

**BALLARAT
LIBRARIES**
LOVE YOUR LIBRARY



Wendouree Library and Learning Centre

Community Engagement Summary Report
October 2022



Executive Summary

The development of a new Wendouree Library and Learning Centre will provide a creative learning and community space offering a comprehensive library service, spaces for community organisations and groups, a Maker Space, community study, activity and relaxation spaces, a café area and free WiFi.

The Wendouree Library and Learning Centre will provide library and community services to future residents of Ballarat's northern suburbs, including the new Northern Growth Zone- which is expected to welcome more than 18,900 new residents by 2035-2040. In total, the facility is projected to serve a catchment of over 41,000 people, providing vital access to learning, connection and support across the region.

"As the city will grow more to the north over the next several years following rezoning of the northern growth corridor, future residents will need easy access to library and community services this new centre will provide."

Cr Daniel Moloney, Mayor of Ballarat (2022)

ballarat.vic.gov.au/news/wendouree-library-and-learning-centre

Eight community engagement sessions were held, in the existing Wendouree Library and other community locations, with attendance of 100 people. These sessions were informal, discussion-style where existing library users and local residents were invited to view concept plans and provide feedback.

Community feedback from the process clearly identified wide support for the concept and future steps:

- the current library's size limitations and location is a reason **not** to engage with library services.
- Weeramar Park is supported as a location with no significant objections raised
- The project should move to detailed design phase

Background Context

The City of Ballarat [Community Infrastructure Plan 2022-2037](#) identifies a future new library in the suburb of Wendouree as a key capital project, to support community services and program delivery in Ballarat's western corridor.

Library services are currently delivered in Wendouree through a small repurposed shopfront within the Stockland Wendouree shopping centre. The library has been in this location for more than thirty years. At just 250 square metres, this facility is no longer fit for purpose. It has limited space for browsing collections and no capacity to expand learning programs to meet community demand. It does not have community meeting facilities, staff spaces or amenities. There are safety concerns for staff and public, as the shopfront has only one entry/exit and it is not within the centre proper. Despite these limitations, the present library is well patronised by residents from Wendouree, Wendouree West, Lake Gardens, Alfredton, Lucas and Miners Rest.



Current Wendouree Library at Stockland Wendouree Shopping Centre

Planning for a new Wendouree Library and Learning Centre began in 2022, after Council adopted the [Libraries and Learning Strategy 2022-2027](#). A future new library in Wendouree is a key project within the strategy.

In 2022, Cohen Leigh Architects were commissioned to develop concept plans, so that community engagement, consultation and feedback on future library services could begin fully. The brief was to provide contemporary library concept drawings, that would reflect Council's goal of providing Wendouree with a modern, community based learning facility, that embraced open green space and facilities.

The preferred site is Weeramar Park, located on the corner of Norman and Gillies Street.



Weeramar Park, corner Norman and Gillies Streets

Weeramar Park is ideally located in the heart of the Wendouree and Wendouree West communities.

This site is on a major thoroughfare. It is within easy walking distance of key stakeholders, Wendouree Neighbourhood House, Yuille Park Community College, Wendouree Children's Centre, Wendouree Primary School and Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School. Public transport is available on Norman and Gillies Streets and the Wendouree Railway Station is 1.3km away, with transport routes. The existing library is 400m away, allowing easy transition for current users of the library. It is situated on the fringes of the new proposed Northern Growth Area, 3.3km away.

Since planning began for this project, the proposed new facility has been featured widely in broader Ballarat media, through feature articles and Councillor messaging. The project was showcased in Council's *ourballarat* community magazine, Spring 2022 edition, which is delivered to every household in Ballarat. It has also been showcased in Council's online communications, as well as feature articles such as the Ballarat Courier.

Once the initial concept plans were available, the first round of community engagement occurred between July and October 2022.



The consultation process

The first community engagement for future library services in Wendouree occurred between July and October 2022.

The primary audience was existing Wendouree library users and residents in the immediate vicinity of the preferred location, Weeramar Park. This is because Council acknowledges that feedback from those who use the existing facility is vitally important. It is important to understand their connection to existing library services and what they valued and wanted to maintain in any new facility.

The secondary audience was residents of Wendouree generally, extending to neighbouring suburbs such as Alfredton, Lake Gardens and Miners Rest.

The intention was:

- to inform on Council's long-term vision for library services in Wendouree,
- to ascertain initial community response to both the concept of a new library build and the preferred location and,
- to begin advocacy and community support for this long term project.

The methods used to engage:

- A letter to residents in the immediate vicinity of the Weeramar Park. The letter, from Director of Community Wellbeing Matthew Wilson, provided the context for future Wendouree library services and an invitation to attend in person information sessions at the current Wendouree Library.
- Five drop-in information sessions in July and three in September/October. At these sessions, attendees viewed concept plans for a future Wendouree Library. Senior library staff were on hand to present the information, answer questions and concerns and record comments.
- Residents were informed about the schedule for these sessions by letterbox drop, customer service in the Wendouree library branch, SMS message to registered Wendouree library members, library website notifications, media release, and Council website notifications. An extensive stakeholder list was also used to ensure Wendouree community groups and organisations were aware of the opportunity to participate.

Session 1 Timetable

Date & Time	Location
Friday 1 July: 1-2pm; 3-4pm	Wendouree Library
Saturday 2 July: 9.30-10.30am	Wendouree Library
Monday 4 July: 1-2pm	Wendouree Library
Saturday 9 July: 9.30-10.30am	Wendouree Library
Friday 15 July: 3-4pm	Wendouree Library

After the release of ourballarat, a second round of engagement sessions was held at Wendouree Library during September and October 2022. While the target audience and purpose followed the same principles, these sessions were also to answer potential concerns or questions raised because of the earlier public information campaign. The sessions were scheduled to occur immediately before or after scheduled library programs to maximise attendance.

Session 2 Timetable

Date & Time	Location
Thursday 15 September: 10–11am	Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre
Thursday 15 September: 2–3pm	Wendouree Library
Tuesday 4 October: 2.30–3.30pm	Wendouree Library

The focus of engagement in 2022 was very much on testing the initial concept plans prior to a future detailed design process.



WENDOUREE LIBRARY UPGRADE

Wendouree Library is one of Ballarat's most loved libraries but is limited by size and location. The City of Ballarat hopes to partner with the Victorian and Australian Governments to deliver a planned new "community heart" with the Wendouree Library and Learning Centre. Learn more about this exciting project at our drop-in information sessions.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

Thursday 15 September 2pm–3pm	Wendouree Library
Tuesday 4 October 2pm–3.30pm	Wendouree Library




Who we heard from and the feedback

The eight face-to-face drop-in sessions were held at a variety of times, particularly to follow on from scheduled programs and activities.

100 individual comments were recorded and over 30 questions were received from library users and the public. Each session had attendances of between 5–10 people. Staff noted that some attendees had come specifically to attend at the advertised time; others were at the library to use the facility or library services and joined while there.

Staff also noted that existing Wendouree library users demonstrated high levels of interest in the project outside the advertised session times. This occurred through their interactions and conversations with library staff. These more informal engagement opportunities were also recorded. The concept drawings remained on display for three months and staff continued to record questions and comments.

Four key themes emerged during this engagement process:

- limitations to the existing library branch service at Stockland Wendouree due to its small size
- restrictions on access due to limited opening hours, Monday to Friday
- eagerness for a quick timeline to deliver this potential project and
- accessibility must be a key feature of any future library building.

What we learned from the community that will inform detailed design

- The concept of a new Wendouree Library and Learning Centre is strongly supported by existing Wendouree library users and residents. People commented that the current library's limitations and location is a reason not to engage with or utilize current library services.
- The preferred location, Weeramar Park, is supported by the community, activating a space that currently is perceived to have little community benefit and has significant safety concerns and barriers to use.
- Community network partners (such as Wendouree Neighbourhood House and local schools) expressed a wish to collaborate
- The Wendouree community felt that investment in a significant infrastructure project validated them, in the context of greater Ballarat and the focus on emerging suburbs and new developments.
- A strong theme was excitement for the project and impatience for it to begin.

Next Steps

Feedback from this first phase of engagement has confirmed strong community support for the project and a clear desire for improved library services in Wendouree.

This feedback will inform future concept refinement and directly support Council's advocacy efforts for State and Federal funding.

A second phase of engagement will be undertaken once funding is secured and detailed design work is ready to begin, ensuring the community remains closely involved throughout the project's development.

"A project of this size and importance is best delivered with funding from all three levels of government. A partnership of that kind would mean construction could begin before the end of the decade to help meet the rapidly growing demand in the area and relieve pressure on the existing Wendouree Library."

Cr Daniel Moloney, Mayor of Ballarat (2022)

timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/wendouree-library/

Responses to the concept designs and preferred location

"Not generally a fan of modern buildings but this is converting me, there is something about how the indoor/outdoor spaces function and look that is really inviting. You feel like just walking in there and sitting. It's excellent. Will lift the ambience of the area."

"This will be a much better community meeting place than the Stockland food court."

"The library needs to be attractive to get people in, so that they can see what is available to them and start to use it. They need to walk in to see the benefits. The current library can't do that, it's hidden."

"Gives Wendouree West a tick, says we're taking Wendouree West seriously which is good because it currently feels like stepping into the past and deprived, this is the opposite and says you're as valuable as anyone else. Always had a separated feel."

"A tight space here [existing library] so a purpose built maker space would be great. When we attend holiday programs here we feel like we're making a mess and shouldn't do that in this space. Would be great for kids and adults as well to learn technology."

"The library is about more than picking a book and taking it home to read. It's about interacting with the facilities and the services and the community and if you can change people's perspective, they will take ownership of the building."

"It's totally worth the money, the community needs this."

"2029 is too long to wait."

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