# LIBRARY AND HISTORICAL SERVICES STRATEGY

## *2022-2027*

STANTON LIBRARY

NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL

# RECOGNITION OF THE CAMMERAYGAL PEOPLES

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of North Sydney local government area, the Cammeraygal People.*

We acknowledge First Nations people living and working in our local area, and commit to bringing an awareness of this community and their history to all decision making and planning.

> **The staff are very helpful, the resources are very accessible, and it's a happy place to be.**

# LIBRARY AND HISTORICAL SERVICES AT NORTH SYDNEY

North Sydney Council's Library Service operates out of the iconic Stanton Library building on Miller Street, North Sydney, originally opened in 1964. On the edge of the North Sydney CBD, Stanton is well served by buses, with rail transport within walking distance.

The last major upgrade to the library building was completed in 2005 with the addition of level two and substantial internal refurbishment. A Masterplan for the library building, including opportunities for expansion, was developed in 2015. With the guidance of the Masterplan, Council has since made incremental improvements to the library's internal spaces.

The North Sydney Heritage Centre, co-located within Stanton Library, is designed as a research and exhibition space, available to the public during library opening hours. A museum quality exhibition space wraps around the research area, providing a means to showcase Council's unique and valuable collection of artworks, objects, maps and photographs. A significant collection of historic items and artefacts are stored within a purpose built facility at Council's Ernest St depot.

Library and Historical Services staff are responsible for the maintenance and management of two historic properties, now operating as Museums. Don Bank Museum is a 19th century timber slab cottage, and the only one of its type open to the public in the inner city. St Thomas Rest Park, the earliest European cemetery on the North Shore is now deconsecrated ground and managed as an historic site, with significant headstones and monuments, as well as a preserved laying out room known as the Sexton's Cottage.

Stanton Library is part of the Shorelink Library Network, which connects Library Services for Lane Cove, Mosman and North Sydney Councils.

> I think Stanton Library is the most significant cultural institution provided by North Sydney Council. I would be lost without it.

# BACKGROUND

Consultation and community engagement, using a range of methods and platforms, is used to guide all library planning and inform service delivery at every level.

This strategy draws on formal and informal consultation with the community and stakeholders held between 2020-2022:

– 2020 Customer Service Satisfaction Survey
– 2020 My Stanton customer engagement project
– 2021 Community Strategic Plan consultations
– 2021 Library staff consultation sessions
– 2021-22 Library strategy survey: Your Library, Your Say
– 2022 State Library of NSW assessment and compliance report

# RELATED PLANS

– North Sydney Vision 2040: Community Strategic Plan
– Delivery Program 2022-2026
– North Sydney Council Disability and Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026
– Shorelink Strategic Plan 2021-2025

# STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

– Library Council of NSW: Standards and Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries 2020
– Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries
– State Library of NSW: Indigenous Spaces in Library Places 2016
– Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services 2005

## Population

# 69,460

## Population density

*People per hectare (PPH)*

North Sydney LGA — 65.7

NSROC — 9.9

Greater Sydney — 4.2
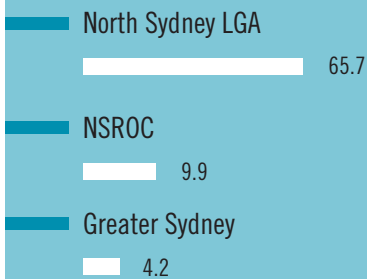
## Household structure

18%

28.9%

6.1%

37%

# 0.4% ATSI origin

## Languages spoken other than English

# 23.9%

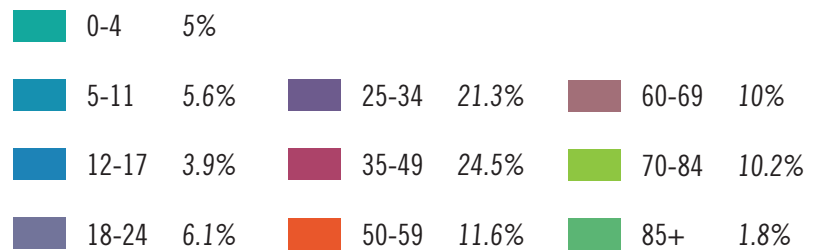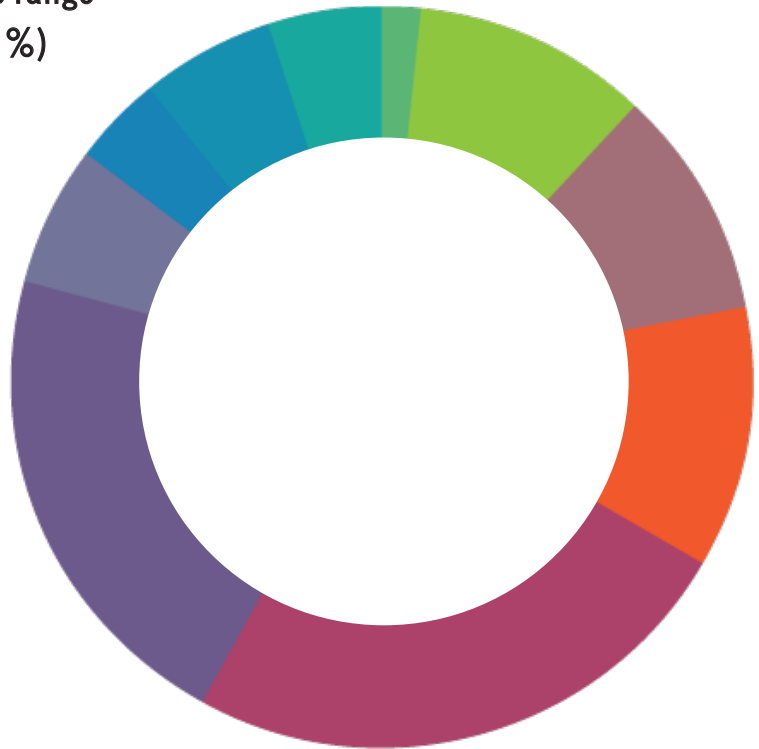of residents speak a language other than English

4.3% Mandarin

2.7% Cantonese

1.6% Spanish

1.5% Japanese

## Age range (by %)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-4 | 5% | | |
| 5-11 | 5.6% | 25-34 21.3% | 60-69 10% |
| 12-17 | 3.9% | 35-49 24.5% | 70-84 10.2% |
| 18-24 | 6.1% | 50-59 11.6% | 85+ 1.8% |

**Source:** Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2021,* compiled and presented in *profile.id* by .id (informed decisions)

"I consider the library to be a home away from home.

"

There is a reason that the Stanton Library is held in such high regard by our community with its reach extending beyond our LGA. Council must continue to invest in the community asset, keeping it relevant and as a hub contributing to the heartbeat of our community.

# KEY LIBRARY FIGURES

**Active library members**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 25,036 |
| **2020-21:** | 28,061 |
| **2019-20:** | 29,947 |

**New library members**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 1,906 |
| **2020-21:** | 2,466 |
| **2019-20:** | 4,979 |

**Library program attendance**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 8,527 |
| **2020-21:** | 9,535 |
| **2019-20:** | 10,979 |

**Website visits**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 675,953 |
| **2020-21:** | 854,084 |
| **2019-20:** | 716,531 |

**Physical loans**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 307,855 |
| **2020-21:** | 450,674 |
| **2019-20:** | 463,823 |

**eLibrary loans**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 61,640 |
| **2020-21:** | 54,685 |
| **2019-20:** | 43,032 |

**Library visits**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 132,685 |
| **2020-21:** | 164,686 |
| **2019-20:** | 326,787 |

**Customer enquiries**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 16,372 |
| **2020-21:** | 16,037 |
| **2019-20:** | 33,396 |

**Wi-Fi sessions**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2021-22:** | 32,709 |
| **2020-21:** | 8,069 |
| **2019-20:** | 51,665 |

**Note:** Figures since 2020 reflect impact of COVID-19 lockdowns, library closures and visitor restrictions.

STANTON LIBRARY

# TRENDS

Our consultation tells us that overall, customers are very happy with the existing service provided by Stanton Library, in particular the collections available, the library staff and the programs and activities offered.

Users of the library appreciate the depth, breadth, currency and range of library resources, actively seeking out staff recommendations and reading suggestions curated by theme or topic. The physical items in the library and the act of browsing the shelves add to the sense of discovery and atmosphere when using the library.

*Our community see the library as a welcoming and friendly place, and interactions with staff contribute significantly to their positive experience of visiting.*

Many users commented that while the quality and range of programs offered is excellent, they are often difficult to book into or not offered at suitable times. Demand for children's activities of all kinds for ages 0-12 remains high, and sessions offered are quickly booked out.

Identified areas for improvement were the provision of spaces for reading, study, work and meetings, expansion of print and digital collections and improvements to accessing online services and platforms.

In the wake of COVID pandemic closures, lockdowns and long periods of restrictions, visits to the library and loans of physical items has been slow to return. Visits and loans are close to 50% of pre-COVID levels. Demand for digital services, especially eBooks, eAudio and online self-service functionality has noticeably increased.

Better awareness and promotion of the library's services and resources was noted as a significant factor in encouraging users to visit the library more frequently.

"Not having access to the library through lockdown, this year and last, was extremely difficult. I missed this service as much or more than any other restriction.

At 39%, our resident library membership is lower than the expected benchmark, and survey feedback indicates that there are large sections of the community who are unaware of the library, the services available and the programs offered.

Customers also indicated that greater flexibility and more options for how and where they access the library, as well as convenience and ease of access in their own neighbourhood would contribute to their ability to use the library.

I am so proud of Stanton Library as a public and community resource.

# PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The Library and Historical Services Strategy 2022-2027 sets out how library services in North Sydney will evolve and grow over the next five years.

The plan describes the priorities for our library service, strategies for future development, and initiatives and actions that the library will pursue in delivering these objectives.

The strategy is structured around three core focus areas, driven by the values and direction of the North Sydney Vision 2040, and grounded in insights gathered during community consultation conducted from 2020-2022.

Council and the library leadership team believe in delivering high quality, best practice Library and Historical Services which reflect the values, needs and aspirations of our diverse community.

# 1 INCLUSIVE, RESPONSIVE & FLEXIBLE

Our community needs more responsive library spaces that support their diverse and evolving study, work, social and recreational needs.

Our library spaces are safe and inclusive, and reflect local cultures, histories and languages. We consult and listen to our customers.

Our services are responsive, proactive and can adapt to the changing needs of our community.

Our services are accessible and community driven to best support diverse communities.

## STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

**1.1** Manage and expand flexible library spaces to support the changing work, study and recreational needs of our community.

- Review seating and reading options throughout the library and implement changes to improve customer experience.
- Seek opportunities to expand available library spaces and advocate for library spaces in new developments and plans.
- Refresh and refurbish existing library spaces.
- Research and develop a new Library Masterplan.

**1.2** Support user self-sufficiency in accessing resources and utilising services.

 – Develop user-friendly instructional material to support accessing library online resources and services.
 – Implement online, self service payments through the library catalogue and app.
 – Provide training opportunities for customers in accessing library resources and technology
 – Review signage and wayfinding throughout the library and deliver improvements. Provide aides to customers in navigating spaces and locating material.
 – Implement enhancements and improvements to the library catalogue search experience.

**1.3** Pursue initiatives that demonstrate the library's commitment to diversity, cultural safety, access and inclusion.

 – Deliver an ongoing program of staff training to increase knowledge and skills in creating culturally safe, accessible and inclusive library spaces.
 – Work with the SLNSW Indigenous Spaces in Library Places strategic objectives to build culturally sensitive services for First Nations communities in North Sydney.
 – Build diversity across all library collections through continued assessment and targeted purchasing.
 – Utilise strategic cataloguing to increase findability of diverse authors and subjects in the collection.
 – Ensure appropriate language is used to catalogue diverse material.

**1.4** Increase digitisation and improve online access and engagement with the library's extensive historical and research collections.

 – Develop a detailed plan and roadmap for digitisation of core research and historical material.
 – Develop staff skills in digitisation and digital asset management.
 – Prepare for implementation of a consolidated digital asset management system.

STANTON LIBRARY

# 2 *READING, LEARNING & SHARING STORIES*

Our community trust the library, and value the expertise of staff. They seek out staff curated collections, suggestions and reading lists, and actively engage in book groups, author talks, writing workshops and literacy activities.

We focus on our core strengths and showcase the specialist knowledge and skills of our staff in connecting the community to quality resources and learning opportunities.

Our collections are diverse and responsive to community recreational and learning needs.

We collect and tell the stories of North Sydney and connect our community with the history and culture of our local area.

## STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

**2.1** Provide programs that support literacy, writing and literary engagement for all ages and abilities.

- Connect programs and events with library collections to build engagement and support self-directed learning.
- Develop programs for all ages with a focus on literacy and reading.
- Review and invigorate library book groups to better meet demand.
- Increase staff expertise in new and emerging technologies.
- Provide training and equipment to build digital literacy skills in the community.

**2.2**  Develop and implement a dynamic and varied readers' advisory program.

- Curate targeted content across all resource platforms.
- Develop and publish reading guides and booklists online and in print.
- Utilise the library catalogue tools to provide reading suggestions, booklists and enhanced content.
- Deliver staff training to increase skills reader's advisory delivery to customers.
- Maintain curated collections and identify opportunities for growth.
- Deliver regular, engaging reading content on social media.
- Consult with user groups to create targeted resources and reading guides.

**2.3**  Develop innovative and responsive collections in a range of formats.

- Use evidence-based collection management tools to develop responsive, customer-driven, dynamic collections in all formats.
- Develop STEAM and makerspace collections and pursue opportunities to expand.
- Actively manage eLibrary platforms to maximise value and promotes usage.
- Research trends in library collections and investigate opportunities to develop new collections.

**2.4**  Collect, curate and share stories of North Sydney's history and people across a range of platforms, both in person and online.

- Develop curated exhibition and interpretive content to be shared in Heritage Centre displays and through online platforms.
- Develop a range of programs that connect the community to the rich history of the local area and the resources of the Heritage Centre.
- Use digital technology to enhance awareness of the Heritage Centre collections and increase community engagement.
- Provide interpretive information on signs and plaques at historic sites.
- Seek opportunities to share local stories through social media, local news and partner groups.

# 3 OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT & ACCESS

Our community needs to understand more about the library and the services we provide.

We encourage more people who live, work and study in North Sydney to benefit from access to library services.

We connect with people in the spaces they inhabit, both online and in the broader community.

Access to library resources and services is flexible and convenient to ensure a customer-centred experience.

## STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

**3.1** Develop and deliver initiatives that increase access and engagement with library services across the LGA.

- Support educational outcomes and encourage reading by developing relationships with local schools and teachers.
- Research and present a proposal for increased neighbourhood access points through book lockers, kiosks, collection points and co-location partnerships across North Sydney.
- Develop productive partnerships with community groups, local organisations and across Council.
- Provide expanded delivery and access options for isolated and housebound library users.
- Build on partnerships with community centres and aged care facilities to support library use and investigate opportunities for joint services.

**3.2** Implement targeted promotional and marketing campaigns to increase awareness and engagement with library services.

- Deliver targeted membership incentives that encourage residents, workers and students to join and use the library.
- Implement the new Library logo and branding for all promotional material.
- Develop a social media plan.
- Develop engaging and original content to build audiences and engagement across social media platforms.
- Explore marketing opportunities that broaden the promotional reach of the library.

**3.3** Develop a broad program schedule that encourages increased participation and builds new audiences for Library activities.

- Offer hybrid delivery of programs, with flexibility to attend in-person, online, via streaming or accessing post-event recordings.
- Offer increased programming on evenings and weekends.
- Develop public programs and activities to support cultural celebrations and festivals in the community.
- Provide activities and resources to support wellbeing, mental health and community connection.
- Increase inclusion in programming through accessibility features such as closed captioning and Auslan translations.

**3.4** Implement a range of engagement methods to seek community feedback on planning and service delivery.

- Deliver a bi-annual Library survey, and report back to the community on results and findings.
- Implement a range of formal and informal engagement methods to seek community feedback and suggestions.
- Develop and implement a formal evaluation plan for all programs to measure impact, effectiveness and engagement, and build continual improvement in program delivery.
- Collaborate with external community organisations and groups to gain feedback and inform planning that attracts potential new members.