



Australian Learning
Communities Network Inc.
(ALCN)



Incorporated in NSW.

No: 9883167

Australian Registered Body No
113 273 859

Annual Report
2024-2025

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Introduction:

This Annual Report summarizes the work of ALCN Inc. and our place-based learning cities and learning communities over the period May 2024 until May 2025.

The ALCN is incredibly proud that our members include all four Australian UNESCO Learning Cities members – the City of Canning in Western Australia, Circular Head Council in Tasmania, the cities of Melton and Wyndham in Victoria. In fact, all our members demonstrate the values and key principles of the UNESCO Learning Cities framework throughout their work. Our practitioners create programs and activities within their place-based learning cities and learning communities that are ‘people centered’ and ‘action oriented’. They contribute to building sustainable communities using lifelong learning programs across all life stages. The UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning says that learning cities create local action to contribute to global goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, for example, SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and UN SDG 11 – “sustainable cities and communities.”

One of my main objectives as Hon. CEO of the ALCN has been to gather stories and evidence of the incredible lifelong learning work that our practitioners implement. I have written six Ripples Newsletters, helped to coordinate numerous online Learning Forums and Two Webinars (with external partners). Topics covered include learning festivals, principles of good governance, leadership to create community impact, learning needs analysis, and climate resilience, sustainability and regeneration. We also highlighted updates on the learning city journeys of Wollongong, NSW, and Circular Head, Tasmania. The topics chosen came from our members and we wrote reflective summary notes and shared resources, thus modelling an action learning/reflexive approach to our own work.

ALCN members were active on the international stage. For example, Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Learning Communities, Wyndham City Council and ALCN Chair, was a panelist at the Sustainable Learning Cities International Forum in Icheon, South Korea, showcasing Wyndham's Green Living Services and other sustainability projects. Leone Wheeler presented case studies and examples of Australian learning cities and Learning Communities at ASEAN + 3 Regional Learning Cities Conference in Bangkok, Thailand and was invited to present about integrated lifelong learning and sustainability to a Virtual meeting of the North American Alliance of Learning Cities (NAALC). Members also contributed to PASCAL International Observatory's Learning Cities Network (LCN).

Full details of the incredible work of some of our members are highlighted in a detailed Appendix. Read about Melton's revamped Online Learning Directory, a case study on Circular Head as a regional and rural UNESCO Learning City, Tamworth Regional Council's Cultural Plan, the City of Canning becoming a more Dementia Friendly City, PAE's vision to become a *Welcoming Liveable City: Made by People*, Ballarat's STEM program, Wollongong's journey to develop a Learning City Strategy for 2025-2029, the initiatives in Brimbank to support all life stages with learning and community development, and Wyndham's incredible summary of achievements in addressing actions in the Learning Community Strategy 2024-2025. Themes woven throughout the Appendix highlight inclusion, reconciliation with our First Nation people, intergenerational learning, the celebration of learning, literacy programs, multicultural activities, revamped learning infrastructure, workplace learning and the list goes on.

ALCN Inc. welcomes feedback on this Final Report, and please continue to send further contributions highlighting your incredible work which we will include in our newsletters. Please contact alcn@bigpond.com.

Dr. Leone Wheeler, Hon. CEO, ALCN

Executive Appointments

In accordance with decisions of the 2024 AGM held on 28 May 2024, the following members were appointed for a two-year appointment from June 2024 until June 2026.

- Dianne Hillier was appointed Treasurer to formerly replace Jim Saleeba.
- Joanne Lockwood representing the City of Ballarat, was appointed on the ALCN Executive Committee as a rural and regional representative for Victoria.
- Sam Davis, Manager Community Development and Libraries, representing the City of Canning and Western Australia
- Dr Donna Goldie, representing Townsville Citylibraries and Queensland.
- Ms Benita Parsons, representing Port Adelaide Enfield (PAE) representing South Australia.
- Dr Leone Wheeler reappointed in the role of Hon. CEO

Other appointments were:

- Peter Kearns, AM, continued as honorary expert advisor to the Executive.

The Executive and roles for the period May 2024 until May 2025:

Name	Executive position	Additional responsibilities
Dr Leone Wheeler.	Hon. CEO and Secretary	Overall coordination responsibilities and Public officer. Newsletters. Mentoring student intern. Coordinating Webinars.
Diane Tabbagh - Wyndham City Council, Victoria	Chair, Victorian Metropolitan contact. UNESCO GNLC member	Chairing ALCN Executive meetings, mentoring student intern, promoting ALCN. Wyndham also assisted with secretarial duties and Learning Forums.
Dianne Hillier – Wollongong City Council, New South Wales	Treasurer	Reconciling accounts, organising the audit, coordinating term deposits and insurance matters. Contributing to Webinars and newsletters.
Silvia Velez – Melton City Council Victoria	Member, Victorian Metropolitan contact. UNESCO GNLC member.	Contribution to Learning Forums, Webinars and newsletters, Wyndham City Council
Dr Donna Goldie, Townsville City Council, Queensland	Queensland contact.	Contributions to Learning Forums, Webinars, and newsletters.
Sam Davis, City of Canning, Western Australia	Western Australian contact. UNESCO GNLC member	Contributions to Learning Forums, Webinars, and newsletters.
Benita Parsons, Port Adelaide Enfield (PAE), South Australia	South Australian contact	Contributions to Learning Forums, Webinars, and newsletters.
Joanne Lockward, Ballarat City Council, Victoria	Vic rural contact	Contributions to Learning Forums, Webinars, and newsletters.
Kay Delahunt, Tamworth Regional Council, New South Wales	NSW rural contact	Local government contact
Peter Kearns, AM	Honorary Role	National and International Learning City Advocate

Notes:

Dianne Hillier, Wollongong City Council, replaced Jim Saleeba as Treasurer. Carina Clement, Team Leader Library and Museum at the Albury City Council, acts as the second signature on all payments. Schnelle Partners, Albury, continues to audit the ALCN annual accounts.

Joanne Lockwood, Ballarat City Council, joined the Executive representing rural and regional Victoria. Sam Davis, City of Canning, Western Australia replaced Ben Armstrong, A/Service Lead Community Learning and Capacity.

The Executive meets bi-monthly via Microsoft Teams and or Zoom. Thank you to Sharyn Wheatcroft, Wyndham for secretarial support to the Executive Committee.

Privacy

The Executive is conscious of the privacy issues affecting members. So, to avoid confusion that can arise with ease of electronic communication, circulation to and the point of contact for members is restricted to:

- Leone Wheeler – for issues affecting the membership.
- Those Executive members listed above.

Members' details are distributed only after expressed consent of members.

Welcome

In 2024 we welcomed new members from Circular Head in Tasmania - Ms Nicky Bolt, former Regional Manager for Study Hub West Coast and Tony McGillvery, Manager, Study Centre Circular Head. We also look forward to working with Amber Power, Connected Communities Officer and Kate Grey, 26Ten Community Coordinator from Circular Head Council.

Advocacy

ALCN Inc. will meet with or make representations to parliamentarians, State Authorities, or key agencies to argue for recognition of and support for the work of learning communities and learning cities throughout Australia and internationally. In 2023/2024 members of our Executive were involved in promoting learning communities and learning cities locally, nationally, and internationally (Refer to the Appendix).

In 2024 Executive Members:

- Coordinated two professional development Webinars –. *(Refer to Research and Publication section for details on partners and topics)*
- Coordinated the LearnWest *Lifelong Learning Stories* – (Wyndham City Council, Melton City Council).
- Continued as active members of UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) – Wyndham, Melton, Canning, and Circular Head.
- Liaised with Adult Learning Australia on one Webinar.
- Coordinated a student internship as a partnership with RMIT University, Wyndham City Council and ALCN.
- Played an important role in contributing significant content and Webinars for PASCAL International Observatory and the UNESCO GNLC.

Information Clearing House on Learning Cities and Learning Communities

The ALCN website (alcn.com.au) and Facebook page (@aus.alcn) are the organisation’s main clearing house with information about learning cities, links to the learning community strategies, stories, evaluation tools and research of our partners.

We thank Andrew Williamson, our web and host manager, for continued generous assistance with the site.

Communication

The main method of communication is through our newsletter entitled “Ripples” which is sent to our members, posted on Facebook, and when available the PASCAL International Observatory Website.

The newsletter is the main way we communicate with our membership. Six Ripple Newsletters were sent out in the past year (May 2024-May 2025). The newsletters contain stories about our learning communities; notices of events; reviews; articles of interest; updates from UNESCO’s Global Network of Learning Cities; Adult Learning Australia and PASCAL International Observatory. Archived copies of these newsletters can be accessed [here](#).

Research/Publications/Webinars

This year the focus continued to be on professional development of our members through 1) the ALCN Learning Forums, 2) our externally available Webinars and 3) promoting opportunities to present at relevant national and international conferences on lifelong learning, learning cities and learning communities.

The ALCN Executive developed an ALCN Conference funding plan and selection criteria, which is aimed at subsidising one or two members per annum to present and report back to the ALCN on relevant lifelong learning/learning city conferences. This professional development scheme is available to paid up members throughout the year and a copy can be requested by emailing alcn@bigpond.com.

ALCN Learning Forums

The ALCN Learning Forum is a collaborative and informal platform where practitioners come together to share experiences and insights. We encourage everyone to actively participate by reflecting on the presentations, asking questions, and sharing members’ own experiences. During the 2024-2025 period the Learning Forums were organised jointly by Sharyn Wheatcroft, Wyndham City Council and Leone Wheeler Hon. Chair ALCN and included:

- ALCN Learning Forum - 23 February 2024. **Wollongong – a Learning City Journey – the challenge of picking up a project mid-stream.** Presented by Dianne Hillier, Learning City Project Leader. A full report is available in [Ripples April 2024](#).
- ALCN Learning Forum - 21 March 2024. **Governance Framework for Partnerships.** Presenters were Dr Leone Wheeler, Hon. CEO ALCN, on **The Principles of Good Governance**; Ms Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Community Learning, Wyndham City Council, on **Adaptability of Governance Structures – Lessons from the Field** and Dr Jenny Thompson, Senior Consultant at the University of Newcastle’s Institute for Regional Futures, reflecting on the session. A full report is available in [Ripples April 2024](#).

- ALCN AGM - 28 May 2024. ***From Self-Discovery to Community Impact*** - a dynamic Leadership development session led by Martin Probst, CEO Chief Education Officer at [PROfound leadership](#). ALCN AGM. A copy of Martin's presentation is available [here](#).
- 10 October 2024. ***Community/Learning Needs Analysis*** – an informal discussion on community/learning needs analysis chaired by Joanne Lockwood, Coordinator Ballarat Library & Learning. A report on this forum is available in [Ripples December 2024](#) and a summary of discussion [here](#).
- ALCN Learning Forum – 20 February 2025. ***Circular Head – UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities*** – presented by Tony McGillvery, Manager, Study Centre, Circular Head. Tony's presentation is available [here](#) and a background paper about Circular Head is available [here](#).
- ALCN Learning Forum – 28 March 2025. ***Capturing the Learner's Voice & Supporting Lifelong Learning Pathways*** – presented by Sharyn Wheatcroft, Learning Community Officer, Wyndham City Council. Summary notes are available [here](#) and Sharyn's presentation [here](#).

ALCN Webinars

The ALCN Webinars are externally focussed and are usually a collaboration with national and/or international partners. This year we partnered with Wyndham City Council, Port Adelaide Enfield Council, PASCAL International Observatory, Adult Learning Australia, RMIT University

- Wyndham City Council and ALCN, 18 July 2024, ***Learning Festivals Webinar***.

A panel of speakers from Cork and Limerick (Republic of Ireland), Wyndham (Australia), and Durban (South Africa) – members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, and the PASCAL International Observatory's Learning Cities Networks – shared over 28 years collective experiences of hosting Learning Festivals.

Moderated by Adult Learning Australia, and with an opening address from Professor Mark Rob, PASCAL International Observatory, this webinar aimed to facilitate learning and the exchange of experiences among learning cities. The Webinar is available under the Australian Learning Cities Network tag at <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/wyndham-learning-city/learning-city-resources>.

As a result of the tremendous interest generated internationally by this topic, Diane Tabbagh from Wyndham City Council is coordinating a series of informal online meetings with learning city practitioners who run learning festivals to share ideas and resources.

- Port Adelaide Enfield and ALCN, 24 October 2024, ***Climate Resilience, Sustainability and Regeneration – Community Education and Action Webinar***.

The forum showcased the practical Education for Sustainability (EfS) work of the UNESCO Learning City of Melton, Victoria, alongside initiatives from Port Adelaide Enfield (PAE) and the *Living Lightly Locally* project in South Australia, which partnered with the Burnside and Mount Barker Councils.

Presenters:

- Silvia Velez, Lifelong Learning Projects Officer, Melton City Council on ***'The role of libraries in promoting environmental literacy – reflections on the 2024 Melton Learning Festival'***

- Dr Keri Hopeward, Uni SA Researcher - '**Living Lightly Locally: Smarter and Stronger through Citizen Science**'
- Benita Parsons, Community Learning Leader (Libraries) PAE - '**Climate resilience projects at PAE Libraries - Gen Green and Council collaborations**'
- A **Mentimeter Evaluation** session was coordinated by Kashish Chopra, RMIT University International Development Masters student.

Resources are available at <https://alcn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/ALCN-Climate-Resilience-Sustainability-and-Regeneration-Forum-2024-10-24.pdf>

International Conference Presentations

Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Community Learning, Community Learning, Libraries and Learning, Wyndham City Council and ALCN Chair, 11-12 September 2024. **Sharing experiences of sustainable development projects delivered in Wyndham**. Incheon, Republic of Korea.

The mayor of UNESCO Learning City Icheon, Republic of Korea (South Korea), invited Wyndham Learning City to attend their **Sustainable Learning Cities International Forum** as a panellist, presenting and sharing experiences of projects delivered in Wyndham and as a member of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) Education for Sustainable Development Cluster.

Wheeler, L., J. Guevara, JR and Tabbagh, D. 4-6 July 2024. **Evolving frameworks to analyse the vital actions of place-based learning cities and learning communities**. Presentation at *17th PASCAL International Conference: New Challenges for Higher Education, Cities and Regions: Addressing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in Changing Contexts 2024*, PASCAL International Observatory: Taipei.

Wheeler, L., 29-30 October 2024. **Successful Strategies of the Networking Activities of Australian Learning Cities and Learning Communities in ASEAN + 3 Regional Learning Cities Conference Bangkok**. 2024: Bangkok.

Dr. Wheeler was honoured to be invited to present at this conference on Successful Strategies of the Networking Activities of Australian Learning Cities and Learning Communities by the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok (UNESCO Bangkok) in collaboration with the Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PUM A) of Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, together with the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) of Thailand; the Ministry of Education; Bangkok Learning City; TK Park and the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD). Read a summary report of the conference [here](#).

Wheeler, L., September 23, 2024, **Integrating Lifelong Learning and Sustainability: Connecting Urban & Rural**. Presentation to the Virtual Meeting of the North American Alliance of Learning Cities (NAALC) in collaboration with the Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organisations (COLLO) on Building, Maintaining, Sustaining: Vision and Partnerships in Learning Cities.

Story Template

The ALCN, has developed a story template to guide our practitioners in the writing of stories for the network. If you are interested in submitting a story using one of our templates, please contact Leone Wheeler – alcn@bigpond.com.

Examples of Learning City Profiles on the ALCN website:

The City of Ballarat, Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://alcn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Ballarat-Profile-for-ALCN.pdf
Circular Head, Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://alcn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Circular-Head-Case-Study_updated-1.pdf
Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://alcn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/PAE-Profile-for-Learning-Cities.pdf
Tamworth Regional Council, New South Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://alcn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ALCN-Tamworth-Profile20_2_2023.pdf

Good Practice Examples of Australian Learning City/Learning Community Practices, Plans and Policies

This table illustrates current good practice examples of Learning City/Learning Community plans. The city of Ballarat updated its strategy in 2022, Brimbank in 2023, and Wyndham and Tamworth in 2024.

The City of Ballarat, Vic	The City of Ballarat Libraries and Learning Strategy 2022-2027
Brimbank City Council, Vic	Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2024-2029
The City of Canning, WA	Learning City Strategy 2020-2024
Tamworth Regional Council, NSW.	Tamworth Regional Cultural Plan 2024-2029
Wyndham City Council, Vic	2024-2029 Learning Community Strategy

Networks

Regional Networks

The ALCN encourages the formation of regional learning networks. These networks can support and share ideas and resources locally.

A good example of a cross-Council Network is *Learn West* which meets regularly to share knowledge. Its membership includes Maribyrnong; Wyndham; Brimbank; Melton; Hobsons Bay; Darebin; Maribyrnong; and Hume.

Adult Learning Australia

ALCN Inc. and ALA continue to collaborate on matters to do with the promotion of lifelong learning throughout Australia. Last year, Jenny Macaffer, CEO of Adult Learning Australia, moderated our international webinar on Learning Festivals. We congratulate ALA on its 65th anniversary in 2025 and look forward to further collaboration in the coming years.

Working with RMIT University International Development Students

Since 2020, the ALCN and Wyndham City Council have had the opportunity to work with five students as part of RMIT University's International Development internship programme and these students have made a real contribution to our work and added a richness by helping us gather impactful stories about lifelong learning in Wyndham and across the ALCN.

In 2024 Kashish Chopra as part of her Masters in Global Studies at RMIT University, undertook her placement with us from July until November. Kashish came to us with a considerable international development experience in India and used this expertise in working with the Community Learning Team at Wyndham City Council. With support from Diane Tabbagh and Sharyn Wheatcroft she wrote several lifelong learning stories about local Wyndham residents, assisted with a significant Wyntalk presented by Uncle Charles Pakana – about the journey to reconciliation; contributed to several Wyndham Learning Festival events, including evaluation and a final report. Kashish also wrote an article highlighting Wyndham's celebration of lifelong learning and focuses on how global ideas such as the learning neighbourhood are applied in Wyndham. We thank Kashish for her tireless efforts and wish her well with her future career.

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

ALCN Inc. supports **UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)** and promotes the GNLC newsletters and webinars to our members. Australia has four local government areas that are members of the GNLC, including the City of Melton, and the City of Wyndham in Victoria, Circular Head in Tasmania, and the City of Canning in Western Australia.

Following an invitation of the Mayor of Incheon, the Republic of Korea, to Wyndham Learning City, Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Community Learning, Community Learning, Libraries and Learning, Wyndham City Council and ALCN Chair, presented on Wyndham's sustainable development projects at a Sustainable Learning Cities International Forum, Incheon, 11-12 September 2024.

As noted above, Dr Leone Wheeler was invited to present at the ASEAN+3 Regional Learning Cities Conference, 29-30 October 2024, Bangkok, Thailand, on *Successful Strategies of the Networking Activities of Australian Learning Cities and Learning Communities*.

PASCAL International Observatory

ALCN Inc. is a member of this international network, and this has enabled individual members to keep abreast of developments in other parts of the world.

Associate Professor Roberto Guevara, RMIT University, presented on behalf of Leone Wheeler and Diane Tabbagh, at the 17th *PASCAL International Conference: New Challenges for Higher Education, Cities and Regions: Addressing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* held in Taipei on 4-6 July 2024.

Leone Wheeler is a former Board member of the PASCAL International Observatory and coordinates the PASCAL Learning City Network (LCN) on *Urban-Rural Learning Initiatives* group. Gwydir Learning Region, the City of Ballarat and Tamworth Regional Council participate in this group.

Leone Wheeler, ALCN and Sharyn Wheatcroft, Wyndham are active participant of the PASCAL LCN group *Reimagining Economic Futures*.

PASCAL International Observatory also supports other initiatives, for example, the successful Learning Festival Webinar.

Membership Funds

These funds were audited through the certificated auditor. This financial statement is recommended by the Executive for approval by members at the Annual General Meeting. The statement is then circulated to members.

The ALCN is required to provide an annual summary of financial affairs (Tier 2) to the NSW Office of Fair Trading 30 days after our AGM.

This report was compiled by the Executive for circulation prior to a motion of acceptance at the Annual General Meeting of the ALCN. Financial Statements are tabled at the AGM and are available to members upon request.

Appendix: A Snapshot Sample of Australian Learning City Achievements 2024 Calendar Year

The following is a snapshot of some of our learning cities and communities report on their activities for the 2024 calendar year.

1. Ballarat City Council

Written by Joanne Lockwood, Coordinator Ballarat Library and Learning.

Learning in the City of Ballarat

The City of Ballarat Libraries and Lifelong Learning business unit has been focused for the last 4 years on delivering on the Libraries and Learning Strategy 2022-2027. One of the major goals within this plan was the redevelopment and re-opening of the central Ballarat Library, the largest of 3 library branches within the LGA. This project had been many years in the planning, with the building and construction phase taking approximately 15 months. During this time the central branch was closed and a much smaller pop-up library operated from the Ballarat Town Hall. The central branch re-opened in late March 2024 and has now been operating for over 12 months.

In that time the library has added 6000+ new members bring library membership to approximately 40% of the Ballarat population. The redevelopment has allowed the Libraries and Lifelong Learning team to expand and diversify learning programs for audiences of all ages.

The large, dedicated children's area allows for large events which have included pop-up museum programs in partnership with Melbourne Museum which saw more than 400 people attend, as well as the continuation of a highly successful children literacy program, Bulldogs Read, with 150 participating students across 10 primary schools. This program, a partnership between City of Ballarat and Western Bulldogs Football Club, is now in its 10th year and has been highly successful with school reporting increased literacy skills and confidence in students enrolled in the program.

The inclusion of a dedicated Maker Space has seen learning programs diversify into the sphere of creative technology. Community members are invited to complete an induction of the space and then have free use of the equipment during opening hours, with a community of makers developing among Maker Space users. We also launched the Try One Thing campaign to encourage community members to get out of their comfort zone and try learning one new skill, technology or program. The popularity of the Maker Space and other digital and creative technology programs have to led to recruitment and training for staff in order to expand what we can offer to the community. This will be a focus of the next 12 months.

In addition to the re-opening of Ballarat Library, the Libraries and Lifelong Learning team has taken over the management of one existing community hub and one brand new community hub, both located in the Western Growth zone in Ballarat. These community hubs offer co-located services including Maternal and Child Health and Kindergartens as well as providing a range of no or low-cost learning programs. Partnerships between the City of

Ballarat and several local Neighbourhood Houses has allowed for these programs to be available at a number of locations throughout the city. Over the next three years there will be a further 2-3 community hubs built within the LGA.

The Libraries and Lifelong Learning team have focused on developing strong partnerships with individuals, groups and organisations both in Ballarat and more broadly across Victoria to establish opportunities and programs for our community in areas of need. One example of this is the grant that Geelong-based STEM company, The Brainary, won in partnership with Ballarat Libraries, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative and Ballarat Regional Multi-Cultural Council, to deliver STEM programs for 12-18 year olds. This program specifically targets young people from communities with low representation in STEM careers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse young people, girls and gender diverse young people and those from low socio-economic neighbourhoods. The program will be rolled out to 150 young people across the LGA over the next 12 months and will give young people access to new and emerging technologies and introduce them to a range of STEM careers that they could pursue.

In terms of future development, along with the opening of more community hubs, the City of Ballarat is advocating strongly for funding for a new Wendouree Library. Wendouree is an area with very low socio-economic, employment, health and education outcomes and the existing library, within the local shopping centre, is inadequate for the community it serves. A new, much larger library branch would offer co-located services, a larger library collection, expansive community meeting room and learning spaces, technology and maker space and dedicate areas for child and young adults. This is a long term project and, like the redevelopment of Ballarat Library, will take years to plan, develop and build, but will have an enormous impact on the community.

2. Brimbank, Victoria

Submitted by Silvia Velez, Community Learning Officer, Libraries Unit, Brimbank City Council

2024- 2025 saw the continuation of the **Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2024-2029**.

The following initiatives support the implementation of the **Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2024-2029**, a framework for building better learning outcomes.

The Strategy guided Council actions to improve learning outcomes in Brimbank through a life stage approach with a focus on the following life stages:

- i) Early Years (birth to compulsory school age)
- ii) School Years (compulsory school age 6-16 years)
- iii) Young People (post-compulsory school age, 17 to early adulthood)
- iv) Adults (25 – 60 yeas)
- v) Later Life (60 years and beyond).

Early Years (birth to compulsory school age)

- **Welcome Baby to Country** – in collaboration with the Brimbank Best Start Project Facilitator, 50 children who identify as Aboriginal were invited to a Welcome to Country ceremony where they received a possum skin, gift, bag, certificate, and the book *Welcome to Country*. This project seeks to support early childhood

language, literacy, and numeracy, as well as foster increased engagement from local and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This project also supports the Brimbank Reconciliation Action Plan and provides families with a positive connection to place and community.

- **Raising Readers Project** – 191 vulnerable families from Early Start Kinder community were identified to receive guided library tours and a set of early years resources including books, numeracy pack, wipe and flash cards, and a new library card. This project seeks to reduce access and usage barriers for vulnerable families that might feel intimidated by libraries.
- **Multicultural Story Times** – after successful piloting of the community-led Cantonese story time at the Sunshine Library, the Libraries Early Years team and Learning team have been developing multicultural story times to promote the value of home languages. Pasifika Story and Auslan story times are being delivered as a part of a 4-year funding opportunity.
- **Early childhood literacy programs** – in the year to date, Brimbank Libraries have delivered 578 early literacy programs attended by 21,341 children and families.

School Years (compulsory school age 6-16)

- Hosted **Schools and Community Organisations Exchange Network** professional development focused on supporting young people experiencing Family Violence. The session, organised in collaboration with the team at Good Shepherd, was well attended and the feedback provided proved that educators are empowered with this support. These sessions will continue to be offered biannually.
- **Secondary Schools and Community Organisations Exchange** topic for this year will be addressing online bullying and how to support staying safe online.
- **Capacity and Resilience building** for grade 6 students – students from Harvester Primary School were invited to a workshop for Improving Emotional Intelligence facilitated by Toolbox Education and were also given a tour of Sunshine Library and resources for study support as they enter high school.
- **School Transitions Project** – In response to feedback 7 workshop across 4 local schools were delivered to support grade 6 students to positively transition from primary to secondary school. A special booklet with a range of resources was developed and distributed as part of the workshops, delivered by the Reach Foundation, and was well received.
- The **2025 Study Support Guide** has been maintained and successfully distributed.
- Brimbank Council continued its \$30,000 scholarship grant to Western Chances to enable more Brimbank students to be supported to stay at school and continue to tertiary education. Western Chances support students to stay at school with practical assistance such as transportation costs, IT, textbooks and stationery.
- Brimbank Libraries have delivered 510 learning programs for school aged children, attended by 11,171 participants.

Young People (post-compulsory school age 17-24)

- Strengthen the connection between schools and young people that identify with the **LGBTQIA+** community through IDAHOBIT, Wear it Purple Day, Pride Month and other activities such as art workshops across all

library branches, including a “Pride in the Library Drag Trivia Night” and an art competition inviting submissions from identifying young people.

- Continued collaborations with Lively.org to **facilitate intergenerational digital literacy** workshops for seniors in the CALD community, giving young people work experience and employment readiness. More sessions are planned for 2025 after the successful application of further grant funding.
- In partnership with Brimbank Learning Futures invested in **VR headsets** loaded with interview skills software to give young people virtual experience of interview techniques
- Brimbank Learning Futures in partnership with Libraries and Learning will be delivering a council careers reverse interviews with 50 local year 10 students. Small groups of students rotate through and talk to council staff. The students get the opportunity to ask staff about their role, how they got into this area of work, whether they needed to study and what a typical day looks like. Libraries staff are active with outreach activities during **Careers Week**. Additionally mock interviews will be held for community members to receive interview feedback, learning about interviewing principles such as STAR interview technique.
- Support career-counselling sessions delivered by VU in partnership with Brimbank Learning Futures, focusing on young people with priority needs or facing barriers to learning, with the outcome of young people successfully transitioning to further education or employment.
- Leadership program for 16–21-year-olds to learn foundational management/leadership skills such as budgeting, storytelling, vision setting.
- A program for 15–24-year-olds to learn barbering skills, which has led to employment and self-employment outcomes.
- Monthly micro credential courses for young people and others in the community to gain qualifications to help them find work.
- Brimbank Libraries have delivered 248 learning opportunities attended by 7,227 young people, including study support, wellbeing, and employment support sessions.

Adults (25-60 years)

- **Local Learner Stories** collected to highlight community learning during Adult Learners Week and promote examples of lifelong learners in the community. This project is an ongoing collaboration with the Learn West Network.
- Two 8-week courses of *Your Career Your Way* delivered through Brimbank Learning Futures in partnership with VU Jobs and Skills Centre. The program is designed to help individuals explore their strengths and values, learn from industry experts, and gain the knowledge and skills to become job ready. This program is for women looking to enter or re-enter the workforce.
- Workshops continue to be delivered through Libraries to target **financial literacy** and education to support people to navigate increased cost of living, mortgage stress, and debt. Workshops included ‘Budgeting Basics’, ‘Bills and your money’ and ‘Debt Support’.
- The Makerspace at the Deer Park Library has established as a place where informal, collaborative learning and discovery can take place through hands on creation, via use of a combination of art and technology.

- The newsletter Learning in Brimbank edition #49 was created and sent to 1500 subscribers and will be sent again to promote engagement with lifelong learning opportunities.
- Libraries delivered 799 activities ranging from author talks, wellbeing sessions, English and employment support, creative and digital, AI and Scam awareness, and social activities.

Older adults (60+ years)

- Ongoing intergenerational learning opportunities, including IT Help sessions for older adults which are facilitated by young people trained by Lively.
- Libraries assisted seniors with various online tasks, including will arrangements, email, phone, and laptop use, land tax payments, flight bookings, Ipad help sessions, MyGov, Excel, water bills, police and working with children's checks, and assistance with cyber safety.
- Year to date, Libraries delivered 657 sessions for seniors including wellbeing, social and digital learning sessions.

Broader initiatives that supported the community across all life stages included:

- The 2025 **Brimbank Writers & Readers Festival** encouraged a love of reading and literature, celebrating creativity and diversity, and promoting lifelong learning in Brimbank for all ages and interests. The 10-day festival consisted of workshops, author talks, panel discussions and storytelling including the launch of a magazine by aspiring young writers, a micro fiction competition, an illustration and comedy writing session as well as a very popular grief writing workshop. In partnership with the Community Wellbeing team, Maxine Beneba-Clarke and Alice Pung delivered a lively discussion as part of Harmony Day. The opening event with Kate Ceberano was fully booked and well attended, as was the closing concert by Mitch Tambo. Overall, the engagement grew from last year and the feedback was positive.

3. Canning City Council

- Written by Sam Davis, Manager Community Development and Libraries, City of Canning

Learning Cities Annual Report 2024/2025

Submitted by Sam Davis, Manager Community Development & Libraries, City of Canning

The City of Canning is a proud member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Our Learning City Strategy 2020–2024 continues to provide a strategic framework for building a thriving, inclusive and lifelong learning community.

The existing Learning City Strategy 2020–2024 was extended through a targeted Action Plan that has guided our initiatives throughout 2024/2025, ensuring continuity in the City’s commitment to lifelong learning while a new strategic framework is developed.

We acknowledge that the City of Canning is located on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar - the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation. With 51% of our residents born overseas, we remain committed to creating opportunities for learning, connection and intercultural dialogue for all.

Home to approximately 97,000 people, the City of Canning is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse local government areas in Western Australia. Over 40% of households speak a language other than English at home, and more than 70 different languages are spoken across the community. This diversity enriches our city and underscores the importance of accessible, inclusive, and culturally responsive lifelong learning initiatives.

Intercultural Connection and Learning



Cultural Sharing Events with Victoria Park Centre for the Arts

In partnership with Victoria Park Centre for the Arts, the City delivered four cultural sharing performance events throughout the year. These events, each attended by up to 120 participants, showcased music, dance, spoken word and interactive cultural activities. This series was notably featured in the Indian Ocean Craft Triennial Festival, marking the Festival’s first inclusion of performance art.

AI in Job Seeking and Workplace Program

Delivered at Hillview Intercultural Community Centre by CX Insight, and supported by the Australian Government’s Local Multicultural Projects program, this initiative focused on equipping migrant communities with foundational and advanced AI knowledge. In

collaboration with the Australian Red Cross’s Kaleidoscope Initiative, participants completed training across three key areas: Generative AI Fundamentals, AI in Job Seeking, and AI for Workplace Communication. Participant

feedback highlighted increased confidence and practical skills in applying AI tools, with opportunities identified for longer hands-on sessions and follow-up workshops.

Hillview Intercultural Community Centre

Over 46,000 people visited Hillview during the year, with 1,800+ bookings for community-led learning programs and cultural events. The Centre continues to provide a welcoming, inclusive space where community members share knowledge, celebrate culture and strengthen social connections.

Cultural Ambassador Program

This unique initiative continues to flourish, with eight Cultural Ambassadors actively involved in providing community feedback and delivering grassroots projects. Their engagement helps ensure that City programs are inclusive, responsive and reflective of our multicultural community. The program is attracting national attention as a model for civic engagement.

Becoming a more Dementia Friendly City



With support from a \$15,000 grant from Dementia Australia, the City enhanced its dementia-friendly engagement practices. Information sessions were delivered to over 400 people, including presentations to six culturally and linguistically diverse seniors groups. Interpreters supported sessions in Punjabi, Hindi, Mandarin and Cantonese.

Culturally relevant Memory Bags were co-designed with community groups and made available through the Library of Things. The bags, reflecting Chinese, Indian and Noongar cultures provide valuable

support for carers and families, promoting connection and memory through sensory engagement. Feedback from the Forget Me Not Memory Café and broader community has been overwhelmingly positive.

Lifelong Learning, Libraries and Programming

The City delivered a robust library service in 2024, supporting lifelong learning through:

- 407,300 library visitors
- 567,931 physical item loans
- 1,534 program sessions with 25,776 participants

Highlights included:

- Rhymes and Stories (ages 0–5) – foundational language and literacy
- Earth Day Expo – sustainability education for school-aged children
- Grow Your Money and End of Life workshops – practical adult learning
- One-on-one digital support – tailored tech assistance

- Canning on the Go van – mobile outreach attending Rhymes by the River, Canning Show, Youth Fest and Global Streets

Environmental Education and Sustainability

Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC) continued to be a hub for environmental learning and community engagement:



- 49+ community workshops on sustainability and waste education, reaching 1,230 attendees
 - Annual Earth Day Expo (4 April 2025) held in partnership with AAEE-WA, engaging 500 students and teachers
 - 100+ educational activities delivered through the Nearer to Nature program, involving 2,300 students
- While staffing constraints impacted the total number of activities compared to previous years, the quality and reach of the programming remained strong.



Youth Engagement

The City of Canning continued to invest in youth development and support, with a focus on providing safe, inclusive, and engaging spaces for young people to connect, learn and thrive.

In 2024/2025, the City’s Youth Services expanded its offerings to include targeted support for young people aged 16–25. The Lynwood Late Nights initiative was launched to provide a safe and supportive environment for young adults navigating the transition from high school into early adulthood. This program complements weekly Life Skills Workshops delivered from Riverton Library, which focus on career readiness and building confidence as young people enter the workforce.

The Lynwood Youth Hub has continued to grow as a central location for youth engagement, offering a wide range of services and programs in partnership with local organisations. Notably, collaborations with the Muslim Women’s Support Centre and the Baris Education and Culture Foundation have enabled the delivery of culturally-sensitive support tailored to the needs of young people from diverse backgrounds. These partnerships enhance inclusion, wellbeing and pathways to opportunity.

4. Circular Head, Tasmania

Extract from a case study written by Dr Leone Wheeler, Hon CEO, ALCN and Tony McGillvery, Manager Study Hub, Circular Head

Circular Head is one of four Australian UNESCO Learning Cities which are members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and the only one located in a rural and regional area.

The rural community of Circular Head is in far North-West Tasmania and is classified as outer regional by the ARIA measure. The community is served by the Circular Head Council, and covers an area of 4,917 km², with an estimated population of 8,352 (ABS, 2024). Key economic sectors include dairy and livestock production, commercial fishing, aquaculture, forestry and timber production, agriculture, light industrial manufacturing, iron ore agglomeration and tourism. Smithton is the principal town, primarily servicing the above industries. The second largest town Stanley, in the shadow of an extinct volcano basaltic plug named Circular Head. It is this geographic feature, known colloquially as “the Nut”, that gives the region its name.

Formal lifelong learning infrastructure within Circular Head include five public primary and one independent primary school, one public high school, and one K-12 independent school. Both schools with secondary students have Trade Training Centres that facilitate school-based VET training to Certificate II level. There are no tertiary training campuses within Circular Head. Burnie, approximately one hour drive east of Smithton hosts the University of Tasmania Cradle Coast Campus and the TasTAFE Burnie campus. Smithton has a Regional University Study Hub supporting remote students as described further on in this case study. There are many organisations that provide non-formal learning opportunities. Such organisations include a Heritage Museum in both Smithton and Stanley, numerous sporting clubs, particularly AFL and hockey, a “Men’s Shed”, Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, Libraries Tasmania and Circular Head Council. It is of note that Circular Head Council and Libraries Tasmania are both members of the organisation 26Ten, which is a network of organisations working to improve the literacy and numeracy of Tasmanians.

Circular Head as well as being a 26Ten community is also a UNESCO Learning City. The ambition to be recognised as a UNESCO Learning City came from the Circular Head Education and Training Consultative Committee (CHETCC) formed in 1999 as a sub-committee of Circular Head Council.

Vision: CHETCC promotes the value of community participation in skills and learning for life and will enhance awareness of the critical link between education and training and future life opportunities to work, connect and thrive in Circular Head (CHETCC, 2018).

The full case study with information about the role of CHETCC, the Literacy Plan, the Workforce Plan and the Study Centre Circular Head, Study Hub West Coast and Study King Island is available [here](#).

5. Melton City Council, Victoria

- *Written by Chelsey Excell, Team Leader Literacy and Learning Programs, City of Melton*

Melton City Council continues to provide lifelong learning opportunities for the community through programs, events and initiatives throughout the municipality. A few highlights from the 23/24 year:

2024 Learning Festival



Celebrating its sixth year, the City of Melton Learning Festival encourages the Melton community to embrace the joy of learning by participating in workshops, author talks, DIY crafts and more.

This year, the theme of the festival was Sustainability. Melton delivered over 40 earth-friendly programs throughout Adult Learners Week in Libraries and Community Centres.

The opening day celebration of the festival at Melton Library saw over 1700 people through the doors, and featured events, exhibiting local sustainable businesses, face painting, a scavenger hunt style activity, and live music.

The entire festival embedded sustainability within program delivery including reusable or recyclable materials for all workshops, minimal waste produced, and promotion of sustainable methods.

Computer Classes



Melton City Libraries has recently started a new pilot Computer Class program, aimed at teaching basic computer skills for adults.

Acknowledging the low digital literacy in adults in Melton, the Computer Classes explore the foundations of computer learning in a judgement-free space among like-minded individuals. The class sizes are purposefully small, to give patrons the full attention required.

Classes cover a range of topics including 'What is a Computer', 'Microsoft Word for Beginners' and 'Getting Started with Computers'.

Attendance is over 90%, with most sessions booking out and receiving a long waitlist. The success of this program has led to its expansion, increasing the quantity of sessions, with the intention to create a scaffolded program to continue to support lifelong learners as they graduate the foundation levels.

Melton Learning Directory Revitalisation

The beginning of 2025 saw the launch of the new and improved Melton Learning Directory.

This online platform houses programs and learning opportunities held by Council and community organisations throughout the City of Melton.

The new website allows users to easily browse and filter programs, view learning locations, and book sessions with ease. The addition of accessibility icons for locations and programs allows users to plan their visit, and choose programs at a glance.

The Melton Learning Directory aims to be a one-stop repository for learning programs throughout Melton, offering free and low-cost programs for all ages, abilities and interests.

<https://meltonlearning.vic.gov.au/>

6 City of Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia

- Written by Belinda Parsons, Community and Cultural Development Leader, City of Port Adelaide Enfield.

In 2024, City of PAE moved to a new City Vision and brand; **A Welcoming Liveable City: Made by People.**

Two key events that supported lifelong learning were the **Makerspace Market** workshops and event and a **Family Fun Day promoting Words Grow Minds** early literacy campaign. A self-guided walk was created for families encouraging them to talk, play, read, sing and dance with their children. The Parks Library Makerspace had its first 12 months under a new model with over 300 library members being inducted into the Makerspace. 124 new library members were signed up at Outreach events, with particular focus on new arrivals and migrant communities.

A student from our Adult Literacy Class was successful in winning an award from Adult Learning Australia. Local History team created a unique exhibition to showcase Bob Ware, a local First Nations community member and his achievements across several fields. **The Ngaityu Muiyu Tantu** (My Feelings Bag in Kurna) Aboriginal early learning book pack project was a finalist in the South Australian Local Government Excellence Awards.

The **media room** at Parks Library was reviewed and turned into a Sound Studio with a new focus on podcasting. English Classes, digital creativity, sewing, STEM and art classes have continued to be popular.

The Community Learning & Libraries team was expanded to include Community Centres, Cultural Diversity and Children, Families and Youth teams. PAE Libraries led the development of a **Gaming in Libraries** framework to demonstrate the value of Gaming in storytelling, social connection and youth engagement. PAE Library showcased their sustainability programs to the ALCN and at Australian Library and Information Association Information Online conference.

7 Tamworth Regional Council

Written by Kay Delahunt, Manager Cultural and Community Services

Cultural Plan

The [2024-2029 Creative Communities Plan](#) is Tamworth's fourth Cultural Plan. It builds on the region's long arts and culture history, achievements of the previous plans and the aspirations of the community. The plan is the result of extensive consultation. It provides a framework that will promote inclusivity and diversity, strengthen the creative sector, and provide useable spaces for learning and creative activities.

It speaks to the NSW Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy and includes measurable outcomes from the Cultural Development Network's outcomes schema.

The plan was endorsed in July 2024 and has 62 actions, of which 15 relate directly to creating a learning culture in the region.

- Action 1.9 In partnership with Tamworth Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (TACCO) provide culturally appropriate library programming that includes **Tech Savvy Seniors** for First Nations and **Aboriginal Family History Workshops** on an annual basis
- Action 2.7 Develop a Tamworth Region Learning Communities Strategy and work towards accreditation as a **UNESCO Learning City** (Region)

- Action 2.8 Seek out partnerships with Tertiary Education providers to **expand learning opportunities** in the region
- Action 2.9 Develop a **Tamworth Libraries Strategy** that continues to create environments for learning, innovation and social connection (2025-2028)
- Action 2.30 Update and implement the **Central Northern Regional Library Strategic Plan (2026)** .
- Action 2.31 Continue to develop rewarding cultural sector **volunteer opportunities** and provide succession planning and sustainability for volunteering
- Action 3.3 Enhance cultural offerings at Nundle by relocating the Gil Bennet Collection and establishing a **dedicated local studies room at Nundle Library (2024/25)**
- Action 3.4 Support members of the regions multicultural community to **tell their stories** and celebrate their history and culture
- Action 3.5 Continue to increase access, including digital access to Gallery, Museum **and Library collections**, making our stories available to audiences at a local, national and international level
- Action 5.6 Encourage **work experience** and professional development placements for tertiary students i.e digitisation, social work, libraries, gallery, museums, theatre and other performing venues
- Action 5.7 Provide **free after-hours study access** at Tamworth and Kootingal Libraries
- Action 5.8 Promote Lifelong Learning and host an **annual learning festival** with affordable or free learning opportunities
- Action 5.9 Facilitate community programs and workshops that have **learning outcomes**
- Action 5.11 Establish a funding model for **renewable energy projects** to support learning opportunities and cultural programs in the smaller towns and villages
- Action 6.10 Investigate **expansion and/or redesign** of library spaces, with emphasis on **the Barraba and Manila facilities**

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) is a free book gifting program dedicated to fostering a love of reading in children from birth to age five. Each month, enrolled children receive a high-quality, age-appropriate book delivered directly to their home—at no cost to families.



In Tamworth, the program follows a 'whole of community' model, ensuring that every child born within the Local Government Area (LGA) is enrolled. The initiative is coordinated by United Way and funded through a combination of community contributions, including corporate sponsorship, workplace giving, service club support, fundraising events, individual donors, and support from Tamworth Regional Council to cover any shortfalls.

Now in its fifth year in Tamworth, the program has seen its first full cohort of participants begin school, marking a major milestone for the initiative.

Claire Galea, a biostatistician and senior impact analyst currently pursuing a PhD at the School of Psychological Sciences at Macquarie University, has co-authored a research paper titled [The Impact of Shared Book Reading on Children and Families: A Study of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Tamworth, Australia](#). In April, Claire presented her findings at the World Literacy Summit in Oxford.

Adult Learners Week at Tamworth Library

Tamworth Library celebrated Adult Learners Week with a vibrant program of hands-on workshops and inspiring talks.

Workshops included:

- Craft and Chat, where participants were “yarning” in both senses of the word—sharing stories and knitting side by side.
- Library Choir, where music teacher Danielle Jones led a group of beginners to impressively sing two songs in harmony.
- The Library Innovation Studio, which introduced attendees to 3D design and printing, culminating in custom-made buttons.
- A fully booked Cake Decorating Workshop hosted by the Tamworth CWA Evening Group.
- A popular Learn to Cross Stitch session, with some participants returning the following week for more.
- A Local History training session, which gave attendees the tools to start exploring and building their family trees.

Talks and Discussions:

- Keynote speaker Grahame Neville shared his inspiring journey of learning to read as an adult and how it transformed his life.
- Bestselling author Hugh Mackay joined two Book Group discussions via Zoom, offering thoughtful insights and conversations.
- RUOK Ambassador Danny Dalton presented a valuable session on the four steps of starting an RUOK conversation, promoting mental health awareness and connection.

In addition, all six Tamworth Libraries launched a ten-week Tech Savvy Seniors Program in early September, equipping older adults with improved digital skills

Library Programming

Each year, Tamworth Libraries host more than 1,000 children’s learning activities and over 1,000 adult events. Weekly preschool story times often feature the latest titles from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Children love seeing “their book” come to life during these sessions.

In addition to preschool programs, Toddler Time and Baby Book Time are delivered regularly, fostering early childhood literacy.

The Library’s Innovation Studio is a hub for creativity and hands-on learning. It offers both drop-in opportunities and structured programs, with access to cutting-edge equipment including a laser cutter, 3D printers, robots, and a microscope.

Regular programs include sessions for home-schoolers, a robotics club, and school holiday STEM workshops. Activities this year have included Wind Skating, Robot Soccer, and VEX Robot Capture the Flag, sparking curiosity and problem-solving skills in young minds.

Learning Region Plan (progress)

Tamworth has commenced the Learning Region Plan consultation process with an online survey and 7 workshops. The next steps will be to interview key stakeholders.

New library for Kootingal

For over 20 years, the Kootingal Library has operated from a modest 83-square-metre partitioned space in the foyer of the Memorial Hall. Thanks to a State Library Infrastructure Grant and Federal Local Roads and Community Infrastructure funding, a brand-new, purpose-built facility has been constructed adjoining the Hall.

The Memorial Hall has been restored to its original size, with resurfaced floors and freshly painted walls. The new library offers 295 square metres of functional space, housed in a charcoal Colorbond structure that complements the Hall's architecture.

Designed for flexibility and modern use, the library includes a meeting room, a staff workroom, and small pod-style desks for staff assistance. All furniture is on wheels for easy reconfiguration. The space is bright and airy, with high ceilings and a skillion roof that enhances the natural light and sense of openness.

8 Wollongong City Council, NSW

- Written by Dianne Hillier, Project Leader Learning City

Wollongong Learning City in 2024

In the Wollongong region we benefit from a diverse learning and educational framework, from a world-class university, the University of Wollongong, over 70 primary and secondary schools, and over 130 early education centres, through to a rich and diverse range of non-formal artistic, fitness, physical, environmental and cultural learning places and resources available for community members to explore and enhance their learning journeys.

In 2024 Wollongong City Council's Learning City Project has developed our Learning City Strategy for 2025-2029. Building on previous community engagement with over 600 participants, we have workshopped across seventeen service areas within Council to explore existing programs and resources, problems and opportunities, partnership and stories of lifelong learning impact. We have set direction for our values, goals and strategies and established our governance model and key steps for implementation.

Our Learning City Values are:

- Inclusive and accessible learning
- Place-based and learner-centric opportunities
- Promoting, celebrating and supporting learning
- Collaboration and partnership
- Innovating now and preparing for the future

Our Goals are:

- Strengthening Learning Foundations
- Learning in Communities
- Learning with Nature
- Learning for Work and the Economy
- Learning for Leadership and Innovation

In 2025 we are building on collaboration and participation in the governance structure, augmenting our capacity for problem-solving and meeting community needs in new ways.

9 Wyndham, Victoria

- Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Learning Community, Libraries and Community Centres, reports on the highlights implementing [Wyndham’s Learning Community Strategy 2024-2029](#) (LCS) by Wyndham Council.



2024-2025 SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

A visual highlight reel of Wyndham’s Learning Community achievements can be found here:

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/wyndhams-learning-community>.

The Learning Community Strategy 2024-2029 Action Plan for 2025 was distributed in January, arising from the input provided by key stakeholders at the Annual Forum held in October 2024. A new online reporting tool was launched with the 2025 Action Plan, facilitating a more streamlined way of capturing outcomes

Overview of the Learning Community Strategy 2024-2029

Wyndham’s Learning Community Strategy (LCS) provides a strategic and integrated framework for the creation of a community of lifelong learning. It is used as the basis for Council to lead, advocate, influence, facilitate, deliver, innovate, and celebrate Wyndham’s learning goals. It clearly defines Council’s role in improving learning outcomes.

Our current LCS was developed through a series of community consultations and endorsed by Council in April 2024.

The LCS identifies four foundational areas of focus, or “pillars,” for strengthening learning in Wyndham:

- First Nations 1st - embedding First Nations knowledge, culture, and language into learning across life.

- Learning to Learn and Foundation Skills - strengthening language, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills.
- Employability, Work Skills, and Building Careers - support the development of employability and career pathways.
- Leadership and New Learning – building community leadership through social and action learning, strengthening workforce skills and capability of local businesses, exploring new digital technologies in education, and facilitating civics learning.

Underpinning the pillars is consideration of health, including mental health, and wellbeing impacts, environmental sustainability and climate change, availability of culturally safe spaces and places for learning, deepening the reach of the Strategy in Wyndham’s communities, integrating actions across Council, and measuring engagement and impact.

Progress in Addressing Key Actions:

Pillar 1: First Nation's 1st

ACTION 1.01: Engagement with WRAC

The Wyndham Reconciliation Advisory Committee (WRAC) were provided with opportunities to shape and guide the Learning Community Action Plan, through the delivery of a short report outlining WRAC’s role in the LCS implementation. First Nations perspectives were integrated, and cultural awareness promoted through events such as WynTalks and the Principal’s Breakfast.

ACTION 1.02: Cultural Values Assessment

Discussions were initiated with Traditional Owner groups regarding a cultural values assessment of Wyndham, through engaging with Wadawurrung and Bunurong groups to explore feasibility. Conducted formal discussions with Bunurong Land Council, initiating plans for a Cultural Learning Resource Kit.

ACTION 1.03: First Nations Training for WCC Staff

Eight Cultural Awareness Training sessions were delivered to 109 staff members; Council piloted and formalised the Deadly Induction Program for First Nations employees, including a connection with culture Wyndham tour and guest speaker sessions. LCU participated in Reconciliation Victoria’s Maggolee Webinar on First Peoples employment.

ACTION 1.04: Cultural Awareness Events and Walking Tours

- Launched the 'Unite for Diversity: Listen, Share, Understand' initiative with cultural exchange events, successfully hosting a Cultural Exchange Day attended by over 80 participants.
- Held National Apology Day with significant community and leadership participation.
- A "Yarn and Create Your Own Acknowledgement of Country" event was held, which was highly popular.

ACTION 1.05: WynTalk on Treaty or First Nations Theme

WynTalk featuring Uncle Charles Pakana on ‘Journey to Reconciliation’; the event utilised local Indigenous businesses and showcased Wyndham Libraries’ First Nations collections. Positive audience feedback was received highlighting the event’s impact on reconciliation and education.

ACTION 1.06: Principal’s Breakfast on First Nations Services

The Breakfast engaged 80 school leaders in discussions on First Nations services and supports; and fostered collaboration between educators and community service providers. Received positive feedback highlighting its impact on supporting First Nations education outcomes and facilitating connections between Wyndham schools and First Nations services.

ACTION 1.07: Promoting Library Services for First Nations People

Council celebrated NAIDOC Week with themed Story Times, craft workshops, and film screenings; hosted a Bushtukka Workshop and Storytelling through Art sessions; and conducted the 'Yarn Circle: Creativity in Conversation' program featuring First Nations artists.

ACTION 1.08: Indigital Schools Master Class Outcomes

The Indigital Schools Masterclass, delivered by Wyndham Tech School was featured at the Principal's Breakfast. The class introduced students to augmented reality and emerging technology with Indigenous industry mentors. The Deadly Tech Day provided First Nations students hands-on experience with technology and cultural connections.

Pillar 2: Learning to Learn and Foundation Skills

ACTION 2.01: Promote language, literacy, numeracy, and digital training

- Wyndham Libraries delivered 3,002 literacy, numeracy, and digital training programs in 2024, with 81,701 attendees.
- Special AUSLAN-integrated Sing and Sign Rhyme Time sessions welcomed 212 preschool children and carers. Monthly Q&A sessions with a Speech Pathologist and a Comms Accessibility workshop supported literacy awareness.
- Participation in the 2024 Volunteer Expo connected the community with learning opportunities and raised awareness of the Wyndham Learning Festival.
- Advocacy efforts contributed to the establishment of several new schools in Wyndham, including Laa Yulta Primary School and multiple secondary colleges, supporting educational infrastructure.

ACTION 2.02: Support the Early Years “Sharing Stories Help Your Child Learn from Birth” Project

The Sharing Stories project engaged hard-to-reach families to promote early literacy, addressing developmental vulnerabilities. This was a collaboration with VicSeg, VACCA, IPC Health, and community playgroups enhancing reach and effectiveness. 57 sessions were delivered to 1,145 participants in 2023-2024. The project has continued into 2025, further supporting early literacy development.

ACTION 2.03: Explore intergenerational learning, community learning, and alternative learning models

An Intergenerational Learning Report was completed by an RMIT Masters student, informing the 2025 Transformative Education Showcase, which is being led by Wyndham CEC.

Pillar 3: Employability, Work Skills, and Building Careers

Action 3.01: Education Roundtable – Employability & Workplace Learning

Wyndham hosted 35+ stakeholders from education, industry, and government, who received a keynote by Dallian D’Cruz (WynBayLLEN CEO) highlighting population growth, early childhood education, and literacy challenges. Presentations showcased innovative employment pathways including Opportunity Wyndham youth employment programs; Alternative education models (Julia Gillard Community College, Hester Hornbrook Academy); CALD

Community Hub initiative; DoE Navigator Program for disengaged youth and WynBay LLEN's mock job interviews and work experience.

Action 3.02: Promoting Local Career Pathways & Learning in Wyndham

- Wyndham Learning Festival 2024 engaged thousands in a week of free learning events (Sept 1-7).
- Libraries promoted inclusivity via IDAHOBIT participation, book displays, author talks, and curated reading lists.
- Expanded Library Community Languages collection, making LOTE resources more accessible.
- Sport & Recreation clubs provided hands-on training in coaching, umpiring, and management roles.
- Economic Development Unit's initiatives such as Love Your Local and Proudly Wyndham Business Expo supported business growth.

Action 3.03: Engaging Employers in Disability Inclusion & Skills Development

Mock Job Interviews Program were held at Warringa Park School, with Council and WynBay LLEN facilitating realistic interview practice for students with disabilities. Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Initiative implemented at libraries for discreet disability support. Wyndham Disability Services Network (30+ providers) improved city-wide accessibility and inclusion strategies. Opportunity Wyndham partnership supported 1,138 job seekers, engaged 100+ employers, and placed 189 individuals in employment.

Action 3.04: Addressing Future Skills Needs for Small & Medium Businesses

- WYNnovation 2024 (450+ attendees) featured masterclasses and networking for entrepreneurs.
- Spark Innovation Hub supported 20 startups, emphasising Women in STEM and business mentorship.
- Innovation Business Growth Programs assisted 20 small businesses, bringing the alumni total to 123 since 2018.
- Annual Business Confidence Survey 2024 provided economic insights to guide strategy.
- Launched initiatives like Love Your Local Campaign and Proudly Wyndham Business Expo to boost local business visibility.
- 2025 Inclusive Toolkits (Industry Mentoring, Employee Retention) launched in March 2025.

Pillar 4.0 Leadership and New Learning

Action 4.01: Capturing & Celebrating Stories of Learning in Wyndham

- LearnWest Network: Collaborated with six LGAs to showcase diverse learner stories through "CONNECT – SHARE – LEARN" during Adult Learners Week (Sept 1-7). Promoted lifelong learning's social and economic benefits via social media.
- Cultural Diversity Week (March 17-23): Celebrated multiculturalism with food, dance, and cultural dialogues, reinforcing Wyndham's commitment to reflecting on diverse cultural journeys and fostering understanding.

Action 4.02: Promoting Youth Civic Participation

Youth Civic Participation Program took place July-Sept 2024 engaging young leaders (18-25) in governance, policy, and lawmaking, with site visits to Wyndham Council, State Parliament, and Federal Parliament. Concluded with a four-day tour of Canberra, including stops at the High Court and Museum of Australian Democracy.

Action 4.03: Place-based Social & Action Learning

Wyndham Learning Community Annual Forum was held Oct 31, presenting key achievements from the 2024 LCS Action Plan, including emerging learning needs, place-based learning, and community engagement. Discussions helped shape the Learning Community Strategy 2024-2029 Action Plan for 2025, released January 2025.

Action 4.04: Active Participation in ALCN and LearnWest Network

Wyndham continues to play a leadership role in the Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN), chairing the network and offering secretariat support, collaborating with Melton and ALCN to host Learning Forums, covering topics such as governance in learning partnerships, community needs analysis, and climate resilience.

Hosted a webinar on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in collaboration with ALCN, featuring insights from UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities members (Cork, Limerick, Durban, and Wyndham), attracting 101 registrants worldwide.

The LearnWest Network continued to promote lifelong learning through its shared storytelling project (see Action 4.01).

Action 4.05: Maintain Connections with PASCAL, UNESCO, and GNLC

- Wyndham actively engaged in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), particularly in the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Cluster.
- Collaborated with the PASCAL International Observatory, contributing to the "Reimagining Inclusive Economic Futures" group and presenting at the 17th PASCAL Conference in Taipei.
- Participated as a panellist at the Sustainable Learning Cities International Forum in Icheon, South Korea, showcasing Wyndham's Green Living Series and other sustainability initiatives.
- Wyndham's Climate and Resilience Unit contributed to UNESCO's monthly webinar series, presenting the My Smart Garden initiative as a model for urban sustainability.
- Featured in UNESCO's Online Collection on Lifelong Learning for Climate Action, alongside 11 other global learning cities.
- Submitted a video for the Sixth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 6) in Saudi Arabia, highlighting Wyndham's sustainability programs.
- Completed Wyndham's three-yearly report to UNESCO UIL, demonstrating progress in lifelong learning, community engagement, sustainability, and alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Action 4.06: Civic Learning Initiatives

The *Allies for Reconciliation Building Blocks* program engaged First Nations communities through co-design, cultural learning methods, and leadership development. Participants explored decolonisation, anti-racism, and allyship, deepening their understanding of reconciliation. Wyndham Building Blocks alumni continued engagement through council initiatives, local learning opportunities, and the Wyndham Learning Festival.

Action 4.07: STEM Education & Industry Conference

Held at Wyndham Tech School, this event connected educators and industry professionals to explore STEM education and workforce needs. Key topics included AI, Esports, gender disparities in STEM, and emerging job markets. The conference emphasized hands-on tech exploration, industry collaboration, and innovation.

Action 4.09: Wyndham Coding Champs Competition

Aimed at children (7-15 years old), this STEAM competition encouraged coding skills, creativity, and digital literacy. It included beginner and intermediate workshops, with finalists showcased online and winners celebrated at an awards event.

Action 4.13: Promoting Lifelong Learning for Older People

The *Victorian Seniors Festival* celebrated lifelong learning with 54 diverse events, including cultural education, self-care activities, and community dinners. Over 1,500 attendees participated, with several new community centres joining the initiative.

Action 4.14: Connecting with Wyndham's Diverse Communities

The *Library of Stories* program, inspired by the Human Library model, encouraged personal storytelling to foster understanding and inclusivity. Participants shared their experiences in small group settings at community dinners, schools, and senior groups. A *Kids Storybook Workshop* taught families how to create books with children, promoting creative literacy and community storytelling.

Further Information and Contact

An electronic copy of the Learning Community Strategy 2024-2029 is available at:

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/wyndham-learning-community-strategy-2024-2029>

For more information about the Learning Community Strategy, or to connect with the Wyndham Learning Community unit, please contact: Diane Tabbagh, Coordinator Learning Community, Wyndham City Council Email: wynlearn@wyndham.vic.gov.au.