

11.7 Review of Mudgee Library Opening Hours

REPORT BY THE MANAGER LIBRARY SERVICES
TO 21 FEBRUARY 2024 ORDINARY MEETING
GOV400105, F0620008

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. receive the report by the Manager Library Services on the review of opening hours at Mudgee Library branch;
2. place this report on exhibition for 28 days to seek feedback from the community;
3. note the proposed changes to the opening hours of the Mudgee Library as:
 - 3.1 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:00am – 5:30pm
 - 3.2 Thursday: 9:00am – 7:30pm
 - 3.3 Saturday: 9:30am – 1:30pm; and
4. adopt the proposed change to opening hours if no submissions are received during the exhibition period.

Executive summary

This report seeks guidance from Council on a proposal to change the opening hours of the Mudgee Library. The proposal seeks to open the library an hour earlier at 9:00am and close an hour earlier at 5.30pm with an extended operation on Thursday evenings. There is also an increase in the hours of operation on a Saturday.

No changes are proposed in this report (or recommended by the State Library review) to the smaller branch libraries in Gulgong, Kandos and Rylstone.

Disclosure of Interest

Nil

Detailed report

In February 2020, the State Library of New South Wales conducted a review of Mid-Western Regional Council libraries in accordance with the *Library Act 1939*. From this review, it was determined that the Mudgee Library branch is presently open for 43 hours per week, which falls below the recommended 48 hours for a tier one (main) library.

Currently, the opening hours of the Mudgee Library branch are:

- **Monday – Friday** 10:00am – 6:00pm
- **Saturday** 9:30am – 12:30pm

During the recent strategic planning process, a consistent and timely theme emerged from community focus groups and survey results, there was a strong demand for extended opening hours (which would enable greater accessibility to library services) and a desire for one late opening night per week (to accommodate additional programming and study, with the library already planning on enhancing specific spaces to create dedicated study and reading areas).

It is clear the tradition of opening at 10:00am, which originated from early banking practices, is no longer suited to today's environment.

Throughout June and August 2023, library staff manually recorded visits to the library between 5:00pm-6:00pm. The average number of people visiting the library between 5:00pm – 5:30pm was 5.8, while the average number of people visiting the library between 5:30pm – 6:00pm was 3.4. From these figures it is evident that the Library isn't well utilised during this time, though it should be noted that higher numbers are attending on Thursday evenings for scheduled programs.

Following discussions and feedback from staff, a review of the opening hours of other libraries in the Central West Zone, and consideration of all the above-mentioned factors, the following change to opening hours is proposed:

- **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday** 9:00am – 5:30pm
- **Thursday** 9:00am – 7:30pm
- **Saturday** 9:30am – 1:30pm

An earlier opening will not impact upon staffing, as library staff are already rostered to start at 9:00am or earlier. An additional hour on Saturday does not impose on current rostering as there would still be no requirement for lunch cover. And lastly, this change means the library would be open 48.5 hours a week, slightly exceeding the State Library of New South Wales guideline.

Overall, these revised hours would better align the Library with most other organisations and businesses, and would be more beneficial in meeting the needs of our community.

Community Plan implications

Theme	Looking After Our Community
Goal	A safe and healthy community
Strategy	Maintain the provision of high quality, accessible community services that meet the needs of our community

Strategic implications

Council Strategies

Delivery Program 2022/23–2025/26
Operational Plan 2023/24
Community Plan – Towards 2040
2023-2033 Cultural Plan
2022 Community Engagement Strategy

Council Policies

2023 Collection Development Policy

Legislation

Library Act 1939

Financial implications

The proposed changes can be accommodated without change to the overall existing library budget allocation.

Associated Risks

Changes to agreed service levels require appropriate consultation with Council and the community. Risk to adverse community sentiment about the proposed changes can be mitigated by providing the opportunity for feedback from the public through placing the proposed changes on exhibition.

RACHEL GILL
MANAGER LIBRARY SERVICES

SIMON JONES
DIRECTOR COMMUNITY

21 December 2023

Attachments: Nil

APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION:

BRAD CAM
GENERAL MANAGER