.
- The Darebin Heritage website was launched (heritage.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au) to make Darebin's local history more accessible to the public.

KRA 5 Working together

- We delivered the Vic Tech Savvy Seniors program in partnership with PRACE and Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre. The program gave older people the opportunity to develop skills to use technology to safely socialise, access services or conduct personal business.
- The Be Connected program was delivered in partnership with the Fairfield Greek Hellenic Women's Group to increase the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians.
- Justice of the Peace weekly services were offered at Preston Library.
- Strengthened our ability to activate events more meaningfully with partners including delivering shared goals e.g. IDAHOBIT, International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism, Indigenous Literacy Day, Harmony Day, Midsumma Festival.
- Increased community consultation, especially to develop Frameworks and Action Plans.

KRA 6 Knowledgeable, creative and accountable

- Improved marketing and launch of Facebook page to engage with our customers.
- Shifted our focus from transactional to more meaningful customer service.
- Implementation of shelf-ready procurement. This approach decreases the time it takes for a collection resource to be available for our customers to borrow.
- Darebin Libraries Strategy Implementation Reference Group engaged with the library team throughout the life of the strategy.
- Increased focus on professional development, higher duties and secondment opportunities and presenting at conferences and seminars to build capability and capacity of our team members.
- Roles and positions were adapted within our organisational structure to support changing community needs.



Key statistics: 2014–15 to 2018–19

NEARLY
6 MILLION LOANS

202% increase in **Digital collection loans**

38% increase in **Usage of online reference & skills training programs**

Corresponding **16%** decrease in **Physical collection loans**



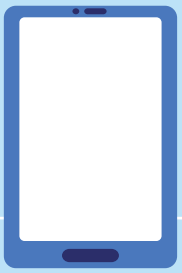
MORE THAN
3.1 MILLION VISITS
TO
LIBRARY BRANCHES

a slight **2%** ↓ in branch visits



18+ MILLION
WEBPAGE VIEWS

Pageviews increased **46%**

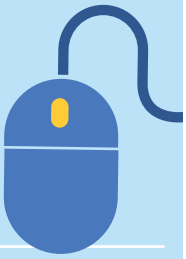


Darebin Libraries App downloaded to
10,340 DEVICES

Enabling access to library resources **24/7**

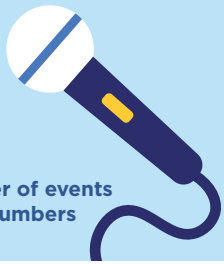
113% increase in usage since launch

417,811 COMPUTER SESSIONS



5% ↑ which supports those who don't have access to their own computers

ALMOST
3,000 EVENTS
AND
160,000 attendees



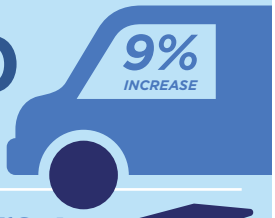
38% increase in the number of events
31% increase in attendee numbers

SUPPORTED
244,806 WIRELESS SESSIONS

44% ↑ demonstrates more people are bringing their own devices to our libraries

HOME LIBRARY SERVICE

Delivered nearly
44,000 ITEMS



310 customers +
12 aged care facilities

"I love the entire experience – the 15-minute walk to the library with my chatty children, the availability of books and magazines for all our ages and interests, the peaceful and happy environment, and the multicultural community of all ages that gathers there."

Library customer, March 2019





"My library helps me not feel lonely and staff at Reservoir are just lovely."

Library customer, March 2019











Libraries Change Lives

DAREBIN LIBRARIES

266 Gower Street, Preston
PO Box 257, Preston, Vic 3072
T 1300 655 355
E contact_us@darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au
darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au

National Relay Service
relayservice.gov.au

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.

Speak your language
T 8470 8470

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