

2.1 REPORT ON MULGRAVE LIBRARY EXTENDED HOURS TRIAL OCTOBER 2018 – AUGUST 2019

(JS File No.)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

RECOMMENDATIONS*That Council:*

1. Notes the benefits to the community that have resulted from the trial of extended hours at Mulgrave Library in particular the opportunities to increase lifelong learning, enhance literacy skills and develop social connections; and

2. Considers the continuation of these additional opening hours (13 hours per week) and the provision of programs at the Mulgrave Library on an ongoing basis from October 2019 at the cost of \$50,000 per annum.

INTRODUCTION

Monash Public Library Service (MPLS) has a branch library in Mulgrave since 2012. This community library located in the Wellington Reserve Community Centre (WRCC) commenced a trial of 13 additional opening hours in October 2018 accompanied by additional program offerings.

The library works closely with the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House (MRNH) located in the WRCC. This partnership has been enhanced and strengthened throughout the trial bringing direct tangible benefits to the Mulgrave community.

Council is asked to consider the outcomes of the trial extended opening hours and community benefit with the view to making this a permanent arrangement.

BACKGROUND

The Mulgrave Library opened in November 2012 in the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House at the Wellington Reserve Community Centre in Mulgrave. The single-room 30m² library is the smallest of the six Monash library branches. It initially opened for 3 to 3½ hours each day from Tuesday to Saturday – a total of 17 hours per week.

A Feasibility Study, funded via a Councillor Bid on behalf of the Mulgrave community through the 2017/18 budget process sought to undertake:

- a demographic analysis of the Mulgrave area, including analysis of social indicators to assess the need for a fully-resourced branch library;
- analysis of usage patterns of the current Mulgrave Library;
- analysis of the use of other libraries in Monash and neighbouring municipalities by Mulgrave residents;

- benchmarking with other relevant community hub or public library projects;
- consultation with the Mulgrave community, including a Mulgrave resident user and non-user survey and no less than two focus group sessions;
- analysis of industry trends and current benchmarks in provision of relevant public library services; and
- a cost-benefit analysis to assess the various community benefits of an expanded or new library facility against capital and recurrent costs.

The outcome was a report (Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study) identifying a series of recommendations that observe the potential benefits of an expansion of library services in the Mulgrave area accompanied by additional opening hours and more community-based programs. It was tabled as a Notice of Motion (NOM) 6.3 Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study at the July 2018 Council meeting.

Council endorsed the recommendations of the NOM to increase the expansion of library hours for a twelve (12) month trial basis effective October 2018 and to be considered as part of the mid-year budget process. Council also endorsed in-principle support to expand the floor space of Mulgrave Library from 30 m² to 60 m² in accordance with Option 4 of the Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study and refers this for consideration in the Council budget process. The additional hours of opening were introduced on 8 October 2018 to align with Term 4 of the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House.

This report covers the period October 2018 to August 2019 and provides a statistical profile of library patronage and loans, the scope of programs offered the impact of the extended hours on the community, and the synergies that have occurred between the MRNH users and the library.

DISCUSSION

Overview and statistical profile

Prior to the trial the Mulgrave library was, open 17 hours per week, 3 to 3.5 hours (Tuesday to Saturday). The immediate impact of the extended hours meant that for the first time since the library opened in November 2012 library services were available for a full day on Monday and Tuesday.

Library Open Hours	Trial Open Hours from Oct 2018 to September 2019	Pre Trial Open Hours
Monday	10am – 5pm	Not open
Tuesday	10am – 5pm	1:30pm – 5pm
Wednesday	2pm – 7pm	3:30pm – 7 pm
Thursday	1.30pm – 5pm	1:30pm – 5pm
Friday	9am – 1.30pm	9:30am – 1pm
Saturday	9am – 12 noon	9am – 12 noon
Sunday	Not open	Not open
Total Hours per week	30 Hours	17 Hours

The response to this change of hours was well received by the community and has been sustained throughout the trial. In feedback received from the community, since the trial commenced, a patron commented, “[It’s] fantastic having more hours and Monday’s at Mulgrave. I’m here at least once a week’.

Another stated “[The library] is very handy to my home, I use the library all the time. Extended hours definitely a bonus”.

The increased utilisation of the library, in comparison to the Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study, during the trial are summarised in the following table:

Measure	Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study	Oct 2018 – August 2019
Visits per month	500	877
Loans per month	850	1090
Programs per month	6 to 7	12
Program attendees per month	90	201

Loan trends

Across the October 2018 to August 2019 period Mulgrave Library issued 11,996 items an 8% increase in loans for the same period in 2017-2018.

Program offerings

The additional hours has meant that the library has been able to provide a number of extra programs and consolidate others across the October 2018 to August 2019 timeframe.

These programs included:

- Literacy support to Maternal and Child Health, New Mums groups and the Chinese Playgroup families (who meet on Monday’s)
- Cultural Awareness programs
- Family History
- LEGO Club for pre-schoolers aimed at developing motor skills
- School Holiday programs including Twilight story time
- Adult Book Club
- Baby time since July 2019
- Story time including a request for a Chinese story time
- Life skill classes

The Commonwealth Government has also supported five sessions of the *Digital Literacy for Seniors* program at Mulgrave, which was well attended each week with full sessions and a wait list. Speciality events have doubled and a Saturday university student-led children’s science program (*Engineers without Borders*) when held over four weekends resulted in a quadrupling of the regular number of Saturday morning visitors to the library. July 2019 saw a record number of visitors to the Mulgrave

Library, close to 1,400 people over the month. The July 2019 School holidays saw over 10 events conducted and all were well attended.

Synergies with the MRNH

The MRNH offers a community morning tea on Tuesday morning and a Chinese Grandparents group also that morning. Two Craft groups meet on Mondays as well as a support group. The participants in each of these classes and their tutors now have access to the library, which was not the case beforehand. Individuals actively look for library resources in Chinese or in their areas of interest. The library can now support these individual's information needs as a direct result of the extended hours.

The Coordinator of the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House has expressed strong support for the continuation of the extended hours. She confirms that the extended library opening hours have benefited the Mulgrave community and MRNH participants, particularly on Mondays. In addition, she reinforced the benefits of joined-up services stating, "People prefer to come to public buildings which offer multiple services and I think this is definitely the case at Wellington Reserve".

Other benefits

Work has already commenced on scoping a potential extension to the Mulgrave Library to double its size from 30 m² to 60 m². Council funded this capital works project this financial year (2019-2020) and it aligns to Option 4 of the Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study, which recommends doubling the library's current footprint.

It would be beneficial to continue with the additional opening hours to support this expanded space and Council's return on investment.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Mulgrave Library extended opening hours align with the *Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021* – to improve community engagement, confidence and connectivity as well as enhancing health and wellbeing by having a service that is more accessible to all residents, promotes a sense of space and facilitates lifelong learning.

The retention of the hours also speaks to *Monash 2021* – an inclusive and safe community; with facilities and opportunities for people to come together and actively participate in the life of their communities. Public libraries have a significant role as civic connectors advancing both community cohesion and a sense of place where people feel safe and connected. Extended hours and the resultant services can continue to address the key aspects of the *2021 Plan*.

CONSULTATION

The intent of the 2018 *Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study* was to provide the City of Monash and Monash Public Library Service (MPLS) with evidence on which to make an informed decision about the future development of public library services and spaces in Mulgrave.

Community Consultation was a strong element of the Study and was conducted with library users, Mulgrave residents, and MRNH and Council Staff focus groups. This shaped the recommendation for extended hours.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The additional trial hours have contributed to a strong sense of community connection. They have reinforced the finding of the Feasibility Study, which pointed to “the value of the library as ‘a little gem’ because it is intimate and personal... The Mulgrave Library feels safe, welcoming and comfortable”.

Throughout the period of trial, Mulgrave Library has been able to offer Mulgrave and Monash residents not only access to the library for longer opening hours, but the opportunity to engage with more events (hosted by MPLS) within the Wellington Reserve Community Centre.

These opportunities demonstrate that the increased opening hours have contributed to the educational and skills development of residents through the provision of a larger range of programs for all ages.

The ongoing increase in the opening hours of the Mulgrave Library will clearly provide the Monash community with additional opportunities for participation in both civic and cultural life.

The Mulgrave Library is an accessible, local library service point that, although small, is a place where people can connect, learn and create. Mulgrave Library is also a key hub of activity and stimulation to the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House, and the additional hours would enhance the overall offerings and capacity of the location to the local community.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

This report is in line with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and in particular with the right of taking part in public life.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to Council for the trial hours and program delivery is \$50,000. This would be an addition to the MPLS operating budget. This will result in an increase to library staffing EFT by 0.44. This is comprised of 13 additional opening hours plus 3 hours for back of house duties and meeting attendance.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the trial and the overwhelming support of the users for the continuation of the extended opening hours reinforces the value of this small neighbourhood library in the life of the Monash community as a place for learning, discovery, inspiration and social connection.

The additional hours have enhanced the community’s opportunity for participation in civic life. By the very fact that the library is open longer it has maximised opportunities

for individuals to develop a love of reading, explore new knowledge, foster literacy and life skills and be exposed to both print and digital collections in a safe and welcoming environment.

This report seeks Council's recognition of the benefits of the trial to the community and endorsement of the extended opening hours (13 hours per week) and provision of programs for the Mulgrave Library an ongoing basis from October 2019 at the cost of \$50,000 per annum.