

6.3 MULGRAVE LIBRARY FEASIBILITY STUDY OUTCOMES

Submitting Councillors: Cr Paul Klisaris & Cr Shane McCluskey

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes the outcomes from the Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study that was funded through the 2017/8 budget;*
2. *Endorses the proposal to increase the opening hours of Mulgrave Library from 17 to 30 hours per week and to increase the range of community programs on offer in accordance with Option 3 of the Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study at a cost of \$50,000 effective from September 2018 for a twelve (12) month trial period;*
3. *Receives a further report detailing the utilisation, impact and outcomes resulting from the trial period;*
4. *Provides in-principle support for the proposal 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;*
5. *Notes that funding for the Mulgrave Neighbourhood Library expansion detailed in recommendation 4 above has been submitted by the Wellington Reserve Community Centre for consideration in the State Government's 'Pick My Project' initiative. If this is successful, the expansion may require additional funding support from Council; and*
6. *Considers the allocation of capital funding to progress the physical expansion of the Mulgrave Library as part of the 2019/20 Council budget process if funding via the 'Pick My Project' submission is unsuccessful.*

INTRODUCTION

Monash Public Library Service (MPLS) provides direct service to the Mulgrave community at the Mulgrave Library at the Wellington Reserve Community Centre as part of Council's highly valued public library service.

The Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study (refer Attachment 1) was undertaken between October 2017 to April 2018 to provide Council with evidence based advice on which to make an informed decision about the future development of public library services and spaces in Mulgrave. The output from the Feasibility Study is a report featuring recommendations on the potential benefits of expanding library services in Mulgrave.

This notice of motion seeks the approval of our Councillor colleagues to adopt both recommendations of the Study. These recommendations support the expansion of the library service at Mulgrave, additional hours, and program delivery in partnership with Mackie Road Neighbourhood House.

BACKGROUND

The Mulgrave Library was opened in November 2012 in the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House at the Wellington Reserve Community Centre in Mulgrave. The single-room 30m² library is by far the smallest, of MPLS' six library branches. It is currently open 3 to 3.5 hours each day from Tuesday to Saturday, a total of 17 hours per week. The library features:

- a small onsite collection of around 3,000 items, with access to the entire MPLS collection through the MPLS catalogue, reservations, and stock rotation;
- a weekly Story Time activity for toddlers, preschoolers and their families;
- other occasional onsite programs relevant to Mulgrave residents;
- free access to computers and the internet, and places where people can relax and read the newspaper (through the Mackie Rd Neighbourhood House); and
- a librarian who is well-regarded by the people who use the library and provides personalised service to the local community.

The Feasibility Study, funded via our 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.

DISCUSSION

The study provided the following picture of the Mulgrave Library and sets the context for its recommendations. With opening hours of 17 hours per week and other branches open up to 65 hours per week, Mulgrave Library averages:

- 500 visits per month (0.6% of total visits to Monash libraries);
- 6.8 visits per opening hour (versus 58 per hour for all MPLS branches);
- 850 loans per month (0.6% of total loans in Monash libraries);
- 1.8 loans per visits (higher than the MPLS average of 1.6 influenced by high borrowing of junior collection items);
- 6 to 7 library programs offered per month; and
- 90 program attendees per month (with around 25% of library visits driven by library programming, vs 7% across all Monash libraries).

Library use choices and user feedback

With the absence of a full-service library in Mulgrave (and no local library prior to 2012), many Mulgrave residents have chosen to make other Monash library branches their 'home' branch. Some also choose to use libraries in neighbouring LGAs, there being 11 other libraries within

a 15-minute drive of Mulgrave Library (five being Monash libraries) and the two closest public libraries (by travel time) being in Springvale and Westall.

User feedback indicates a solid level of satisfaction with the services provided at the Mulgrave Library (7.4 out of 10), and appreciation for the difference it makes in their lives. An important finding from the community consultation was that part of the appeal for some users of Mulgrave Library is the fact that it is not a large, full-service library.

It's notable that for some people the library is 'a little gem', because it is intimate and personal offering. For some people who experience social, emotional and/or psychological challenges in their everyday lives, the Mulgrave Library feels safe, welcoming and comfortable. They value the library because when they visit it is peaceful and undemanding sanctuary.

What this means is that while there are people who choose to use the larger Monash libraries because they offer the full range of contemporary library services and are vibrant community hubs, there are also people who deliberately choose to use the small Mulgrave Library because it is not like the larger libraries.

Feasibility Study Outcomes: Recommendations

The Feasibility Study has found that the Mulgrave Library currently delivers a good quality but limited library service to the residents of Mulgrave. While the full range of services expected of a contemporary public library are accessible at Mulgrave (through the combined efforts of MPLS and the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House), the services are not provided at a level that can be expected to attract new and regular library users, other than those who value the personalised service that characterises such a small library. While there is an inequity in the provision of a small library in Mulgrave when the City of Monash's other libraries are full-service library branches, there is no indication that the Mulgrave community is urgently seeking redress of this situation, and it is clear that many Mulgrave residents choose to use other nearby libraries (in Monash or in neighbouring municipalities) in preference to the Mulgrave Library.

Therefore, we fully support the following recommendations incorporate two of the options examined in the Study:

Recommendation 1: That the Council progressively consolidate and grow the library service offering in Mulgrave, pursued at the earliest opportunity within Council's established budget process and timelines (detailed as Option 3 in the Feasibility Study).

It is proposed that this be implemented concurrently with the expected growth in community engagement with the Mackie Road Neighbourhood House. It should occur collaboratively with the management of the Neighbourhood House, especially through joint endeavours to promote local participation in and use of the services and facilities available at the Wellington Reserve Community Centre.

Recommendation 2: That subject to the outcomes from implementation of Recommendation 1 above, the Council, in line with Council's budget processes and timelines, allocate funding to support the expansion of the Mulgrave Library on its current site (Detailed as Option 4 in the Feasibility Study) in the 2019/20 financial year.

'Pick My Project' Submission

A submission to the State Government's *Pick My Project* initiative has been made by a Mulgrave community member and Chair of the Wellington Reserve Community Centre Committee of Management to seek \$200,000 funding for the extension of Mulgrave Library

from 30m² to 60 m². The submission emphasises the benefits to the community of the additional space including an expanded service, empowering existing community relationships and fostering a more inviting, inclusive, community feel. A decision on the submission is anticipated in September 2018.

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our proposal speaks to the *Healthy and Resilient Monash Integrated Plan*, notably the commitment to:

Healthy Environments in Active and Healthy Communities. Our proposal also demonstrates the vision of the *Monash Library Plan 2015-2018: To inspire strong, vibrant, creative and connected communities* and promotes the role of the library as a gathering space for residents to pursue and share literary and creative interests and activities and to support lifelong learning.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An expanded library space in Mulgrave will provide its community with an accessible, local place where people can learn, connect, and create. Where people have the chance to use a library in this way, whether individually or as a group, they are more likely to realise benefits related to social and digital inclusion, personal wellbeing and development, and stronger creative communities.

The new space will allow for additional seating, larger collection, after-hours returns options and easier access through a more prominent entrance direct to the library space. The expanded library space will promote further synergies and opportunities for new programs for both Neighbourhood House and Library users, in the local Mulgrave area, benefitting the Mulgrave community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costings for the 30 m² extension are premised on advice from Council's Architecture and Urban Design Unit. They have indicated a sum of \$200,000 for design and build, furniture, equipment and fit out of the extension based on indicative cost of \$5,000 per square metre. To ensure that project outcomes are met and allowing for any unforeseen elements in the build it is proposed that additional funding may be required from Council.

The proposed change to the Mulgrave Library's opening hours from 17 to 30 hours per week 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.

CONSULTATION

An important feature of our Feasibility Study research was a consultation process conducted with library users, Mulgrave residents, and Mackie Road Neighbourhood House and Council staff. This comprised an online survey, individual meetings with key stakeholders and consultation sessions offered at the Neighbourhood House and individual surveys filled out by visitors to the Centre and Mulgrave Library. This process was conducted to determine the demand for provision of library services in Mulgrave, the current supply of library services to

Mulgrave residents, whether there is any gap in service provision, service options and recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The Mulgrave Library Feasibility Study has reinforced the value of this small library in the life of the community, providing a local place for learning, discovery and inspiration. On behalf of the Mulgrave community, we seek the support of our fellow councillors in the allocation of funding of \$50,000 to provide an extension of hours and programming at Mulgrave Library, to raise service levels sought by the community. Further, in the event that funding via the State Government *'Pick My Project'* initiative is unsuccessful, we seek support to allocate capital funding to progress the physical expansion of the Mulgrave Library as part of the 2019/20 Council budget process

With the support of our fellow councillors, we look forward to the delivery of the expanded Mulgrave Library, in opening hours, service offer and space.