

## City of Wollongong: Developing a Learning City (April 2021)

### Introduction

The City of Wollongong is a Local Government Area (LGA) in the Illawarra region about 80km south of Sydney. Wollongong is the third-largest city in New South Wales and is bordered by an escarpment to the west, the ocean to the east and Lake Illawarra to the south. Wollongong was originally inhabited by the Dharawal people and today is home to nearly a quarter of a million people.

According to the 2016 ABS Census Data and REMPLAN used as a basis for the ***Our Wollongong 2028 Community Strategic Plan***:

- There were 5,346 people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, representing 2.6% of the total population.
- 20% were born overseas in countries like the UK, China, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy and New Zealand.
- 78% of the population only spoke English at home.
- The median age of the population was approximately 39 years and the city's population is ageing with consistent growth in the proportion of people aged 50 years and over.
- Wollongong's employment rate continued to be above the state average at 5.7% compared with 4.8% for New South Wales.
- 21.3% of households earned a high household income (\$ 2,555 per week or more) and 29.0% of households earned a low income (\$0 to \$750 per week).
- Approximately three quarters of the people living in Wollongong reported to using a vehicle to travel to work; 5.5% travelled by train; 2% travelled by bus; 3.7% used active transport.
- The median weekly mortgage repayment was \$449 and the median weekly rent payment was \$328 compared to \$456 and \$384 respectively for New South Wales.
- A total of 76.6% of Wollongong's households had broadband internet connection up from 71% IN 2011. This varies across suburbs from a low of 55 to a high of 88.4%.

In addition, according to the ***2016 Census QuickStats***:

- Of people aged 15 and over, 13.1% reported having completed Year 12 as their highest level of educational attainment, 19.3% had completed a Certificate III or IV, 8.8% had completed an Advanced Diploma or Diploma and 17.4% had completed a Bachelor Degree level and above.
- Of the employed people in Wollongong, 4.3% worked in Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals), 2.7% in Aged Care Residential Services, 2.7% in Higher Education, 2.5% in Supermarket and Grocery Stores and 2.5% in Iron Smelting and Steel Manufacturing.

### Key Challenges

The ***Our Wollongong 2028 Discussion Paper*** identified ten key issues and challenges facing Wollongong over the next ten years including the economy, population growth and climate change; in response to the discussion paper, the community identified similar challenges like financial

sustainability, population growth and management, and environment, climate change, waste management and renewable energy.

Common themes identified and considered in the development of the ***Our Wollongong 2028 Strategic Plan***: were ensuring appropriate levels of development in the city centre and near beaches; urban greening; increasing employment opportunities for local residents with an emphasis on youth employment; housing affordability; traffic, reducing congestion, and improving public transport; parking, including cost and availability in the city centre; ensuring green spaces; protecting our local environment; and impacts of climate change.

What are the key challenges that Wollongong can address through a Learning City Strategy from 2022 – 2028?

As of April 2021, this is undetermined - the Learning City Project will work with internal and external learning partners and the broader community to identify the key issues that can be addressed through lifelong learning; an action plan will be developed accordingly.

### Formal and Non-formal Learning Infra-structure

Wollongong LGA boasts a broad array of formal and informal learning infrastructure.

- Formal education is available through the KU preschools, the University of Wollongong, Wollongong TAFE and the University of the Third Age, to name but a few.
- Informally, learning is offered through Wollongong City Council's broad range of programs such as Baby Bookworms, Toddler Time, Lego Club, book clubs and Knit, Stitch and Yarn. There are also number community groups supporting learning in the community such as SCARF's L2P Driving Mentoring Program supporting refugees to obtain their P-Plate license.

As of April 2021, the full breadth of learning assets in the Wollongong LGA is unknown. A comprehensive mapping project will be completed by the middle of 2022.

### Learning City Developments

Wollongong City Libraries (WCL) plays a core role in delivering on Wollongong City Council's commitment to creating a community that is informed, engaged, creative and connected. WCL is now driving an innovative project to establish Wollongong as a Learning City; as such, it is currently addressing the three fundamental conditions for building a learning city, as per the Framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities in the UNESCO Guiding Documents.

At present, this involves establishing the governance with lifelong learning stakeholders across the organisation to map existing resources, identify gaps and develop a draft action plan. It is understood that Wollongong City Council needs to lay the groundwork internally before going out to the community. Phase 1 of the Learning City Project focuses on three objectives for 2021-22:

#### **Objective 1:** Governance for the Learning City Project (LCP) established

##### 1.1. LCP 2021-22 Project Control Group with representatives from relevant teams formed:

- a) Agree upon a definition of learning;
- b) Conduct an audit of Wollongong City Council learning assets and identify gaps;
- c) Support the development of a draft Learning City Action Plan based on UNESCO and Australian Learning Community Network frameworks and resources;
- d) Support the development of an internal engagement plan and community engagement plan;
- e) Consider hosting Wollongong's first learning celebration which will include Wollongong's first Learning City community forum;
- f) Advise on 2022 action priorities and future LCP working groups/committees.

##### 1.2. LCP 2021-22 Steering Committee established with managers from relevant divisions formed:

- a) Provide the strategic direction for the LCP 2021 Project Control Group
- b) Support the development of a draft Learning City Project Action Plan;
- c) Support the development of an internal engagement plan and community engagement plan;
- d) Advise on 2022 action priorities and future LCP working groups/committees.

**Objective 2:** Map of existing WCC Learning Assets drafted; Internal engagement plan developed, approved and implemented; 2022 community engagement plan drafted and approved.

**Objective 3:** Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN) – *a national network of leading-edge practitioners building sustainable communities using learning as the key element* – actively engaged with through executive committee membership.

Phase 2 of the Learning City Project will be determined at the end of phase 1; it is likely to focus on community engagement.

### Key Activities in the Learning City Field

There is a plethora of activities across the Wollongong LGA that support lifelong learning. As of April 2021, these activities have not been mapped and these learning resources have not yet been mobilised. This will be a key focus of the Learning City Project team in 2021 and 2022.

### Key Priority Areas for Future Development

Wollongong is committed to driving innovation and creating a community that is informed, engaged, creative and connected. Its key priority area for 2021 and 2022 is to lay a solid foundation for a learning city and:

- take stock of what its already doing to support lifelong learning in the community both formally and informally;
- identify the synergies between its emerging Learning City goals and existing strategic plans;
- develop a draft vision and action plan; and
- actively engage in the Australian Learning Community Network.

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Wriggle and Jiggle at Wollongong Library

<https://allevents.in/wollongong/wriggle-and-jiggle-wollongong-library/10000139606473721?ref=cano-rd-params>



Wollongong Library Study and Homework Support

<https://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/learn/study-and-homework>



Knit Stich & Yarn

<https://wollongong.nsw.gov.au/whats-on/news-and-alerts/news/news/2020/november-2020/library-program-proves-theres-no-such-thing-as-too-much-yarn>