WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Experience Western Downs

It's the people that make it.

WESTERN DOWNS Libraries

WESTERN DOWNS LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2029

Mayor's Welcome

The Western Downs is a region of active, vibrant communities with residents of diverse ages, backgrounds and experiences. Our libraries sit at the heart of these communities and remain among the most valued public spaces Council offers.

Libraries are about much more than just books. They are a place of connection where people come together to learn, create and feel part of something bigger. As our region continues to grow and thrive, libraries and the diverse range of services they offer are becoming an increasingly vital part of the enviable quality of life we enjoy in the Western Downs.

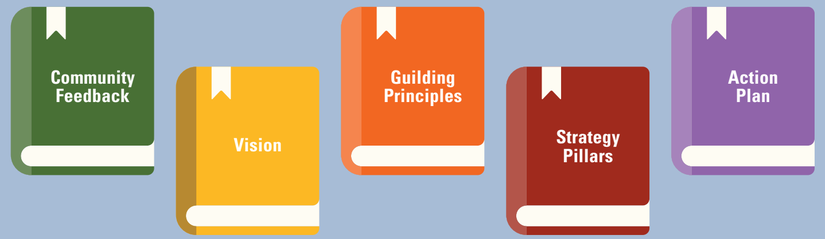
This Libraries Strategy sets a clear direction for how Council will support and grow these much-loved spaces. It reflects our commitment to ensuring our libraries remain welcoming, innovative and community centred, while also upholding strong operational efficiency and responsible financial management.

From early learners and young families through to students, jobseekers, seniors and everyone in between, every library has its own character shaped by the people who use it. This strategy builds on the strengths our libraries already have and guides their continued evolution so they remain accessible, welcoming places for all, now and into the future.

Cr Andrew Smith
Mayor, Western Downs Regional Council

Contents

Welcome.....2
Why is this Strategic Plan important?.....4
Positive outcomes this Strategy will achieve.....4
Alignment with the Corporate Plan.....5
How this Strategic Plan connects.....5
Regional Snapshot.....6
Community Voices Shaping our Libraries.....7
Turning Feedback into Action.....7
Our Library Journey.....8
Strategy on a Page: Vision, Principles, Pillars.....9
Action List.....10
Monitoring, Reviewing and Reporting.....14
Next Steps and How To Stay Involved.....14



Why is this Strategic Plan important?

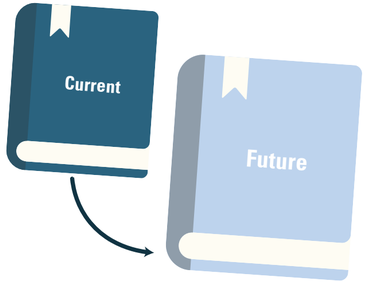
Libraries are more than places to borrow books—they are essential community hubs that foster learning, creativity, and social connection. As our region grows and technology evolves, libraries must adapt to changing needs and expectations. This strategy provides a clear and actionable pathway to ensure Western Downs Libraries remain relevant, inclusive, and future-focused.

It responds to community feedback and emerging trends such as:

- Inclusion and accessibility – creating spaces and services for all demographics.
- Community connection – strengthening social connection, creativity and lifelong learning.
- Digital transformation – bridging the digital divide and supporting technology confidence.
- Sustainability and growth – planning for modern facilities and resilient services.

By setting a shared vision and priorities, this strategy ensures:

- Libraries continue to deliver high-quality programs and services.
- Decisions are guided by evidence, community input, and best practice.
- Investments are aligned with Council's broader goals for vibrant, connected communities.



Positive outcomes this Strategic Plan will achieve

FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Greater access to inclusive, welcoming spaces for learning, creativity, and connection.
- Improved digital literacy and confidence through technology programs and support.
- Flexible options for accessing library services.

FOR COMMUNITY

- Stronger social connections through programs, partnerships, and cultural engagement.
- Opportunities for lifelong learning and creative expression across all demographics.
- Libraries as vibrant hubs that celebrate local identity and heritage.

FOR COUNCIL AND THE REGION

- Alignment with corporate priorities for active, connected communities.
- Modern, sustainable facilities that anticipate future growth and community needs.
- Enhanced operational efficiency through clear priorities and measurable outcomes.

Vibrant Connected Communities

Balanced Prosperous Lifestyle

Sustainable Effective Council

Alignment with the Corporate Plan

This strategy directly supports Western Downs Regional Council's Corporate Plan 2026–2031 by fostering vibrant, inclusive, and well-connected communities. It does this through the delivery of modern library services, programs, and spaces that promote lifelong learning, digital inclusion, and cultural engagement. Guided by principles of accessibility and sustainability, the strategy ensures our libraries remain welcoming, adaptable, and future-ready.

How this Strategic Plan connects

The Libraries Strategic Plan works hand-in-hand with Council's other strategies to create vibrant, connected communities.

Together, these strategies ensure libraries remain central to community life, enriching learning, creativity, and connection across the Western Downs.

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND FRAMEWORKS

Aligns with statewide priorities for literacy, digital inclusion, and innovation.

PARKS & PLACEMAKING

Supports welcoming public spaces and community hubs, activates our parks and open spaces.

TOURISM

Activates libraries as cultural destinations and visitor experiences.

COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Embeds feedback and collaboration in service design.

CORPORATE PLAN

The Corporate Plan sets Council's vision for the region. It focuses on four (4) Strategic Priorities: Diverse Thriving Economy, Vibrant Connected Community, Balanced Prosperous Lifestyle and Sustainable Effective Council.

OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Operational Plan captures key projects and priorities for the financial year to ensure the corporate plan commitments are delivered.

PUBLIC ART & ART AND CULTURE

Celebrates local identity through creative programs and storytelling.

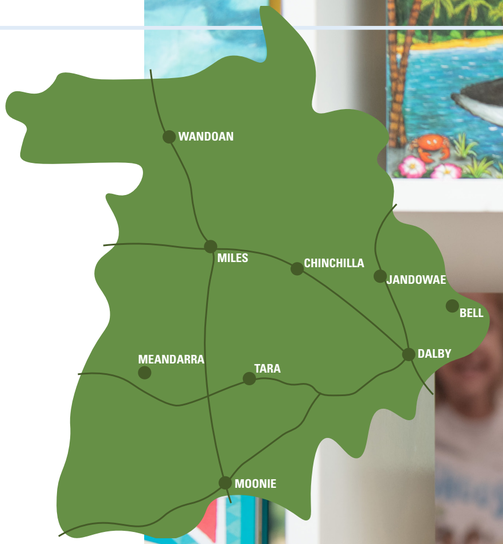
Regional Snapshot

Western Downs Libraries is a regional public library service operated by Council, serving communities across the Western Downs—an area comparable in size to Switzerland. The service plays a key role in providing access to information, lifelong learning opportunities, digital inclusion and community connection through a network of nine branch libraries located in:

- Bell
- Chinchilla
- Dalby
- Jandowae
- Meandarra
- Miles
- Moonie
- Tara
- Wandoan

Branches are supported by shared services and a single integrated catalogue, allowing members to borrow and return items seamlessly across the region.

The library service offers free membership and access to a broad range of physical and digital resources, including books, magazines, DVDs, audiobooks, eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, online databases, learning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, and local history collections. Libraries also deliver diverse programs and events for all ages—from early literacy programs and school holiday activities to book clubs, technology help sessions and wellbeing workshops—while providing free public computers, Wi-Fi, printing and scanning services, supporting digital access and community participation regardless of location.



At a Glance: FY 2024/25

- 130,005 annual visits
- 970 programs delivered
- 17,293 program attendance
- 14,599 members
- 12,226 public PC sessions
- 12,049 WiFi hours
- 174,468 loans

Community Voices Shaping Our Libraries

Our community played a central role in shaping this strategy. Through surveys, workshops, and engagement sessions, we heard what matters most to residents across the Western Downs.

Key themes included:

- **Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces**
  Libraries are valued as welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible places for all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
- **Digital Innovation**
  The community is interested in emerging technologies, including AI, AR/VR, Makerspaces and opportunities to build digital confidence and creativity.
- **Robust Core Services**
  Programs like First 5 Forever, digital support, creative workshops and lifestyle learning remain highly appreciated and well used.
- **Opportunities for Growth**
  Residents expressed interest in extended hours, youth-focused spaces, modern facilities and spaces that support flexible learning and community productivity; and libraries that serve as vibrant centres for creativity, culture and lifelong learning.

Turning Feedback into Action

These insights have guided our vision, principles, and actions, ensuring the strategy reflects local priorities and aspirations.

654 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESPONSES

167 'HAVE YOUR SAY' SURVEY RESPONSES

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

92 DIGITAL VISION BOARD INTERACTIONS

3 WORKSHOPS WITH WDRC STAFF

95 CHILDREN'S 'DREAM LIBRARY' BOOKLETS RECEIVED

Our Library Journey

Where We Are Now

Libraries are an essential part of community life in the Western Downs. They provide safe, welcoming spaces for learning, creativity, and connection. Across nine branches, our libraries deliver programs that support early literacy, digital confidence, wellbeing, and cultural engagement. We are committed to keeping libraries inclusive and relevant, with services that respond to community needs. This strategy will build on our strengths and drive continuous improvement.

What We Do Well

- **Welcoming Spaces**
  Libraries are trusted, inclusive places for all ages and backgrounds.
- **Impactful Programs**
  First 5 Forever, digital support, and lifestyle workshops are highly valued.
- **Responsive Service Delivery**
  We adapt programs and services based on feedback and emerging trends.

Where We Want To Be

"Our libraries are dynamic, inclusive, and future-focused community hubs that inspire learning, creativity, and connection. They provide equitable access to knowledge, technology, and cultural experiences, empowering individuals and communities to thrive."

We regularly review our services to ensure they meet evolving community needs. Guided by engagement insights, industry standards, and Council priorities, we aim to deliver innovative programs, modern facilities, and sustainable practices that keep libraries relevant and responsive for years to come.

Conversations with our community have shaped our strategy

Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces
Libraries are welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces for all people.

Digital Innovation
Engagement with emerging technologies builds digital confidence and creativity.

Strong Core Services
Key programs remain highly appreciated and well used.

Aspirations for Growth
Extended hours and modern, youth-focused spaces create vibrant learning centres.

Vision

Our Libraries are vibrant community spaces that spark curiosity, creativity, and connection.

We ensure everyone has fair access to knowledge, technology, and cultural experiences to support lifelong learning and community wellbeing.

Guiding Principles

Accessibility
We champion equitable access to information, technology, spaces and opportunities.

Community-Centred Service
We design and deliver services guided by community needs and aspirations.

Lifelong Learning
We create opportunities for learning, creativity, and discovery at every stage of life.

Innovation
We leverage modern technologies and new ways of working to deliver better services and build the community's digital confidence.

Sustainability
We plan responsibly for resilient, efficient and sustainable libraries.

Strategic Pillars

Access and Inclusion
We offer welcoming, inclusive services that remove barriers and support equity.

Community Connection and Lifelong Learning
We strengthen social connection, creativity and learning through programs and partnerships.

Digital Transformation and Creative Innovation
We build digital skills, inspire creativity and lead in emerging technologies.

Future Focused Growth and Sustainability
We plan for modern facilities, sustainable growth and resilient services that anticipate community needs.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1:

Access and Inclusion

Objective	Key Actions	KPI	Timeline
Remove barriers and provide flexible, inclusive options for all community members	Trial enhanced access initiatives that improve flexibility and inclusivity.	Access initiatives implemented at 3 branches	2026/27
	Activate dedicated youth spaces by delivering targeted youth engagement campaigns and maintain the spaces to reflect changing interests and needs	Deliver 20 youth programs annually with participation maintained or increased. Youth spaces maintained as active, fit-for-purpose spaces with continued informal use	Ongoing
	Develop new offerings such as Library of Things	Library of Things launches with >30 borrowable items and actively used	2028/29
	Develop and implement a Collection Development Policy ensuring a commitment to intellectual freedom and providing a diverse range of resources and collection items	Endorsed Collection Development Policy	2026/27
	Evaluate study spaces in branches and implement improvements where appropriate	Study space audit completed and improvements delivered	2027/28

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2:

Community Connection and Lifelong Learning

Objective	Key Actions	KPI	Timeline
Foster social connection and lifelong learning through programs and partnerships	Expand workshops and programs in: • Intergenerational • Job readiness • Multicultural	Deliver >100 programs annually Achieve >90% participant satisfaction	Ongoing
	Develop and implement targeted marketing campaigns and initiatives to increase community awareness, engagement and program participation	Increased reach and engagement with library promotions Quarterly reporting on campaign engagement	Ongoing
	Deliver the annual Words Out West festival, including School Days, community events, and programs across multiple Western Downs locations	2,000 students attend School Days 5 festival events delivered 4 Western Downs locations activated ≥80% satisfaction rating	Annually

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3:

Digital Transformation and Creative Innovation

Objective	Key Actions	KPI	Timeline
Empower communities through technology and digital literacy	Launch new and expand existing technology programs including AI education, scam awareness, personal security, AR/VR experiences, STEM programs and interactive technologies	Deliver >50 tech programs annually Achieve > 80% participant satisfaction	Ongoing
	Activate Makerspaces, podcasting hubs and implement loanable tech initiatives	Makerspaces operational in at least 2 branches >50 uses per quarter >20 loanable tech items Podcasting hubs in Dalby and Chinchilla	2026-2029
	Libraries will continue to monitor and adopt emerging technologies	Digital infrastructure remains appropriate, reliable and aligned to service needs.	Annually

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4:

Future-Focused Growth and Sustainability

Objective	Key Actions	KPI	Timeline
Plan for sustainable growth, modern facilities and resilient services	Plan and implement facility maintenance to ensure modern and welcoming spaces	Feature walls repainted in all branches by 2028 >90% satisfaction in facility surveys	Ongoing
	Embed sustainability initiatives including community gardens and environmentally responsible practices	Community gardens established at two branches Sustainability practices embedded in all branches	2026-2028
	Increase capable volunteering with specific roles such as Junior Librarian Volunteer and Local History and Heritage Volunteer	Establish three structured volunteer roles by 2027 Recruit and train >5 volunteers across all branches by 2029 >90% volunteer satisfaction rating	Onoging
	Refresh Library brand kit to maintain a contemporary identity	Brand kit updated and implemented across all branches	2026/27
	Increase library visitation to meet or exceed 2019 pre-covid benchmarks	Annual library visits increase by approximately 45% to meet the 2019 benchmark of 188,402 visits, by 2029	2029

Monitoring, Reviewing, and Reporting

Progress against this strategy will be regularly monitored and reported through quarterly updates and annual reviews. A mid-term review in 2028 will assess achievements and adjust priorities as needed. This ensures the strategy remains responsive to community needs and aligned with Council's Corporate and Operational Plans.

Next Steps & How To Stay Involved

Following Council adoption, this strategy will move into implementation through annual action plans aligned with the Operational Plan and budget. Progress will be shared through regular updates and reviews, ensuring transparency and accountability.

We invite you to stay involved by:

- Visiting Council's **Have Your Say** platform for updates and feedback opportunities.
- Engaging with your local library team to share ideas and participate in programs.
- Following Western Downs Libraries on social media for news, events, and initiatives.

Together, we can keep our libraries vibrant, inclusive, and future-focused.

We value your input and support, please connect with us and stay in touch!

Stay up to date via Council's **Have Your Say website.**

This strategy was Endorsed by Council on [date].
ECM ID #

DRAFT

WESTERN DOWNS LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN
2026-2029

WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL