

YOUR LIBRARY LTD ANNUAL REPORT

Report Author: Manager Community Support
Responsible Officer: Director Communities
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public

SUMMARY

This report presents to Council the first annual report for Your Library Limited since transitioning from Eastern Regional Libraries in June/July of 2023. Your Library Limited supports the three Councils of Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox in provision of library services.

2023-24 has been a complex year that included managing the transition and the tragic loss of their CEO, Joseph Cullen. Despite these hardships Your Library Limited has undertaken a significant body of work supporting education, literacy and connection of the Yarra Ranges communities as well as strengthening its financial position.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the Your Library Limited Annual Report 2023-2024.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

At the 28 June 2022 Council Meeting, Council supported the winding up of the Eastern Regional Library Corporation, the establishment of a new beneficial enterprise 'Your Library Limited', and to transition the collective library services of Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox to Your Library Limited.

At the 27 September 2022 Council Meeting, Council approved the appointment of Cr Jim Child and Cr Andrew Fullagar to the Eastern Regional Library Corporation board until it is wound up and operation of library services transitions to Your Library Ltd.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

The *Local Government Act 2020* required Regional Library Corporations to transition to a Beneficial Enterprise structure within ten (10) years from 1 July 2020. In July of 2023, Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation (ERL) – who provide the library services for Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox Councils, was one of the first regional libraries to transition, becoming Your Library Ltd (YLL).

The creation of a Your Library Limited as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee supported: stronger, well tested governance and legal supports; lower risks to the member Councils; taxation benefits; retention of the deductible gift recipient status; and greater opportunities for grants and philanthropic funding.

In 2023-24, Yarra Ranges Councillor Jim Child was selected as the Chair of the Your Library Board, and Councillor Andrew Fullagar represented Council on the board and the Audit and Risk Committee. They are joined on the Your Library board by Knox Councillor's Susan Laukens and Nicole Seymour, and Maroondah Councillors Linda Handcock and Kylie Spears.

The attached Annual Report discusses the achievements and not insignificant challenges that the new entity – Your Library Limited – has managed in it's first year of existence.

It must be acknowledged that the most significant of these challenges was the sudden passing, in May 2024, of Joseph Cullen, the highly respected, innovative and much-loved CEO of Your Library Limited and the Eastern Regional Library Corporation. Under Joseph's leadership the library services of Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox Councils had developed to be industry leaders in Victoria and highly regarded across the country.

The Your Library board has acknowledged that Joseph had worked tirelessly since the new entity was established and had created a solid foundation for the future. Also acknowledged was the professionalism and resilience of the staff in managing the organisation through this loss and ensuring that the service did not waiver.

Key achievements of Your Library Limited in 2023-24 includes:

- Borrowing rates averaging 7.3 times a year per item compared to other metropolitan libraries' average of 6.6 times a year.
- Average spend per item \$4.20 and per capita \$33.20, compared to \$5.91 per item and \$38.02 per capita for other metropolitan services.
- 23% longer opening hours than the national average.
- 42% more public internet workstations per person than the national average.
- 96% of members surveyed, reporting services as 'good' or 'very good'.
- Developed close working relationships with the Koori Heritage Trust to enhance Aboriginal cultural competencies.
- Developed and delivered a significant number and range of programs connecting and educating the community members of the three member Councils

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Noting this report would not result in any additional financial impacts on Council. The report illustrates that Your Library has strengthened the financial performance in 2023-24 (its first year) than the final year of its predecessor, the Eastern Regional Library.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

The service Your Library Limited supports directly contributes to the Connected and Healthy Communities Key Strategic Activity in the Council Plan.

It also responds to two of the priority areas in the Yarra Ranges Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25. They are:

- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health.
- Improve mental wellbeing and social connections.

RELEVANT LAW

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020 - S330 discusses Council's role in libraries and has the following clauses pertaining to their need to cease within 10 years of the Act being adopted:

- (4) *An existing regional library must be wound up in accordance with section 197G of the [Local Government Act 1989](#) before the expiry of the period of 10 years after the commencement of [section 110](#).*
- (5) *If an existing regional library has not been wound up in accordance with subsection (4), the Minister must appoint a liquidator under section 197G of the [Local Government Act 1989](#) to wind up the existing regional library in accordance with that section.*

This new requirement was the trigger to wind up the Eastern Regional Library Corporation and establish Your Library Limited.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

There are no direct economic impacts from Council considering this report, however Your Library Limited does offer programs that create pathways to more formal learning opportunities in the community.

Social Implications

Libraries, as acknowledged in the Yarra Ranges Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25, are part of the network of facilities in a community that encourages and supports social connectivity and accessibility.

Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications of Council considering this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Your Library Limited is a facility born from the needs for strong library services of three Councils (Yarra Ranges, Knox and Maroondah). The entity is supported through strong collaboration between the three Councils and Your Library Limited.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Your Library Limited was created to support better governance and legal supports to the operations of the library service for the region. It's creation also supported better financial sustainability.

The main risk associated with the Annual Report is reputational if Council were not to endorse the document. The control for this risk is the involvement of two Yarra Ranges Councillors on the board, supporting and considering the quality and transparency of the resulting service offering.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Your Library Limited Annual Report 2023-2024