

### **3.1. The Sydney Library of Things Progress Report**

**AUTHOR:** Danielle Birkbeck, A/Manager Environmental Services

**ENDORSED BY:** Marcelo Occhiuzzi, Director Community, Planning and Environment

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. TSLoT infographic July 2023 [3.1.1 - 1 page]

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides an update and overview of The Sydney Library of Things operations, following the end of the trial period in June 2023.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

- The *Sydney Library of Things* (TSLoT) began operations at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in November 2021. It provides a volunteer run library of tools and other household equipment that may be borrowed by members of the community. The trial period ran from November 2021 through to June 2023.
- There are currently 25 volunteers and 96 memberships to the library.
- There are 277 items that can be borrowed, and 755 loans have been made over the trial period.
- It is anticipated that the lease for Workshop 2 at the Coal Loader be extended for a further 2 years following Council approval.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial implications are minor and are funded through Council's allocated Coal Loader or Property budgets depending on the nature of the request.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** that the report on the *Sydney Library of Things* is received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment

1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

1.4 Well utilised open space and recreational facilities

### **4. Our Social Vitality**

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

## **BACKGROUND**

In February 2021, Council endorsed the establishment of a volunteer run, not for profit, community tool library also known as a library of things. These libraries operate much like traditional libraries; however, members can borrow items such as power drills, sewing machines, electric whipper snippers, party catering kits, camping equipment, marquees and much more. The libraries aim to reduce the purchase of new but often rarely used items in the local community, promote the share economy and in turn reduce resource use and eventual waste to landfill.

As a result, The Sydney Library of Things (TSLot) was established at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability, with the view to open in July 2021. However, COVID lockdowns in the second half of 2021, meant that opening was delayed until November of that year.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

As a not-for-profit community group, TSLot is administered and operated solely by volunteers. The group currently has 25 volunteers who fulfil several roles including maintenance, inventory, volunteer training and operations. There are currently 96 active memberships which is just short of their target 100 and it is hoped to increase over the next year.

There are currently 277 items that can be borrowed and since opening, 755 loans have been made. Table 1 below shows the top 10 most borrowed items. Further statistics are provided in the infographic in Attachment 1.

Table 1. Top 10 most borrowed items

Item	Category	Loans
Hedger	Electric Hedge Trimmer	24
Food Dehydrator	Canning, Preserving, Homebrew	18
Extension cord – 18.5m for indoor/outdoor use	Extension Cords	17
Water pressure washer	Pressure Washers	14
Room Dehumidifier	Appliances	13
Triangle Sander	Sanders and Planers	13
Gazebo 3m x 3m	Canopies	13
Ice cream Maker	Appliances	12
Bunting – Red, Blue, and White	Party and Events	12
Bunting - Yellow	Party and Events	12

TSLoT continues to raise funds through grants, workshops and memberships and are now financially secure with ongoing revenue coming from annual memberships. To date they have secured over \$5,000 in grant funding and have been employed by Council to deliver several workshops as part of the Green Events program.

Leveraging the skills of the volunteers and showcasing the items available to borrow has been a win-win for both Council and the group as we demonstrate closed loop and share economy focused sustainable living to our residents. TSLoT have delivered four workshops for Council over the last 18 months, focusing on sustainable food and food waste to over 100 North Sydney residents.

The group has implemented a communications and marketing campaign which has resulted in 432 newsletter subscribers. This includes a monthly e-newsletter and presence on social media channels. Social media presence continues to increase with 3,426 on Facebook and 1,104 followers on Instagram.

Due to the success of TSLoT at the Coal Loader, other Councils have now expressed interest in establishing a library of things in their Local Government Area. TSLoT are currently in discussions with the Councils of Lane Cove, Randwick and Hunters Hill and partnerships have become a key part of the TSLoT business model to ensure financial sustainability for the group.

The success of the TSLoT trial at the Coal Loader is evident through the comments from members.

*‘We borrowed a leaf vacuum, and it worked very well. So glad we could borrow it instead of buying it because we don’t use it often. Will definitely borrow other things in the future as it’s very convenient. The volunteers are super friendly and helpful, the website and the booking system are easy to use. Library of Things is such a great concept to live environmentally friendly ‘*

*'The Sydney Library of Things is a great local resource for all those things you need occasionally but don't want or need to buy. We've borrowed the reusable partyware for several kids' parties, fishing rods for our Scout group, the cake stand for Mother's Day, and the paper shredder for some admin. It's a fantastic initiative that is helping to reduce consumption and waste!'*

*'Borrowed outdoor gas heater for a winter party along with fairy lights and champagne glasses. Was fantastic service, easy pick up. Gorgeous volunteers. Highly recommend joining the library!'*

*'The library has everything I need. Great service and easy to book. I can save space, money, and care about the environment. Why buy when you can borrow?'*

*'Borrowed an air Mattress for a camping trip. Had a great few nights sleep. Worked perfectly and saved me a few bucks too. Great service as always. Cheers Guys.'*

*'This is such a great resource. We borrowed the party set which contained a setting for 25. Our guests were very happy not to be using disposable party items. The box contained good quality plastic plates, tumblers, wine glasses (plastic) and metal utensils (knives, forks, and spoons). Will definitely borrow again.'*

*'Fantastic initiative and well worth the small membership fee. All equipment in good working order and friendly volunteers.'*

*'Amazing resource. Have used several items already including tools, gurney and hedge trimmer, dehumidifier, and camping gear. Every council should have this available.'*

## **Future Direction**

Throughout the trial period, TSLoT has proven to be a successful model of a volunteer led, not for profit community resource that promotes key themes of sustainability including the share economy, waste reduction and community connectedness.

The initial trial period for TSLoT at the Coal Loader ended in June 2023, and a new lease agreement is now needed. A further report will be presented to Council, after which, it is anticipated that the lease for Workshop 2 at the Coal Loader may be extended for a further 2 years with options to extend (in keeping with the lease terms of other Council owned facilities).

## THE SYDNEY LIBRARY OF THINGS: JANUARY 2022 - JUNE 2023



### 25 volunteers

Volunteers fill a variety of roles from executive committee, maintenance, IT & fundraising to front desk support.

### 96 members

Of these, 36 are annual memberships which guarantees on-going income.



### 277 loan items

Items include garden tools, kitchen items, power tools, camping gear, games and puzzles.

### 755 loans made

Members can borrow 5 items every fortnight for two weeks at a time.



### 8,624 loan days

The number of days that items have been out of the library and being used by members.

### 432 newsletter subscribers

They receive a monthly newsletter containing information about new library items and how to use them.



### 3,426 Facebook followers

In addition to these, TSLot has 3,000 people who 'like' our Facebook page.

### 1,104 Instagram followers

They receive regular posts about TSLot, items that are available and how others are using items.



THE SYDNEY LIBRARY OF THINGS  
AT  
THE COAL LOADER CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

