



Australian Learning
Communities Network Inc.
(ALCN)



Incorporated in NSW.

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Annual Report
2025-2026

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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 2025 until May 2026.

Firstly, congratulations to our founding Hon. CEO, Jim Saleeba, on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in January 2026, for service to vocational and tertiary education and to the community. Also, in June 2025 Maxwell Eastcott-Layton (Max), former Chair of the ALCN and former CEO Gwydir Shire, as part of the King's Birthday Honours List, was awarded the Public Service Medal (PSM) New South Wales for outstanding public service to local government and the Gwydir Shire.

Secondly, and most importantly, I have been reflecting on our work this year and I am indebted to our Executive Committee and our expert members that I have recruited to help. They have stepped up when we needed to strengthen our business model and think about our future direction. This work is ongoing, but it does make you think of the value of our people and the work they undertake for their communities. What an amazing group of leading-edge lifelong learning practitioners building sustainable communities using learning as the key element!

The environment that our practitioners work in is ever more challenging, but what amazes me is that our learning cities and learning communities have established learning ecosystems, frameworks, strategies and action plans

ready to provide learning opportunities for their residents as people come to terms with new challenges, and changes in the workforce, in their communities and their families. The best part of this report is the Appendix where we have a snapshot of the amazing work of our communities. Some significant highlights include

- Wollongong City Council, New South Wales, was formally admitted as a **member of UNESCO’s Global Network of Learning Cities** in December 2025, marking a significant milestone in the city’s long-term commitment to lifelong learning, inclusion, and sustainable community development.
- The [Tamworth Region Creative Communities Plan](#), which recognises the role of learning in the creative ecosystem, won the Leo Kelly OAM Arts and Culture Award at the NSW Local Government Awards in August 2025.
- The City of Brimbank, Victoria, celebrated 21 years of hosting the Readers and Writers Festival which continues to position libraries as “**inclusive cultural and civic spaces**, fostering dialogue, creativity, and community connection”.
- The City of Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia, celebrated the opening of opening of Yitpi Yartapuultiku Aboriginal Cultural Centre.
- The adoption of a new Learning Cities Framework in the City of Canning, Western Australia.
- The City of Wyndham, Victoria, celebrated 10 Years of running a Learning Festival. A great collaboration between Wyndham Community & Education Centre (Wyndham CEC) and the Wyndham City Council.
- The significant achievements of the Hume Jobs and Skills Task Force and the Hume Multiversity project, both established in 2012, in the City of Hume, Victoria.
- The wide range of community learning programs for all ages, including Digital, Creative Technology and STEM, that the Libraries and Lifelong Learning team at City of Ballarat have developed and delivered over the last 12 months.
- The City of Melton Libraries, Victoria, celebrated 20 years of running a short story competition.
- Circular Head Council, Tasmania, launched the Circular Head Learn for Life Literacy Action Plan 2025–2028

Thirdly, another milestone is the appointment of Associate Professor Roberto (Robbie) Guevara as our Director of Research. Robbie is President of the International Council of Adult Education and an Associate Professor of International Development at RMIT University, and among many other career highlights was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (IACEHOF) in October 2012. Robbie has worked with the ALCN for several years and has helped us think about our work in a systematic way, promoting our work internationally. We look forward to his continued contributions which are so valued by our members.

Finally, thank you to all contributors of this report and as always let me have your feedback.

Enjoy reading.

Leone

Dr. Leone Wheeler, Hon. CEO, ALCN

Executive Appointments

In accordance with decisions of the 2025 AGM held on 20 May 2025, the following members were appointed for a two-year appointment from June 2025 until June 2027.

- Diane Tabbagh, Wyndham City Council, Victoria (UNESCO Learning City).
- Chelsey Excell, Melton City Council, Victoria (UNESCO Learning City).
- Kay Delahunt, Tamworth Regional Council, New South Wales.
- Kate Grey, Circular Head Council, Tasmania (UNESCO Learning City).

The Voting Executive and roles for the period June 2025 until June 2026:

Name	Executive position	Additional responsibilities
Dr Leone Wheeler.	Hon. CEO	Overall coordination responsibilities. Newsletters. Mentoring student intern. Coordinating Webinars. Developing business, communications and risk management strategies.
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.
Sam Davis, City of Canning, Western Australia	Vice-Chair of the ALCN. Western Australian contact. UNESCO GNLC member. Business Advisory and Communications sub-committee.	Deputy Vice Chair of the ALCN. Part of the Business Advisory sub-committee and Communications sub-committee.
Dianne Hillier – formerly Wollongong City Council, New South Wales	Treasurer. Business Advisory sub-committee	Reconciling accounts, organising the audit, coordinating term deposits and insurance matters. Contributing to Webinars and newsletters.
Kay Delahunt, Tamworth Regional Council, New South Wales	NSW rural contact Communications sub-committee	Local government contact for NSW and part of the Communications sub-committee.
Kate Grey, Circular Head Council, Tasmania	Tasmanian contact. Communications sub-committee.	Contribution to Learning Forums, Webinars and newsletters. Part of the Communications sub-committee.

Chelsey Excell – Melton City Council Victoria	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. Business Advisory Sub Committee.	Contributions to Business Advisory sub-committee, Learning Forums, Webinars, and newsletters.
Joanne Lockward, Ballarat City Council, Victoria	Victorian rural contact	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.
Peter Kearns, AM	Honorary Role	National and International Learning City Advocate

Other Matters

The Executive worked on strengthening our business model and consequently implemented the following to improve our processes:

- Max Eastcott, former CEO of Gwydir Shire and current contact the Gwydir accepted the position of Public Officer in line with the requirements of the NSW Office of Fair Trading.
- The registered office of the ALCN was changed to that of our auditor Schnelle Partners, 580 Englehardt Street, Albury, 2640.
- The ATO and ASIC were informed of the change of Directors and address of the ALCN.
- Sam Davis, Canning City Council accepted the position of Vice Chair of the ALCN
- Sharyn Wheatcroft, Wyndham City Council accepted the position of Secretary of the ALCN. Sharyn takes the minutes of the Executive Meeting and organizes ALCN Webinars and Learning Forums.
- Dianne Hillier, Treasurer, improved our accounting processes and investigated options for more cost-effective public liability insurance.
- The establishment of a Business Advisory subcommittee which included developing a draft business strategy. Group members are Sam Davis (Canning), George Osborne (Hume), Max Eastcott (Gwydir), Dr Donna Goldie (Townsville Libraries). The group was supported by Leone Wheeler (Hon CEO), Diane Tabbagh (Chair, ALCN) and Dianne Hillier (Treasurer).
- The establishment of a Communications sub-committee to review and implement a new ALCN website. Members are Kate Grey (Circular Head), Sam Davis (Canning) Leone Wheeler, and Kay Delahunt (Tamworth).

Honorary Positions:

- In February 2026, Roberto Jose Guevara, Associate Professor in International Development at RMIT's School of Global, Urban and Social Studies accepted the honorary position of Director of Research for Lifelong Learning.
- Peter Kearns, AM, continued as honorary expert advisor to the Executive.

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.

Congratulations

We are very proud that in December 2025 the City of Wollongong was accepted as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Congratulations Wollongong City Council and we look forward to promoting your work.

In January 2026 the ALCN congratulated Owen James Saleeba (Jim) on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to vocational and tertiary education and to the community. Jim served as the foundation Hon. CEO of the Network for the period 2001-2019. Jim promoted lifelong learning projects and the concept of learning cities in a very practical way. Through conferences, the sharing of lifelong learning practitioner stories through newsletters, advocating for practitioners, he built a strong network. He aligned strongly with international learning city partners, particularly in the United Kingdom and Canada. He left the ALCN in a financially stable position which has enabled the present network to grow.

In June 2025 the ALCN congratulated Maxwell Eastcott-Layton (Max) on the King's Birthday Honours List award of Public Service Medal (PSM) New South Wales for outstanding public service to local government and the Gwydir Shire.

Max, as the former Gwydir Shire CEO, and a former Chair of the ALCN, among other things, was instrumental in establishing the Gwydir Learning Region, a community-based learning organisation that partnered with local businesses, the University of New England, TAFE and local schools to enable hundreds of people to obtain qualifications to take up meaningful employment.

Max was a member of the ALCN Executive member from when he joined the ALCN in 2004 until December 2022. Max was Vice Chair in 2009 and made Chair in 2010. A position he held for 6 years. Even in retirement Max continues to be the contact for the Gwydir Shire, became the NSW Public Officer for the ALCN and is a member of the Business Advisory Sub Committee of the Executive.

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 2025 members of our Executive were involved in promoting learning communities and learning cities locally, nationally, and internationally (Refer to the Appendix).

In 2025 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.
- Played an important role in contributing significant content and Webinars for PASCAL International Observatory and the UNESCO GNLC.
- Collaborated with Adult Learning Australia and PASCAL International Observatory.

Information Clearing House on Learning Cities and Learning Communities

In the past the ALCN website (alcn.com.au) has been 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. The Communications Committee has reviewed the current outdated website and are working on content for a new website to be launched later in 2026. We thank Andrew Williamson, our web and host manager, for continued generous assistance to help us maintain the outdated site while we are in the process of renewal.

Communication

The main method of communication is through our newsletter entitled “Ripples” which is sent to our members, posted on the Facebook page (@aus.alcn). Five Ripple Newsletters were sent out in the past year (May 2025-May 2026). 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](#). Please send your stories for inclusion to alcn@bigpond.com.

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 has conference funding plan and selection criteria, aimed at subsidising one or two members per annum to present and report back to the ALCN on relevant lifelong learning/learning city conferences. Last year this fund was not utilised, but the scheme is available to paid up members throughout the year and information can be requested by members by emailing alcn@bigpond.com.

ALCN Learning Forums and Webinars

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. Webinars are more formal and usually a collaboration with national or international partners and are open to a wider audience. During the 2025-2026 period the following Learning Forums/Webinars were organised jointly by Sharyn Wheatcroft, Wyndham City Council and Leone Wheeler Hon. Chair ALCN.

- ALCN Learning Forum – 20 February 2025. **Circular Head – UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities** – presented by Tony McGillvery, Manager, Study Centre, Circular Head.

- 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.
- ALCN AGM Presentation – 20 May 2025. ***Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Aotearoa New Zealand***. The presenter was Hannah Pia Baral, CEO, ACE Aotearoa, and an experienced leader in adult education, shared an in-depth update on the state of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in New Zealand, highlighting the sector’s history, current challenges, strategic priorities, and future opportunities. She emphasised the importance of lifelong learning, equity, and innovation — particularly the integration of AI and ancestral intelligence in education.

Webinars

- ALCN Webinar: ***Where Stories Grow: The power of reading in Tamworth & Circular Head homes***. The Keynote speaker, Dr Claire Galea, shared her research on the impact of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in Tamworth. Kay Delahunt, Manager Cultural and Community Services, Tamworth Regional Council coordinates the program in Tamworth. Kate Grey 26TEN Coordinator, Circular Head Council led a group of community facilitators who spoke about a range of books for babies’ programs in Circular Head. A recording is available [here](#).
- ALCN Webinar 23 October 2025, ***Climate Action – Creating Community Circular Hubs***. Presenters from Green Industries SA (Shani Wood) and Port Adelaide Enfield Libraries (Benita Parsons) shared practical models, funding pathways, and community-led examples, while international and national frameworks — including UNESCO’s Learning Cities and Australia’s Climate Risk Assessment — provided strategic context. The session highlighted the social and economic benefits of circular hubs, implementation challenges, and behaviour change strategies, with interactive input from participants across Australia and beyond. A recording is available [here](#).
- ***ALCN Webinar 26 March 2026. The Adaptation Game (TAG) in Action – Advancing Resilient Futures Together***, held on 26 March 2026.

Participants heard from the City of Canning’s Sustainability team during a hands-on session demonstrating how *The Adaptation Game* can spark meaningful community conversations about climate adaptation and resilience. The forum also featured a practical case study from Wyndham City, showcasing climate resilience in action, followed by time for discussion, questions, and reflections. A recording is available [here](#).

ALCN and PASCAL International Observatory

The ALCN also partnered with the **PASCAL International Observatory** to deliver a series of online forums for the *Connecting Rural and Urban Learning Initiatives* as part of PASCAL’s Learning City Network. Dr Leone Wheeler coordinated the following online presentations:

- 5 May 2025, ***Lifelong Learning Profile of Ballarat***. Joanne Lockwood, Ballarat Libraries and Lifelong Learning Team, introduced members to the lifelong learning profile of Ballarat – a vibrant regional town in Victoria, Australia.
- 26 June 2025, ***Small Town Libraries Network – Tamworth Regional Council***. Kay Delahunt, Manager Cultural and Community Services, spoke about Small Town Libraries and how they are now multipurpose facilities that are important community hubs in their communities.
- 16 October 2025, ***The Civic Thread: Weaving Urban and Rural Knowledge into a Learning Society***. Dr Rhiannon Jones (FRSA), Associate Professor Civic Practice and Head of Civic and Communities, University of

Derby, explored how urban and rural knowledge systems can be interwoven to strengthen civic identity, inclusive learning, and place-based innovation—anchored by Derby’s role as a UNESCO Learning City.

- 30 April 2026, ***Learning for Change: Social Learning and Innovation in the Fiji Landcare LIFE Project***. Dr Mary Johnson **Research Fellow, Global Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne**, presented an overview of a six-year *Fiji Landcare* research project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The project aims to strengthen smallholder farmer livelihoods in Fiji through improved food and fibre production, sustainable natural resource management, and collaborative learning across Fiji, the Philippines, and Australia.

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 most recent is from the City of Canning which in 2026 launched a Learning City Framework with seven principles that guide their approach as a Learning City and underpin the design and delivery of inclusive, impactful and future-focused learning opportunities across Canning.

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 Framework
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 and the ASEAN region.

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 five 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, the City of Canning in Western Australia and the City of Wollongong in New South Wales.

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.

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 PASCAL LCN group *Reimagining Economic Futures*.

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 Hon CEO and approved 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 2025 Calendar Year

The following is a snapshot of some of our learning cities and communities report on their activities for the 2025 calendar year.

Note: any photographs supplied are with the permission of the respective Council.

1. Ballarat City Council

Written by Joanne Lockwood, Coordinator Ballarat Library and Learning.

The Libraries and Lifelong Learning team at City of Ballarat have developed and delivered a wide range of community learning programs for all ages over the last 12 months.

Digital and Creative Technology has featured heavily in our programs as we expanded offerings in the maker space and introduced AI-focused digital literacy programs. These were both in response to community feedback highlighting the need for more learning programs on these topics.

Our early years literacy programs continue to be very well attended and a popular weekly activity at all branches and several outreach locations. Partnering with the Maternal Child Health Team to promote the introductory session, Beginning with Books, has proved a successful way to introduce new families to the early years' literacy programs and to the importance of reading with children from the very beginning. This program also provides a book to every family at their 12-month Maternal and Child Health (MCH) visit.

We have had another extremely successful year with Bulldogs Read, partnering with the Western Bulldogs Football Club to provide a sport and literacy program for Grade 5 students across 10 different schools in Ballarat. Students submitted hundreds of book reviews, spoke with AFL and AFLW players about reading and footy and even got to attend training and a game as VIP guests of the club.

In April, we finished our 18 month-long grant partnership with the Brainary, rolling out STEM Maker programs to secondary school students across the region. Students learnt about green architecture and CAD design, VR and building with microbits.

With the help of several grants and scholarships, the staff at Ballarat Research Hub at Eureka (BRHAE), has undertaken a range of projects including the digitisation of some rare and unique items from the collection. This has allowed us to showcase new and previously unknown histories and stories and has introduced the research centre to new audiences. BRHAE staff have also run a series of family and local history workshops including how to trace your convict past, how to research adoption records and using Trove in family history research. Over the next 12 months, we will see a further expansion of these workshops and new conservation and digitisation projects to augment what has already been done.

Wendouree Library explored all things hobby-related with workshops on bike maintenance, seed saving, digital art and drawing and mending clothes. While limited by the small spaces at Wendouree Library these small workshops were extremely popular and a fun, social way to learn a new skill or revamp an old one.

This year we continued the Wellbeing Matters program with a focus on Healthy Aging in partnership the Aging Well Services team. A highlight of the program was the Life Well Read event with prominent local older adults discussing reading for wellbeing and looking at books that positively represented aging or older people.

With the help of a Living Libraries grant, Ballarat Libraries are preparing to roll out 4 new outreach lockers. These will allow people living on the fringes of the Local Government Areas (LGA) to access library holds 24 hours a day without having to visit a library branch.

Finally, from December 2025 council adopted new extended opening hours at all three branches. We now have late opening (until 7pm) 4 days per week across two branches and longer weekend hours, including an additional 4 hours on Sundays at Ballarat Library. This was part of council's broader plan for tackling the cost of living.

2. Brimbank, Victoria

Brimbank Annual Report 2025–2026

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

Summary

2025–2026 saw the continued implementation of the **Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2024–2029**, with a strong focus on inclusive, community-led learning across all life stages.

Across the year, Brimbank Libraries and Learning delivered **programs**, engaging **more than 52,580 participants**. Programs prioritised equity of access, cultural inclusion, digital literacy, and lifelong learning pathways.

A key highlight was the significant expansion and rebrand of the **Brimbank Writers & Readers Festival**, which more than doubled its engagement and strengthened the role of libraries as vibrant cultural and civic spaces. This growth was achieved alongside a substantial program redesign and increased cross-council and community partnerships.

Strategic Context

The Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2024–2029 provides a framework for improving learning outcomes across the municipality through a life stage approach, with a focus on:

- Early Years (birth to compulsory school age)
- School Years (6–16 years)
- Young People (17 to early adulthood)
- Adults (25–60 years)
- Later Life (60+ years)

All initiatives outlined below contribute to building an inclusive, accessible, and responsive learning environment in Brimbank.

Early Years (birth to compulsory school age)

- **Early Years Programs** – Across five library branches, 520 sessions were delivered, engaging 23,068 children and caregivers. These programs supported early literacy, language development, and social connection, contributing to school readiness outcomes.
- **Multicultural Story Times** – Continued delivery of culturally inclusive sessions, including Pasifika and Auslan Story Times, promoting the value of home languages and inclusive participation. Delivered as part of a four-year funded initiative, these sessions respond directly to Brimbank’s diverse community profile and support cultural identity and belonging.

Outcome: Increased participation from culturally and linguistically diverse families and strengthened early engagement with literacy and learning.

School Years (6–16 years)

- **Schools and Community Organisations Exchange Network** – Professional development sessions focused on bullying prevention were delivered to educators, equipping them with practical strategies to support student wellbeing. Strong attendance and positive feedback have led to these sessions being scheduled biannually.
- **Grade 6 Capacity and Resilience Program** – Delivered in partnership with Youth Services, these workshops supported students to build confidence and resilience during a critical transition period.
- **School Transitions Project** – Five workshops across four schools supported students transitioning to secondary school. A tailored resource booklet was developed to extend learning beyond the sessions.
- **Library Learning Programs** – 392 programs were delivered to 7,639 school-aged participants, supporting literacy development and curiosity.
- **Author Engagement** – A highlight was a live event with Andy Griffiths, attracting 188 attendees and fostering enthusiasm for reading and storytelling.

Outcome: Improved student confidence, stronger school transitions, and increased engagement with reading and learning programs.

Young People (17–24 years)

- **Inclusive Engagement Initiatives** – Programs aligned with IDAHOBIT, Wear It Purple Day, and Pride Month created safe, creative spaces for LGBTQIA+ young people, strengthening connection and visibility.
- **Intergenerational Digital Literacy (with Lively.org)** – Young people gained employment-ready skills while supporting seniors from CALD backgrounds to build digital confidence.
- **Virtual Reality Career Readiness** – In partnership with Learning Futures, VR tools simulated interview environments, building practical job-seeking skills.
- **Careers and Pathways Support** – Outreach during Careers Week and tailored counselling sessions (with Victoria University) supported young people facing barriers to education and employment.

- **Youth Leadership Program** – Participants developed foundational skills in leadership, budgeting, storytelling, and planning.
- **Library Programs** – 416 learning opportunities engaged 11,800 young people across study support, wellbeing, and employment readiness.
- **Writers Festival Engagement** – A strong youth focus saw increased participation through contemporary and accessible formats, including workshops on screenwriting, music, and digital storytelling.

Outcome: Increased confidence, skills development, and improved pathways into further education, training, and employment.

Adults (25–60 years)

- **Financial Literacy Programs** – Workshops such as ‘Budgeting Basics’ and ‘Debt Support’ responded to cost-of-living pressures, supporting informed financial decision-making.
- **Makerspace (Deer Park Library)** – Continued to grow as a hub for informal, hands-on learning, blending creativity and technology in an accessible environment.
- **Library Programs** – 958 activities engaged 6,933 adults across literacy, wellbeing, digital skills, employment support, and social connection.

Outcome: Increased digital confidence, financial capability, and social connection among adult participants.

Older Adults (60+ years)

- **Intergenerational Learning** – Ongoing IT support sessions, delivered with young people through Lively.org, strengthened both digital literacy and social connection for Vietnamese seniors with Vietnamese young facilitators.
- **Digital and Practical Support** – Libraries provided assistance across a wide range of essential tasks, including MyGov access, online safety, and everyday technology use.
- **Program Delivery** – 70 sessions engaged 360 older adults in wellbeing, social, and digital learning activities.

Outcome: Reduced digital exclusion and increased independence and confidence in accessing essential online services.

Brimbank Writers & Readers Festival 2026

The Brimbank Writers & Readers Festival was a major highlight of the year, representing a significant expansion in scale, reach, and impact. Delivered under the theme *“Sharing Stories”*, the six-day program featured 32 events with over 50 authors including workshops, author talks, panel discussions, and community storytelling.

The 2026 festival involved a substantial rebrand and program redesign, resulting in **more than double the engagement compared to the previous year**. This growth was achieved alongside increased program complexity and strengthened partnerships.

Key highlights included:

- Opening event with Nam Le, delivered to a full audience
- A Harmony Day conversation featuring Santilla Chingaipe
- Strong partnership with Victoria University, including engagement with the Vietnamese Student Association
- Cross-council collaboration with Arts and Environment teams, with opportunities for future scaling identified
- Platforms for emerging writers, including a published magazine and a micro-fiction competition
- Diverse and contemporary programming that attracted new and younger audiences

The festival successfully positioned libraries as **inclusive cultural and civic spaces**, fostering dialogue, creativity, and community connection. It also strengthened engagement with culturally diverse communities and significantly increased youth participation.

Outcome: Expanded audience reach, deeper community engagement, and stronger positioning of Brimbank as a centre for inclusive cultural participation and storytelling.

3. Canning City Council

Learning Cities Annual Report 2025/2026

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, recognising lifelong learning as a key driver of inclusion, resilience and sustainability. This year, following the conclusion of the Learning City Strategy 2020–2024, the City transitioned to a [Learning City Framework](#). The framework replaces a time-limited strategy with an enduring approach that guides how lifelong learning is planned, delivered and integrated across the organisation and the broader community.

The Learning City Framework provides a shared, long-term lens for building a thriving, inclusive and lifelong learning community. It supports learning as something that happens across everyday programs, services, partnerships and places, rather than through standalone initiatives alone, embedding learning city principles into how the City works with and for its community.

The City of Canning is located on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar, the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation. Home to approximately 97,000 people, Canning is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse local government areas in Western Australia. With 51 per cent of residents born overseas, more than 40 per cent of households speaking a language other than English at home, and over 70 languages spoken across the community, this diversity is a defining strength of our city.

This rich cultural landscape underscores the importance of accessible, inclusive and culturally responsive lifelong learning opportunities that foster connection, belonging and intercultural dialogue for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Intercultural Connection and Learning

At the Hillview Intercultural Hub, a key centre for intercultural learning, connection and community participation, several capacity-building programs were delivered, including the successful Career Accelerator program.

Canning’s Career Accelerator Program is Helping to Build Successful Futures

From July to December 2025, the City of Canning’s Career Accelerator Program supported 24 participants to build confidence, communication, job readiness and digital skills.

Delivered at Hillview Intercultural Community Centre, the *Bridging Cultures, Building Futures* program reduced employment barriers for multicultural participants through masterclasses, digital training and one-on-one coaching.

Outcomes included 60% gaining employment, 83% expanding their LinkedIn networks, 100% recommending the program, and all participants reporting improved confidence and job search skills.

Techcare and Digital Support

We ran 18 Techcare sessions and supported over 100 people, primarily seniors and CaLD community members, to build digital literacy through one-on-one assistance. Fortnightly digital support was also delivered in libraries, alongside workshops with Ubuntu covering Canva, ChatGPT, online safety, and basic computing.

Building Capacity of Local Knowledge Experts in CaLD community

We delivered multiple “How to Plan and Present a Winning Workshop” sessions at libraries, helping community members identify their skills and develop workshops resulting in more local facilitators being engaged by the City of Canning.



Climate Adaptation Game

Climate change education and empowerment workshop for Muslim women delivered in partnership with the Sustainability team.

Community Programs and Partnerships (Hillview, Community Learning and Libraries)

Hillview supported a range of community-led groups and programs, including Noire-baa (creative arts), mahjong, English conversation classes, citizenship workshops, STEM and AI programs, community safety sessions with police, and cultural events in partnership with Vic Park Centre for the Arts.

Across Community Learning and Libraries:

Financial literacy workshops (10 sessions) covered topics such as investing, superannuation and income generation, while nutrition workshops with Carrie Reedy provided accessible advice on healthy eating, gut health and cardiovascular wellbeing.

New community groups, including crochet, writing and wellbeing groups strengthened social connection and attracted new library members, supported by events such as the Community Group Showcase (March 2026).

Seasonal and community programs included festive events in December and a week-long WA Seniors Week program celebrating older adults through inclusive activities.

Riverton Library also hosted an Aged Care Reform Information Hub (Aug–Dec 2025), where trained volunteers provided multilingual support and workshops to help residents navigate aged care changes and access services.



Volunteering Information Sessions



Volunteering Information Sessions were delivered in partnership with Zonta House and Communicare, providing community members with guidance on volunteering, including expectations, national standards, and how to identify opportunities aligned with their motivations. Zonta House sessions were tailored to women embarking on a new chapter, while Communicare sessions supported migrant women building confidence in a new country.

Libraries and Community Learning

The City delivered a robust library service in 2025, supporting lifelong learning through:

- 422,437 library visitors
- 777,427 physical item loans
- 1,488 program sessions with 26,388 participants

Highlights:

- Early Years Programs (ages 0–5) have grown with additional Rhymes session and introduction of Toddler Wiggle and Giggle to meet demand

- Community Groups Open Day: Grow, Learn and Thrive – showcasing our community groups and sharing opportunities to get involved [Video](#)
- Neurodiversity sessions for ADHD – Upskilling and Lifelong Learning
- Indigenous Weaving workshops – Connection to Country
- A four-part *End of Life Matters* workshop series (Feb–March 2025), led by Erin Griffin, supported participants with practical and emotional end-of-life planning
- Outreach: Canning on the Go van – mobile outreach attending Rhymes by the River, Canning Show, Youth Fest, Neighbourhoods Town Team event, Local History at Woodloes event.

Environmental Education

- 93 educational activities delivered through the Nearer to Nature program, involving 2,294 students
- 57 community workshops on sustainability and waste education, reaching 1,370 attendees

Lifelong Learning, Libraries and Programming

1. Digital Inclusion and Everyday Learning

Libraries supported digital literacy through one-on-one help, workshops and service point support, assisting with job applications, online forms, government services and basic device skills ensuring the community can confidently access digital services



2. Makerspace and Creative Learning Expansion

We expanded Makerspace services, enabling hands-on learning in areas such as 3D printing, Cricut and creative technologies, fostering creativity and skill development, particularly for young people.

3. Library of Things and Accessible Learning Resources

The growing Library of Things provides access to technology kits, creative tools and memory kits, reducing barriers and supporting learning beyond traditional collections.

4. Gaming and Esports Engagement

Gaming and esports programs engaged young people in teamwork, digital literacy and problem-solving, offering safe, inclusive spaces for social connection and learning. [Video](#)

Environmental Education and Sustainability

The Adaptation Game

Developed with Commonwealth Disaster Ready funding and DFES support, TAG is a tabletop game that builds community awareness of climate adaptation. In 2025/26, one facilitator training and three community sessions engaged 42 participants.

Grow It Local

Grow It Local connects residents with gardening knowledge, workshops and seed programs. In 2024/25, 908 Canning residents were members, with 61 attending webinars and 208 new registrations. Reported impacts include increased food growing, improved skills, and greater awareness of food waste, composting and environmental sustainability.

Electrify Everything

This program supports residents to improve energy efficiency and transition to all-electric homes. To date, workshops and events have engaged around 740 people, covering induction cooking, EVs and solar. Library of Things resources (induction cooktops and energy audit kits) support “try before you buy,” with 16 and 36 loans respectively.

Youth Engagement

Youthfest

On 11 April 2026, the Youth Services team welcomed the community to Agincourt Park in Willetton to celebrate young people as part of Youth Week 2026. Over 2,000 people attended and enjoyed inflatable attractions, a cuddly animal farm, dodgeball games, and more. Community members also had the opportunity to engage with valuable community partners such as East Metropolitan Health Service, St John WA, WA Police Force and the Young Australia League. Alongside the activities, the City undertook valuable engagement on the Public Health Plan and on understanding ways to connect young people with the City.

Youth Consultants Network

The City’s Youth Consultants Network continues to run monthly, providing young people opportunities to engage with City projects and build professional skills. Over the last 12 months, young people undertook skills development opportunities such as first aid, public speaking, communication skills, emergency readiness and financial skills. They’ve also provided their insights into topics such as alcohol public health messaging and the City’s strategies for engaging with young people.

Recreation

Resilient and Adaptable Communities

Deliver targeted capacity-building for local sports clubs.



Volleyball Activation Event – Partnered with Volleyball WA, Canning Vale Indoor Beach and Rossmoyne Volleyball Club

- Intention to increase awareness of volleyball, showcase the new beach court at Shelley, improve club capacity and increase memberships for local clubs.
- Bentley Cricket Practice Net Installation Opening – Partnership with DCITS PlayonWA 2030
 - Increase cricket participation, enable junior pathways and increase club capacity.
- Collaboration between community dev and club dev for club capacity education series.

Community Events



This event season, the Major Events Team successfully planned and delivered four Local Bite Nights across different neighbourhoods. This is one more event than the previous event season. Rebranded this year as Friday Night Eats, these vibrant Friday evening events took place in Canning's local parks, bringing the community together to connect, in a relaxed, family-friendly setting.

Each event featured a diverse range of local food vendors, live music, and free activities for children. Community members were encouraged to attend and could bring their own picnic, helping keep the experience accessible and affordable for families.

4. Circular Head, Tasmania

Submitted by Kate Grey, 26Ten Community Coordinator, Circular Head Council

Circular Head is one of five Australian members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), and notably the only community within the network located in a rural and regional setting.

Situated in far north-west Tasmania, Circular Head spans 4,917 km² and is classified as outer regional under the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The municipality, governed by the Circular Head Council, has an estimated population of 8,352 (ABS, 2024). Its economy is diverse and strongly tied to primary industries, including dairy and livestock production, agriculture, forestry and timber, commercial fishing and aquaculture, alongside light manufacturing, iron ore processing and a growing tourism sector.

Smithton serves as the region's main service centre, supporting these industries and the broader community. Stanley, the second largest township, sits beneath the striking basaltic plug known as Circular Head, more commonly referred to as "The Nut", a defining natural landmark and key tourism drawcard.

Circular Head's formal education landscape includes two early childhood services, five government primary schools, one independent primary school, one government high school, and one independent K–12 school. Both secondary schools are equipped with Trade Training Centres, enabling delivery of school-based vocational education and training to Certificate II level. While there are no tertiary campuses within the municipality, access is supported by nearby facilities in Burnie (approximately one hour east) including the University of Tasmania's Cradle Coast campus and TasTAFE. Locally, Study Centre Circular Head provides an important pathway for students undertaking higher education remotely.

Beyond formal education, a wide range of organisations contribute to a strong culture of lifelong learning. These include heritage museums in Smithton and Stanley, service clubs, active sporting clubs, a Men's Shed, the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, Libraries Tasmania, and Circular Head Council. Both Council and Libraries Tasmania are members of 26Ten, Tasmania's statewide network committed to improving adult literacy and numeracy outcomes.

In 2025, this commitment was further strengthened with the launch of the Circular Head Learn for Life Literacy Action Plan 2025–2028. The plan sets a clear, community-driven vision that *anyone who wants to learn can*, outlining practical actions that support accessible, inclusive and lifelong learning across the region.

Circular Head's designation as a UNESCO Learning City builds on a long-standing local commitment to education and community development. This vision was first championed by the Circular Head Education and Training Consultative Committee (CHETCC), established in 1999 as a sub-committee of Council, and continues to underpin the region's approach to lifelong learning today.

5. Hume City Council, Victoria

George Osborne, Manager Economic Development for Hume City Council, has updated the ALCN on initiatives aligned with the UNESCO Learning City Theme of *Learning for Work*

Hume Jobs and Skills Task Force.

Hume City is a thriving and rapidly growing business and employment hub in Melbourne’s North. A thriving and prosperous community can be achieved through strong economic growth, creating diversified local employment opportunities across industry sectors and reducing the need for extended travel. Economic inclusion must, however, be aligned to local job creation as jobs change lives of individuals and families. The Hume economy is growing, and the number of jobs along with it, yet the municipality faces the triple challenge of rapid population growth, higher than average numbers of refugee migrants and pockets of entrenched unemployment.

To help address these challenges and opportunities, Council established the Hume Jobs and Skills Task Force in April 2012. All tiers of government, key stakeholders across the education, business and community sector were involved in its co -design and now comprise the Task Force membership. The Taskforce provides the strategic stewardship for planning whole of government and community support to address unemployment with a priority in improving local employment opportunities for Hume residents and supporting Hume businesses with an effective labour supply.



LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS ACHIEVEMENTS 2025

Local Jobs for Local People Talent Community

- ▶ **13,086** registered Joblink users
- ▶ **6,214** Hume job vacancies
- ▶ **181** directly brokered by Local Jobs for Local People team

10 MULTIVERSITY SIGNATORIES

- ▶ La Trobe University
- ▶ Victoria University
- ▶ Deakin University
- ▶ Melbourne Polytechnic
- ▶ Kangan Institute
- ▶ Holmesglen Institute
- ▶ Illuminate Education
- ▶ NORTH Link
- ▶ Caravan Industry Victoria
- ▶ Australian Institute of Engineering

* See Hume Multiversity Infographic for further details

26 SEED SIGNATORIES

- ▶ Two Culturally Responsive online training sessions attended by **3** businesses
- ▶ One Disability Awareness session attended by **6** businesses
- ▶ One bus tour to Kangan and Nestle attended by **8** businesses
- ▶ One SEED partner collaboration project - SHE Tech (Enable IT and SheForce)
- ▶ **6** local resident employment outcomes with SEED partners

LOCAL JOBS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

104 PLACEMENTS




Facilitated by Council's Local Employment Partnerships team, through:

- ▶ **15** employer-led sessions / site tours
- ▶ **9** targeted workshops to prepare resident for specific employment opportunities and events.



2 INDUSTRY JOB EXPOS

- ▶ Future in Motion - Transport, Logistics & Manufacturing 24/7/2025
- ▶ Who Cares - Careers in Caring & Support 15/5/2025

650+ attendees **430** jobs on offer
45 exhibitors **165** jobs filled

4 CO-DELIVERED EXPOS

- ▶ Value Nation Migrant Refugee Expo 18/6/2025
- ▶ All For You 27/8/2025
- ▶ Step Into Service 3/9/2025
- ▶ Youth Pasifika Career Expo 27/11/2025



5 SUPPORTED JOBS & CAREER EXPO

- ▶ Young People Connecting to Employment
- ▶ Exploring the Local Job Market
- ▶ Broadmeadows Vicinity Retail Jobs Expo
- ▶ HWLLEN VET Discovery Expo
- ▶ Asuria Open Hire



HUME COMMUNITY REVITALISATION PROJECTS

- ▶ **17** residents participated in Uplift and **10** continued to Passport to Work
- ▶ **19** residents participated in Passport to Work. **15** completed foundation training, resulting in a **73%** employment/education outcome
- ▶ **31** women were engaged in Thriving Together - Empowering Women into Economic Inclusion. **11** women secured education & training placements, **11** employment, **3** volunteering roles and **1** secured work experience.
- ▶ **30** residents participated in Hume Start Up Program - Migrant and Refugee Entrepreneurship. **6** commenced their business and **8** are being developed



HUME COMMUNITY JOBS & SKILLS WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

- ▶ **67** interviews conducted with long term unemployed residents within CR ostcodes to better understand barriers to employment
- ▶ **21** service providers interviewed
- ▶ **4** Presentations to Hume Jobs & Skills Taskforce

OTHER SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Workskil Parent Pathways Launch Event 11/06/205
- ▶ RMA Automotive Retrenched Workers Information Session 09/07/2025 - attended by over **50** workers. Of the **21** that registered with Local Jobs for Local People **13** secured employment
- ▶ HWLLEN Real Industry Job Interviews 04/09/2025
- ▶ Local Jobs for Local People Presentation Jobfind Youth

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

- ▶ Local Jobs Program
- ▶ Workforce Australia
- ▶ The Hume Employment and Learning Committee (ELC)
- ▶ Hume Multiversity Steering Group
- ▶ Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network (HWLLEN)
- ▶ Hume Community Investment Committee
- ▶ Brotherhood of St Laurence
- ▶ Youth Transition Support Program

One of the key programs supporting this is the Hume Multiversity Program.

Hume Multiversity Program.

Launched in late 2012, the Hume Multiversity is a partnership development initiative to support a connected system between Hume City Council, education, local business and local community to improve educational aspiration and opportunity by helping facilitate the coordination of lifelong learning by making tertiary education and training opportunities more accessible to Hume residents and to improve opportunities for local business development. The proposition is simple. Rather than a university taking on the challenge of establishing its facilities and meeting the threshold for viability, tertiary partners come together to deliver programs in shared facilities in a complementary manner.

The actual mix of courses delivered under the Hume Multiversity initiative reflects analysis of emerging demographic data, emerging information about industry and occupational trends, and local citizen demand. Models of delivery would address the circumstances of students of all ages, especially those targeted by government policy

The objectives are:

- Partnership development to coordinate a connected system between education, business and community
- Support program partners with delivery in Hume for both residents and the business community
- To support project partners to effectively promote access to educational pathways and resources in Hume City

This diagram is an infographic showing current partner organisations and achievements for 2018-2025.



Hume Suburban Study Hub.

Funded by the Federal Government, the Study Hubs program provide a dedicated space for university students to study, connect and access academic support close to home. La Trobe University is the operator of the Northern Study Hub, encompassing the Northern Study Hub Broadmeadows in Hume and the Northern Study Hub Epping, and is supported by a community advisory group – the Northern Study Hub Advisory Group of which a Hume Councillor is a member. Hosted by Hume City Council in its offices in Broadmeadows, it is open to all registered higher education students.

The study hub is open 7 days a week with extended hours. It provides a flexible learning environment with quiet study zones, informal and collaborative learning spaces and teacher support rooms. Academic support and access to online university services are available. Being close to both a train station and bus interchange and across from a shopping centre it is highly accessible and offers good amenity substantially reducing travel times and cost for higher education students. Some current interesting stats for the Broadmeadows site:

- 141 students are registered at Broadmeadows
- Approximately two-thirds of students are female many of whom have parental or caring responsibilities
- 44% of students are enrolled at La Trobe University Students followed by 17% from the University of Melbourne and 12% from RMIT University.
- 68% of students are young adults aged 18- 24.
- 15% are mature-aged students aged 25-49.
- 17% are career changes or taking steps into postgraduate study.
- The Hub is accessible, with higher-than-average proportions of students identifying as having a disability (10%) or parental/ caring responsibilities (9%)

6. Melton City Council, Victoria

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

2025 Learning Festival:



In 2025 the City of Melton Learning festival celebrated its seventh year. This year, the theme was Food, exploring everything from growing and making, to eating and enjoying. Food crosses cultures to unite us, and food is often a vital source of learning at all stages of a lifetime.

Over two huge weeks, Melton City Libraries delivered over 30 programs to thousands of community members. Highlights included a Native bushfoods workshop with the Wurundjeri corporation, a Pasta Making and Appreciation workshop with Author Jaclyn Crupi, and a Natural Dyes with Food Scraps Workshop with Tamara Leacock of Remuse Designs.

Short Story Competition

2025 marked the 20th anniversary of the City of Melton Short Story Competition. Spanning over 4 age categories, the Short Story Competition is open to any aspiring storyteller to submit their work to be judged by published authors.

This year, Melton City Libraries had the privilege of working with authors Maxine Beneba Clarke, Alice Pung and Ernie Rijs, who had their work cut out for them with almost 400 entries over the categories.

The Short Story Competition has evolved to welcome entries that are not only in written format, but also illustration, video, verse, or voice. The team at the library incorporated our state-of-the-art Butler AV recording studio to encourage entrants to record their stories.

The library also held writing workshops with special guest authors, along with our judges, to share writing tips and tricks with aspiring authors, as well as editing classes for young people to workshop their pieces.



6 City of Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia

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

City of PAE Report for 2025

2025 was another busy year at City of Port Adelaide Enfield.



A key achievement was the opening of Yitpi Yartapuultiku Aboriginal Cultural Centre on Sunday 1 June. Thousands of people attended the launch event, with cultural activities, dance, a panel with the architects and Elders, food and music. The function room at Yitpi has been extremely popular with government departments, local businesses and schools using the space for training, conferences and graduations. Yitpi’s Cultural Ranger has hosted many school and tourist groups, teaching them about First Nations use of plants. Several art exhibitions have been displayed and a new retail space selling locally made clothing, homewares and jewellery has been popular.

Yitpi Yartapuultiku launch event.



Sustainability continues to be a focus at PAE Libraries. We have installed two new recycle stations with a grant from Green Industries SA. We arranged the ALCN Webinar with Green Industries to learn about their Guide to Circular Hubs. In December 2025 we launched a new Tool collection at Port Adelaide Library, making power tools available for loan.

The Library’s program development framework and evaluation survey tool has been refined and simplified, increasing the ability to measure delivery of learning outcomes.

The Adult Literacy class has been replaced by an Adult Reading Help 1:1 program where learners are matched with a volunteer tutor who can meet with them at any of the five PAE Library branches at a time that suits the learner.

English language group after planting native plants in garden bed outside Greenacres Library.

We held our second Words Grow Minds Family Day, this year in collaboration with the Kilburn Community Centre, Welcoming Australia and a significant number of local partners and service providers. This event was highly successful in reaching new arrival families and signing up 70 children with library memberships. Citizen Science was also high on the agenda, particularly with the Algal Bloom affecting our coastline. A citizen science corner at Semaphore Library gave local residents opportunity to learn about the algae and view it under a microscope. PAE's Environment team are continuing to engage with volunteers monitoring local bird life in wetlands, and coastal water conditions.

New learning events at PAE in 2025 included Kurna Language Workshops (Adelaide First Nations Country), an AI/media literacy talk, and several Astronomy events with a set of Telescopes purchased by our STEM Programs and Learning Officers.

7 Tamworth Regional Council

Written by Kay Delahunt, Manager Cultural and Community Services

Cultural Plan

The [Tamworth Region Creative Communities Plan](#), which recognises the role of learning in the creative ecosystem, won the Leo Kelly OAM Arts and Culture Award at the NSW Local Government Awards in August 2025.

Central Northern Regional Library celebrated 75 years of operation on 1 September 2025.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Central Northern Regional Library, two *One Book One Region* campaigns were held.

- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell was published in 1949 and was one of the most popular books when the regional library formed in 1950. In 2025, 400 copies of the book were distributed throughout the community, in cafes, doctor's surgeries, train station and other places where people gather or wait. The idea is to take the book, read it and pass it on to someone else. Discussion groups and extension activities are provided after the book has percolated in the community.

UNE speculative fiction lecturer, Natalia Tobin, gave a talk at the Tamworth Library, on the relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in society today. The audience was highly engaged, and the talk stimulated some interesting discussion and thought.

- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was published in 1950 and is still well-loved today. 400 copies of this title have also been distributed in the community. Extension activities are planned for this title and include discussion groups; another UNE talk and a trivia night.

Adult Learners Week

Workshops for Adult Learners Week 2025 included:

- “*Digital Literacy and your Health*” presented by Healthwise at all Tamworth Regional Council Libraries during Adult Learners Week.



- *Tech Savvy Seniors* 10-week programs commenced at all library branches in Adult Learners' Week

- *Crochet Wildlife Nests* for WIRES was held in Tamworth and at some regional branches



- *Indian Pickling* was held at Tamworth Library (commercial kitchen)
- *Making Sourdough* was held at Tamworth Library – a small group of attendees were taught how to make sourdough from scratch, and all participants were given a jar with a sourdough mother (starter) to make their own sourdough at home.
- *Neural Knitworks* - attendees learned about neurons and then had fun crafting neurons with patterns for knit, crochet and no-knit. Attendees ranged from teens to 70+ and some people learned to crochet while making the neurons. A follow up workshop was run to attach the neurons together to make a display for next year's science week.



- A 4-week *beginner's sewing* course commenced in Adult Learners Week where attendees learnt how to use a sewing machine and at the end of the four-week period they had sewn a bag.
- *3D Pens* - Tamworth Library Innovation Studio ran a drop-in 3D Pen session for adults to create 3D models using 3D pens.



Early Childhood Literacy

Tamworth Regional Council continues to support the “whole of community model” for the Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, where every child receives a book every month until the age of five.

Libraries continue to offer wrap around programs, and the Early Childhood Literacy Officer has provided training on *Reading with Low Literacy* for community service organisations dealing with young families. The training shows how to use books to spark an interaction between parents and children, using modified dialogic reading strategies. The train-the trainer style training, will help the community service organisations to provide instruction to recently incarcerated fathers, and other at-risk families.

Improvements to Nundle Library

The *Gil Bennet Rocks, Minerals and Gems Collection* was relocated to Nundle Library. This significant collection was housed in the Visitor Information Outlet (VIO). The VIO was staffed by volunteers and post covid it became increasingly difficult to open the doors to the facility. The VIO and minerals collection has been moved to the Nundle Library and is now staffed by a library Officer.

A local Studies Room was established at the Nundle Library and a large screen installed for screening films and videoconferencing.

8 Wollongong City Council, NSW

Current Progress – UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

After six years of strategic development and collaboration, Wollongong City Council applied for membership of **UNESCO’s Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)** in **June 2025**. The application was endorsed by the **Learning City Steering Group** and the **Executive Sponsor**, and formally signed off by the **Lord Mayor**, who will act as the official *Member* on behalf of the City of Wollongong.

On **10 July 2025**, Wollongong’s application received national endorsement from the **Secretary-General of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO**, within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), confirming alignment with UNESCO’s lifelong learning principles and national priorities.

On **5 December 2025**, Wollongong City Council was formally admitted as a **member of UNESCO’s Global Network of Learning Cities**, marking a significant milestone in the city’s long-term commitment to lifelong learning, inclusion, and sustainable community development.

This achievement positions Wollongong alongside leading learning cities worldwide and strengthens international collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovation across education, community learning, and workforce development.

In 2026 we are seeking community input on a range of projects that will shape future learning opportunities.

Learning Spotlights

Over the past 12 months, Wollongong City Council has continued to support and celebrate lifelong learning in its many forms across the Wollongong Local Government Area. The following Learning Spotlights showcase the diversity of learning opportunities taking place in our community—across all ages, cultures, abilities, and stages of life.

These examples highlight how learning happens not only through formal education, but also through libraries, cultural events, creative programs, business development, community partnership, and shared experiences. Together, they reflect Wollongong’s commitment to inclusive, accessible, and community-led learning that strengthens connection, wellbeing, participation, and opportunity for all residents.

Learning Spotlight: Libraries – Free Access to Lifelong Learning Resources

Wollongong City Libraries play a central role in fostering lifelong learning across the region. With seven branches spanning Helensburgh to Warrawang and Dapto, a home library service, and an extensive suite of online resources, Council’s library network ensures equitable access to learning opportunities for all community members.

Libraries provide free, welcoming, and inclusive spaces that promote accessibility, diversity, and a strong sense of belonging. They support learning across the life course—from early childhood through to older adulthood—through a diverse range of resources, programs, and services. These safe and engaging environments encourage reading, study,

digital participation, creativity, and social connection, contributing to an informed, democratic, and participatory community.

Recognising the diversity of learning needs and backgrounds across Wollongong, libraries offer materials in multiple formats, including large print, braille, audio, graphic novels, and digital media, as well as multilingual collections and resources for varying literacy levels. This inclusive approach ensures residents can access learning in ways that best suit their needs.

Self-directed learning is supported through the library catalogue, mobile app, and extensive Digital Library, with guidance from skilled and knowledgeable staff. Community feedback and suggestions help shape collections that reflect local interests, aspirations, and learning goals.

Early literacy and strong learning foundations are nurtured through programs such as *Baby Beats*, *Baby Bookworms*, *Toddvertime*, and *Preschool Storytime*, while outreach initiatives like *Stories in the Park* and *Paint the Gong REaD* extend learning into neighbourhoods and natural environments. For adults, programs such as *Read and Write for Life* provide one-to-one support to strengthen reading and writing skills, complemented by a range of digital and life-literacy programs delivered in partnership with local community organisations.

Learning Spotlight: Creative Expression, Wellbeing and Community Connection

Wollongong City Libraries also support learning through creative and wellbeing-focused initiatives that strengthen confidence, connection, and emotional safety.

In partnership with the William Campbell Foundation, which supports children and young people in out-of-home care, Council hosted a life-drawing and painting session at Wollongong Library. Caseworkers, clinicians, wellbeing officers, and young people participated in a relaxed, supportive environment, with *Ollie the therapy dog* joining as a much-loved model for the afternoon.

For many participants, opportunities to attend extracurricular activities are limited, and some have experienced loss through frequent changes in care arrangements. The session provided a rare opportunity to engage creatively, connect with a calm therapy animal, and build confidence in a safe community space. Feedback highlighted enjoyment, relaxation, and a desire to participate in future library activities.

The group continued their engagement the following week at Dapto Library through an information and trust-building session with NSW Police, reinforcing libraries as trusted spaces for learning, connection, and community support.

Learning Spotlight: Celebrating Cultural Diversity and Shared Learning

Council's Culture Mix Festival is a flagship example of community-led learning that celebrates Wollongong's cultural diversity and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

In 2024, the festival featured 119 community groups, performers, stallholders, and facilitators representing 35 cultural backgrounds. The program included small grants to support the sharing of cultural traditions, large-scale creative projects exploring identity through performance and art, and hands-on workshops that enabled attendees to learn new dances, songs, cuisines, and art forms.

Designed to be welcoming and inclusive, the festival implemented 21 accessibility measures, including plain-English and Auslan promotion, accessible venues and facilities, staff training, quiet spaces, and tailored experiences for deaf, blind, and low-vision participants.

Supported by the NSW Government, Culture Mix attracted more than 25,000 attendees across 2023–24. Survey feedback highlighted the festival’s success in creating meaningful shared learning experiences and fostering a strong sense of belonging and cultural pride.

Learning Spotlight: Connecting and Equipping Aboriginal Businesses

Council demonstrated its commitment to inclusive economic learning and empowerment through the Illawarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo, which showcased 35 Aboriginal-owned businesses across diverse sectors and attracted more than 400 attendees from the public, corporate, and government sectors.

Held to expand networks and increase visibility of Indigenous enterprises, the Expo was complemented by a Procurement Networking Event hosted by BlueScope during Indigenous Business Month. Panel discussions explored how Aboriginal Procurement Policies can support business growth, while networking opportunities enabled participants to connect with buyers, partners, and support organisations.

These initiatives were delivered collaboratively by Wollongong City Council, the Illawarra Indigenous Business Network, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and BlueScope. The partnership approach highlights the mobilisation of local resources to build business capability, strengthen the local economy, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurship. Future steps will include supporting an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander business owner to take carriage of the initiative.

Learning Spotlight: International Women’s Day – Stories, Reflection and Creativity

Council marked International Women’s Day with *The Reading Retreat*, a learning-focused celebration featuring inspiring authors, a welcoming yarning circle, lively book discussions, and creative, book-themed activities.

Participants shared stories, reflected on lived experiences, and connected through literature and creativity in a supportive and inclusive environment. The event reinforced the role of storytelling, dialogue, and shared learning in empowering women and strengthening community connection.

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.

Wyndham Learning City: Advancing Inclusive Lifelong Learning in 2025



As a proud UNESCO Learning City and an active member of the Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN), Wyndham City continues to strengthen its position as a national and global leader in lifelong and life-wide learning. Throughout 2025, Wyndham delivered significant progress under the [Learning Community Strategy 2024–2029](#), advancing equity, inclusion, participation, and innovation across its fast-growing and culturally diverse municipality. The year marked the second full cycle of implementation, characterised by deepened partnerships, community-led learning, First Nations collaboration, and strengthened visibility of learning opportunities across all life stages

Wyndham Learning City: 2025 Highlights

Pillar 1: First Nations First

Wyndham advanced its commitment to First Nations-led learning through deepening relationships with Traditional Owners, expanded cultural learning for staff, and increased visibility of First Nations culture across libraries, community centres, and public spaces. Initiatives such as mixed-mode cultural awareness training, First Nations Art Tours, NAIDOC programming, truth-telling engagement, and culturally informed public art helped embed cultural safety and shared learning across the municipality. Programs like **Deadly Tech Day** also demonstrated how culturally responsive education can strengthen participation in STEM among First Nations learners.

“We loved the First Nations theme and the opportunity to support local stallholders.”

— Wyndham Learning Festival attendee

Pillar 2: Learning to Learn & Foundation Skills

Libraries continued to serve as a cornerstone of Wyndham’s learning ecosystem, delivering over 4,500 programs across library branches, community centres, and the Pop-Up Library Van, with more than 107,000 attendances in

2025 across early years, youth, adult, digital literacy, and outreach programs. Targeted initiatives strengthened foundational skills, including 243 participants in digital literacy programs, 140 one-on-one IT help sessions, 43 specialised computer classes, and extensive STEAM engagement through 37 Coding Champs entrants, 55 awards event attendees, and five coding workshops. Early years learning was further supported through *Sharing Stories*, which reached 2,487 attendees, distributed 1,412 literacy bags, and enabled families to take home 780+ board books.

Partnerships with AMES, community centres, and Maternal and Child Health services ensured learning pathways reached residents of all ages and backgrounds, including vulnerable families, culturally diverse communities, and new arrivals. Foundation skills were further strengthened through the Wyndham Community & Education Centre, which delivered 1,044 pre-accredited learners completing 55,559 training hours and maintained 470 accredited English enrolments per term. The **Transformative Education Showcase** reinforced Wyndham's commitment to intergenerational learning, bringing together educators across life stages to explore practical models that build connection, confidence, and shared learning. Participants reported 100% satisfaction, highlighting the value of storytelling, mentoring, and cross-generational engagement.

“I enjoyed writing again — it’s something I’ve lost touch with.”

— Intergenerational Letter Writing Program participant

Pillar 3: Employability, Work Skills & Career Pathways

Wyndham delivered a broad suite of initiatives supporting local workforce development and inclusive employment. Highlights included the **Wyndham Principal’s Network Breakfast** on changing employability needs, WynBay LLEN’s Mock Job Interview Program supporting 749 students, engaged 42 organisations, and involved 13 participating schools; and the Opportunity Wyndham partnership promoting and strengthening inclusive employment practices across local employers. Youth Services expanded practical employment pathways through Freeza, the Amplify Paradox Crew, workplace immersion programs, and job-readiness support. This work was complemented by strong business-facing initiatives such as SPARK, Love Your Local, and the award-shortlisted Wyndham–RMIT *AI for Business* partnership further enhancing local workforce capability and innovation.

“The program helped me feel more confident and prepared for real job interviews.”

— Student participant, Mock Job Interview Program

Pillar 4: Leadership & New Learning

Wyndham continued to lead locally, nationally, and globally through knowledge exchange, civic learning, and future-focused education. The **2025 Education Roundtable** brought together 52 leaders to address employability, mental health, AI, and teacher workforce challenges. The 10th anniversary of the **Wyndham Learning Festival** delivered more than 130 events, hosted by 95 event partners, attracting over 3,300 registrations. This milestone year highlighted Wyndham's decade-long partnership model, community-led learning, cultural celebration, and intergenerational participation.

“Christine Anu’s stories and songs beautifully captured the spirit of learning, culture, and connection that defines this Festival.”

— Wyndham Learning Festival Launch reflection

In 2025, Wyndham strengthened its national influence through active leadership in the **Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN)**, occupying both the Chair and Secretary roles. Wyndham co-designed and delivered

multiple ALCN Learning Forums, contributing practice insights on lifelong learning pathways, adult education, climate action, and community-led learning models. These forums continue to mature into nationally recognised platforms for professional dialogue among learning city practitioners.

Through **LearNWest**, Wyndham promoted learner stories across Melbourne’s north and west, reaching more than 51,000 people and reinforcing the social and economic value of accessible learning.

Internationally, Wyndham played a highly visible role within the **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities**, presenting at global forums, contributing to the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) thematic clusters, and sharing practice through publications and workshops, including the Learning Cities Book Series (Vol. 35). Engagement with the PASCAL International Observatory further demonstrated Wyndham’s commitment to collaboration, knowledge exchange, and inclusive economic development through neighbourhood-based learning.

Looking Ahead

As Wyndham moves into 2026, the city remains committed to strengthening cross-sector partnerships, enhancing access to learning, and embedding learning into local government practice to drive community resilience, equity, and wellbeing. Guided by the Strategy and supported by its role in ALCN and global networks, Wyndham will continue to champion learning as a driver for wellbeing, participation, and community resilience.

[View the Learning Community Update 2 here](#)