



STATE LIBRARY
VICTORIA



LIBRARIES FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A strategic framework for Victorian public libraries



Public Libraries
Victoria

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Victoria's public library network operates from many different locations throughout Victoria. Across these locations, we acknowledge the Traditional lands of all the Victorian Aboriginal Clans and celebrate their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

CONTENTS

5	Opening Remarks
6	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
7	The need and our impact
8	Strategy on a page
10	BACKGROUND
11	Victoria's public library network
12	State Library Victoria
12	The origins of this framework
13	Developing the framework
14	WHY LIBRARIES
15	Our strengths
16	Current health and wellbeing activities
18	EXTERNAL CONTEXT
19	Key community considerations
21	Key health system considerations
24	OUR THEORY OF CHANGE
24	Our context
25	Our activities
25	Our outcomes
25	Our impact
26	STRATEGY IN DETAIL
27	Our purpose
27	Our role
28	Our impact areas
29	Our community priorities
32	Our library priorities
33	Sustainable Development Goals alignment
34	ACTION ROADMAP
40	EVIDENCING OUR WORK AND IMPACT
42	OTHER RESOURCES
46	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

OPENING REMARKS



Public libraries occupy a core and trusted position in communities across Victoria. As such, we already contribute to people's mental and physical health and wellbeing in many ways.

Libraries for Health and Wellbeing: A strategic framework for Victorian public libraries outlines the role and priorities of Victoria's public libraries in supporting community health and wellbeing. It speaks to why and how libraries can contribute to better health and wellbeing outcomes, describes what libraries are already doing in this regard, and offers ambitious ideas and initiatives for the future.

As well as looking at the big picture, the framework maps out how libraries will contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and how we will track and evaluate our health and wellbeing activities and impact. It also includes a roadmap with key health and wellbeing projects for individual public libraries across Victoria.

This framework is a resource for library leaders and team members, partners, government and the community. It is a tool to help understand why libraries have a role to play in health and wellbeing, and to guide decision making and action across the Victorian public library network.

We hope you find it useful and inspiring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "b. blt".

Christine Christian AO
President, Library Board of Victoria

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. B".

Chris Buckingham
President, Public Libraries Victoria

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The need and our impact

Good health and wellbeing, and meaningful social connections enable us to live fulfilling lives as part of strong, inclusive communities. Strengthening the health and wellbeing of our communities is not just the responsibility of healthcare professionals and organisations. It is up to all individuals, organisations and communities.

We believe that public libraries can empower, support and connect our communities and partners for a healthy, thriving Victoria.

Victoria's communities and its people are resilient, yet we face significant health and wellbeing challenges. These challenges are further compounded by discrimination, disadvantage, access barriers, inaccurate information and the inherent complexity of our health and wellbeing system.

Public libraries support and strengthen our communities. We are safe, trusted and accessible. Our teams are caring and committed. There are many avenues for us to benefit community health and wellbeing. Working in partnership is central here.

We run programs that bring people together and build skills and literacy. We offer safe physical spaces and provide digital resources and access. We connect people to one another, healthcare providers and wellbeing supports. Our staff and collections equip our communities with the skills and knowledge to better understand and critique health information. We leverage our voice to advocate for the health and wellbeing needs of our communities.

Ultimately, we aspire for less injury and illness, improved physical and mental health and stronger, more inclusive communities.

Strategy on a page

Our strategy on a page outlines the key focus areas, which will guide library choices and actions in health and wellbeing over the years ahead over time.

Our Purpose	We empower, support and connect our communities and partners for a healthy, thriving Victoria.			
Our Role	We support our partners. 	We build skills. 	We provide resources. 	We make connections. 
Our Impact Areas				
Our Community Priorities 			Skills and habits: Communities are empowered	Resources and information: Communities are supported
Our Library Priorities 			Collaboration: Libraries help others	Strong teams: Library teams are effective
			Recognition: Libraries are valued	Sustainability: Libraries are resourced
Our Principles			<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We build on the strengths of our teams, partners and communities.2. We will serve all people with a focus on equity and access to support those most in need.3. We will tailor to our local communities with a clear statewide approach.4. We will tell the story of libraries and our communities and partners.5. We will complement and enable the work of others, aligning to key policies.6. We will test and explore new territory, with clear goals in mind.	

BACKGROUND



Victoria's public library network

Public libraries across Victoria provide our local communities with safe spaces, digital access, information resources and opportunities to connect. There are 51 library services in Victoria, which are primarily operated and funded by local government. Every municipality in the state offers a public library service, which totals 302 library branches (includes mobile library services).

Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) is the peak body for public libraries in Victoria. PLV represents local libraries across the state and works to make libraries the best they can be. Every community is different, if only slightly, but libraries have many things in common. By sharing resources, combining buying power and showing how libraries change lives, we have more to invest back into the services that library members value so much.



Map: Public library branches across Victoria

The origins of this framework

State Library Victoria is one of Australia's leading collecting and cultural institutions. It was established in 1854 and is an agency of the Victorian Government. Sir Redmond Barry, founder of the Library, intended it to serve as the people's university - a place where knowledge and information would be freely available to all. This ethos continues to guide State Library Victoria today.

While State Library Victoria is separate from the local government network of public libraries, it has a legislated role to play in promoting high standards and co-operation across the public library network.

Reading supports mental, emotional and intellectual health (and) library programs support learning and social engagement

- partner organisation

In July 2019, public library, State Library Victoria and PLV leaders gathered for a planning summit. This was an opportunity to determine statewide priorities for Victoria's local libraries for the coming years.

Of the 45 proposals that were considered at the summit, one in three related to community health and wellbeing. These topics were diverse, encompassing physical health and fitness, homelessness, social isolation, mental illness, environmental sustainability and the health benefits of reading.

Accordingly, summit participants agreed to undertake a program to demonstrate and enhance how public libraries support community health and wellbeing. This would require a clear and inspiring strategic direction, a compelling evidence base, professional development for library staff, strong partnerships and great community programs.

The Libraries for health and wellbeing framework is the first step of this program.

Developing the framework

Libraries for health and wellbeing was developed through wide-ranging consultation and engagement with public library leaders and teams, community members, key library partners, health and wellbeing service providers, and Australian and global thought leaders. Stakeholder engagement activities complemented research into key policies and examples of innovation and best practice, and review of key library, health and wellbeing data and documents.

A workgroup of local library leaders and State Library Victoria and PLV representatives oversaw framework development through a series of workshops and project governance meetings.

Spark Strategy was engaged to support the development of the framework through facilitation of conversations, ongoing analysis and synthesis, and writing this document.

We have diverse offerings, and the library actions are integrated into Council's Municipal Health Plan

- library leader

More than 1250 people informed the creation of this framework through:

- 11 focus groups with some 140 library managers and staff
- a benchmarking survey completed by approximately 40 library leaders
- a future-facing survey with more than 800 community, 410 library staff and 25 partner respondents
- one-on-one discussions with 17 key partners and thought leaders
- six workshops and five steering committee meetings with the project workgroup
- two presentations and Q&A sessions with PLV members.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this process. We look forward to continuing the conversation as we implement the framework with and for you.



WHY LIBRARIES?

The health and wellbeing of our society is the responsibility of all people, groups, organisations and institutions.

Libraries are already supporting community health and wellbeing. Our strengths mean we drive positive impact for and with our communities and partners, as inclusive, place-based public spaces.

Our strengths

I have attended a variety of health-related events at my library, such as talks about diet and health, and yoga classes. The many online events held during lockdown also contributed greatly to my mental wellbeing

- community member



We have locations all over Victoria and great physical and digital resources. Victoria's public libraries have more than 2.21 million library members and 24.3 million visits every year.



We are free, non-judgemental, trusted and accessible for all. We engage with individuals and communities that experience stigma, disadvantage and discrimination.



We are place-based and care about our communities. We understand our communities and tailor our services to local demographics, needs and preferences.



We are information experts. People come to libraries seeking knowledge and help to navigate the world of information.



We run programs and offer support. As well as providing information and resources, we also bring people together, provide safe spaces and build skills.



We build relationships and avoid duplicating the work of others. We prioritise collaboration wherever possible.

Current health and wellbeing activities

In addition to our collection items, each of our branches has a community noticeboard that contains information about local health and wellbeing providers

- library leader

Public libraries are seen as sources of accurate, up-to-date, impartial, trusted and non-judgemental information

- library team member

Some examples of how Victoria's public libraries currently support health and wellbeing include:

Developing key life skills, including reading, writing and English language skills.

Supporting digital literacy by providing free access to technology, internet, IT training and assistance.

Providing safe spaces for people experiencing homelessness, family violence and other crises and challenges.

Offering health and wellbeing services and supports, often in partnership, including meditation, Tai Chi and yoga.

Hosting specialist health and wellbeing services at the library, such as counsellors, nurses and maternal and child health specialists.

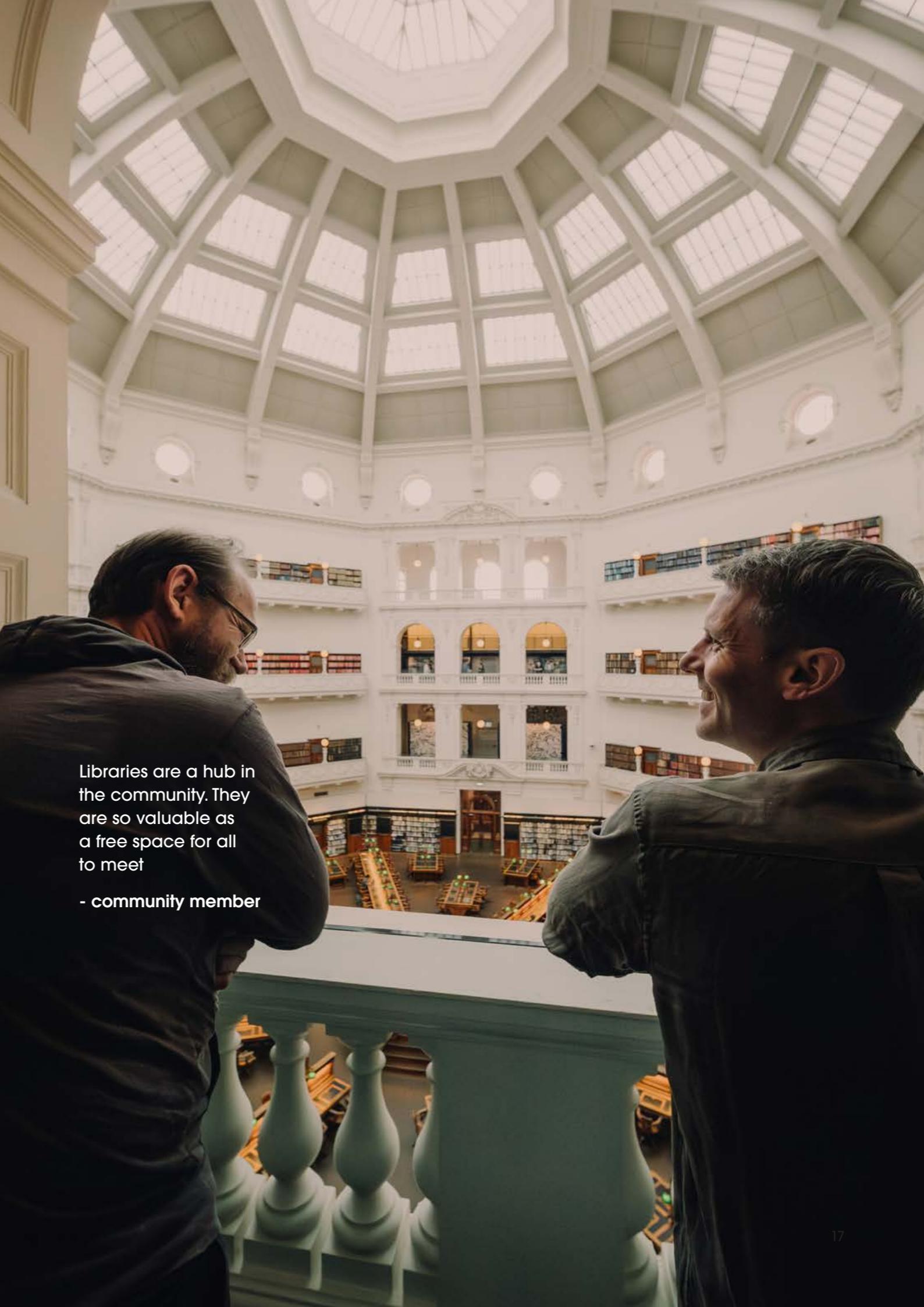
Running programs and events that bring people together, such as morning teas, arts and crafts sessions, and social and recreational support for at-risk groups through Libraries After Dark.

Providing a broad range of health and wellbeing information through our in-person and online collections.

Sharing brochures, pamphlets and other information on behalf of healthcare providers.

Supporting community members to access and navigate credible information about their health and wellbeing.

Raising awareness of key community needs and challenges, including family violence, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling addiction.



Libraries are a hub in the community. They are so valuable as a free space for all to meet

- community member

EXTERNAL CONTEXT



The development of this strategy has been informed by external factors relating to our communities and health system. Highlighted below are the key trends that emerged repeatedly in research and discussions. Please note that this context summary is not exhaustive. Instead, it captures the key external considerations that have been instrumental in shaping this framework.

Key community considerations

A loneliness epidemic

The quality of our social connections and relationships are a critical part of our health and wellbeing. According to research from 2017, being lonely and socially isolated can pose a bigger risk for premature death than smoking.¹ Of note, people over the age of 75 and young people aged 15-25 are at the highest risk of experiencing loneliness.² However, the ongoing impacts of public health emergencies has seen rates of loneliness and social isolation grow across Victoria.

Public libraries have long been places where people can meet and interact. This capacity, in combination with worsening loneliness and social isolation, makes social connection a critical impact area for libraries to focus on over the coming years.

Differences in our health outcomes

Our diverse communities and population groups in Victoria experience vastly different health and wellbeing outcomes. There is growing awareness that our health and wellbeing is driven by such factors as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, housing, geography and access to technology. These non-medical factors are known as the determinants of health and they significantly impact an individual's health outcomes.

Public libraries play a critical and diverse role in improving the determinants of health. Libraries support people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to strengthen their English language skills; provide education and employment pathways focusing on those with the greatest need; and connect community members with housing and other services.

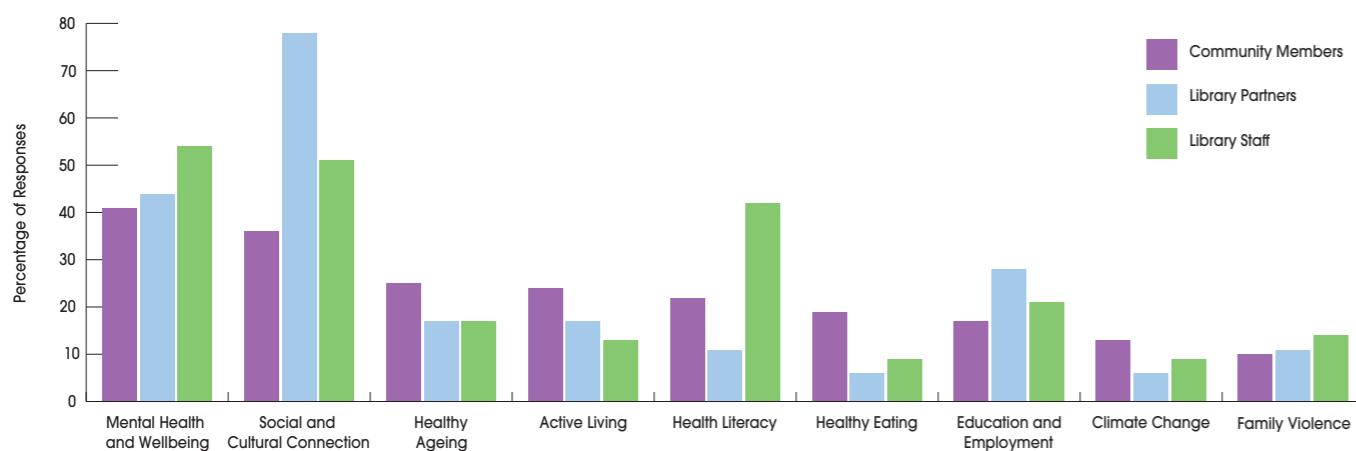
¹ psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Famp0000103

² [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness#](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness/)

Chronic disease and mental health challenges

Our communities are facing a number of multi-faceted health and wellbeing challenges. One in six Australians are currently experiencing depression, anxiety or both, with one in eight people experiencing high or very high psychological distress.³ Many Victorians are physically inactive and have a poor diet.⁴ These challenges pose significant risks to our health and wellbeing, increasing the likelihood of type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease, as well as cancer, chronic diseases and depression.^{5,6}

Different locations and communities are affected by these challenges in varying degrees, and there are markedly different views about which areas of health and wellbeing libraries should focus on (see below). This framework recognises this and provides public libraries with the scope to address the critical health and wellbeing challenges facing our local communities.



³ www.beyondblue.org.au/media/statistics#:~:text=Message%3A%20One%20in%20seven%20young,in%20the%20last%2012%20months

⁴ Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019-2023 at www2.health.vic.gov.au/aboutpublications/policiesandguidelines/victorian-public-health-wellbeing-plan-2019-2023

⁵ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2879283/

⁶ www.health.gov.au/health-topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/about-physical-activity-and-exercise

⁷ www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey-first-results/latest-release

Key health system considerations

A system driven by response

With an ageing population, increasing rates of mental illness and chronic disease, there is growing demand for healthcare services at times of emergency, in response to injury and illness, and for ongoing recovery. This can result in a vicious cycle: as we concentrate resources into response and rehabilitation, prevention and early intervention can be overlooked. In turn, this can mean increased frequency and severity of ill health and injury, resulting in even greater demand for response and recovery.

To break this cycle, there is growing recognition of the need to invest in disease prevention and health promotion. Equipping individuals with the skills, information and confidence to manage their own health and wellbeing is a core component of preventing injury and illness.

Librarians are not and do not want to be trained health professionals. However, our teams and resources can support people to understand and manage their own health, by helping them access services, interpret information and develop healthy habits.

Health 2040: advancing health, access and care presents a clear vision for the health and wellbeing of Victorians and for the Victorian healthcare system. Health 2040 is built on three pillars.

Better health: prevention, early intervention, community engagement and people's self-management to maximise the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

Better access: reducing waiting times and delivering equal access to care via statewide service planning, targeted investment and unlocking innovation.

Better care: people's experience of care, improving quality and safety, ensuring accountability for achieving the best health outcomes and supporting the workforce to deliver the best care.⁸

Victorian Government
Department of Health

⁸ www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Health-2040-advancing-health-access-and-care



The importance of place-based services and solutions

The burden of disease has significant personal, community and economic costs. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System emphasised the need for integrated, local health and wellbeing services and supports to alleviate this burden and these costs.⁹ The final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the Royal Commission into Family Violence also noted the importance of place-based services in increasing access by providing care close to home.^{10 11}

Libraries know and serve local communities across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria. As place-based organisations, they provide inclusive, unintimidating settings where community members from all walks of life can attend programs, access information and meet people, strengthening opportunities for social connection.

- **Victoria has more than 50 public libraries**
- **over 300 public library branches**
- **hundreds of mobile library stops**
- **additional library outlets**
- **recording consistently over 2.2 million Victorian library members with annual visitation remains high statewide with 24 million + library visitors every year**

⁹ rcvms.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/

¹⁰ agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/

¹¹ www.vic.gov.au/about-royal-commission-family-violence

¹² www.plv.org.au/

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



Our context

Our theory of change maps the key external factors, how we respond and what this will lead to in the medium and long term.

- Our communities face significant and growing health and wellbeing challenges, including mental ill-health, social isolation, sedentary lifestyles and widening inequities.
- Stigma, disadvantage and the social determinants of health compound these challenges.
- Rates of depression, anxiety, chronic conditions, loneliness and physical inactivity continue to rise, leading to poorer life outcomes, particularly where preventative supports or early-help options are limited.
- Our health system, though world-class, remains complex to navigate and is often geared toward responding to illness rather than preventing it.
- For many people, discrimination, disadvantage and systemic barriers make accessing support difficult or unsafe.
- Increased access to online information has helped communities be more informed, but misinformation can create confusion, risk and harm.
- We believe public libraries play a vital role in informing, connecting and empowering communities to manage their wellbeing through safe, trusted and accessible spaces.



Our activities

- We run and facilitate programs that strengthen community connection and learning.
- We offer digital resources and physical spaces, helping reduce digital exclusion.
- We connect people with services and supports, improving access through trusted referral and navigation support.
- We provide vetted, accurate information addressing misinformation and disinformation.
- We advocate for community and library needs through localised and collective action.



Our outcomes

- Increased healthy habits and wellbeing practices.
- Improved early years, adult and digital literacy.
- Improved health literacy, including knowledge, skills and confidence to manage one's wellbeing.
- Development of meaningful and supportive relationships.
- Increased sense of community belonging and connection.
- Reduced digital exclusion and improved digital participation.
- More timely access to health and wellbeing information, services and supports.



Our impact

- Reduced loneliness and social isolation across communities.
- Improved mental, social and emotional wellbeing for individuals.
- Stronger community connection and cohesion at the local level.
- Preventative health benefits demonstrated through increased social participation.



Improved social connection and emotional wellbeing.

Improved mental wellbeing and reduced loneliness.

Strengthened preventative health and social wellbeing.

STRATEGY IN DETAIL



In response to the external context and building on our strengths, we have identified our health and wellbeing priorities for the future. This ensures that we focus on areas that will have the greatest impact for our communities and partners. This section of the framework details our key strategic concepts, which will guide the health and wellbeing decisions and efforts of libraries across Victoria, strengthening a consistent statewide approach.

Through prevention rather than cure, connection instead of isolation, and collaborations that break down silos, we will support the development of healthy minds, healthy bodies and healthy communities, with a focus on social connection as a key determinant of wellbeing.

Our Purpose

We empower, support and connect our communities and partners for a healthy, thriving Victoria.

Our Role



We support our partners.

Working collaboratively to drive benefit for communities, libraries and partners through aligned and mutually reinforcing partnerships.



We build skills.

Strengthening literacy and other skills, with a focus on building core competencies and confidence, including foundational health and digital literacy.



We provide resources.

Offering physical spaces, digital access, information resources and library programs.



We make connections.

Linking our community with one another, library staff and other health, wellbeing and community services, fostering belonging and reducing isolation.



We amplify voices.

Sharing the health and wellbeing experiences and needs of our communities, team members and partners ensuring local insights inform decision-making.

Our impact areas



Determinants of Health

These are the non-medical factors that influence our health and wellbeing. They include our life conditions and experiences, and broader systemic and structural factors. We recognise the critical role libraries play to influence the social determinants of health and will continue to support our communities through the provision of education support, employment support and digital inclusion strengthening equitable access to skills, resources and information.

Our community priorities

Skills and habits: Communities are empowered

Our communities are equipped with the capabilities to understand and optimise their health and wellbeing. Making informed decisions and building healthy habits prevent illness and help with recovery supported by strengthened health literacy. Of note, we have a crucial role to play when it comes to literacy for children and adults alike. Literacy takes many forms, each of which enables people to understand and improve their health and wellbeing.

Our Core

Supporting our communities with the foundational skills to understand, navigate and interpret information.

All libraries focus on:

- Early years and adult literacy
 - reading and writing
- Digital literacy – finding, assessing and sharing information online, and using technology with confidence, in a rapidly changing information environment.

The Stretch

Enabling people to understand health information, and establish and maintain healthy habits through partnerships and evidence-informed practice.

We aspire to partner and work in:

- Health literacy – obtaining and understanding health information and making good health decisions with support to evaluate information quality.
- Physical literacy – developing fine motor skills, fitness, coordination and active lifestyles
- Healthy habits – setting up and maintaining the routine for ongoing healthy lifestyles (e.g. diet, exercise) through inclusive, non-clinical ways.

Resources and information: Communities are supported

As democratic, equitable and trusted institutions, we can leverage our digital and physical infrastructure, contemporary collections and information expertise to directly support community health and wellbeing.

Our Core

Supporting our communities, particularly people experiencing disadvantage and difficulty, with some of life's fundamentals.



All libraries provide:

- Safe and non-judgemental spaces
- Computers and WIFI access
- Vast collections with health and wellbeing information

The Stretch

Leveraging our resources in partnership to drive better health and wellbeing outcomes, with a focus on health equity for those most in need.

We aspire to:

- Invite, include and host health and wellbeing partners at libraries
- Share library resources and expertise with our health and wellbeing partners (e.g. library books and technology in waiting rooms)

Belonging and participation: Communities are connected

Our communities are connected: to each other, to library staff and to health and wellbeing supports. Being a core part of our communities means libraries are well placed to build bridges and make connections. We facilitate and enable everything from one-off interactions, fun experiences, meaningful relationships, and referrals to health and wellbeing services.

Our Core

Being sites of connection and belonging where people can meet and get to know one another.



All libraries offer:

- Inclusive programming, physical spaces, volunteer opportunities and shared experiences that bring people together
- Strong links with community groups and services

The Stretch

Reducing social isolation and loneliness, and ensuring our communities are well connected.

We aspire to:

- Deliver targeted programs for people experiencing isolation
- Strengthen formal referral pathways
- Explore creative and radical collaborations with health and community partners to boost wellbeing, including co-location, social prescribing, joint memberships and more

Our library priorities

Our library priorities are the areas that we will focus on to strengthen and better enable us to deliver on our community priorities. For each library priority, we have detailed a description of what this priority entails for the community.

Collaboration: Libraries help others

We leverage our strengths and assets to assist and enable the work of others to effectively deliver health and wellbeing services strengthening shared impact across communities and partners. This is about building more and stronger connections with health, wellbeing and community partners, including helping them to reach and engage with priority population groups in ongoing alignment with community needs.

Strong teams: Library teams are effective

Our staff are equipped to effectively assist community members with their health and wellbeing, supported by evolving guidance, tools and training. This is about library teams receiving the training, support and guidance we need to be skilled, sustainable and agile. It is important to note that our teams are not healthcare professionals and we will partner and refer where specialist expertise is required.

Recognition: Libraries are valued

We are recognised for the critical and unique role we play in supporting community health and wellbeing, with visibility strengthened through stories, evidence and partnerships. Communities, government, service providers and funders view libraries as an integral mechanism and partner for delivering health and wellbeing solutions to the community.

Sustainable: Libraries are resourced

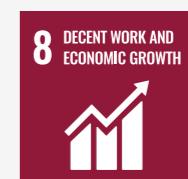
Libraries have access to the required evidence, tools and resources to support the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve guided by sector-wide frameworks and shared learning. This includes data, stories, templates and toolkits as well as physical, digital, human and financial resources.

Sustainable Development Goals alignment

In developing this framework, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were repeatedly discussed. The SDGs identify 17 overarching goals for sustainable development across the globe. The goals were launched in 2015, providing a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

The SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries, developed and developing, in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth, while tackling climate change and preserving our planet.

This framework provides flexibility for local libraries to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our communities, enabling long-term alignment with changing local priorities. As such, the framework supports and enables public libraries to partner to contribute to the below goals.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ACTION ROADMAP



To support implementation of this framework, we have detailed the key activities and initiatives that individual public libraries, Public Libraries Victoria and State Library Victoria will undertake. The action roadmap contains the core projects and initiatives that we are committing to for the next three years. To support and detail the roadmap, an action toolkit has also been developed. The purpose of the toolkit is to outline optional and specific project ideas which public libraries may decide to undertake over the coming years – many of these initiatives are bold and innovative.

No.	Continuous Improvement: Activities or Initiatives
Statewide	
1.	<p>Key health and wellbeing organisations at the statewide level (e.g. Department of Health, VicHealth, Victorian Healthcare Association) and advisory/strategic committees are mapped, culminating in the development of a partnership strategy.</p>
2.	<p>Research partnerships are developed to support evaluation efforts to strengthen their health and wellbeing evaluation approaches and data collection practices.</p>
3.	<p>Statewide community health and wellbeing programs are accessed by public library staff to encourage innovation and partnerships within the public library sector.</p>
4.	<p>Learning and development sessions are accessed by public library staff, including health and wellbeing in the context of Victoria's system, mental health first aid, resilience training and partnership development.</p>
5.	<p>A statewide advocacy and awareness-raising is run to build the profile of <i>Libraries for Health and Wellbeing</i> across key stakeholder groups, including community, healthcare providers and professionals, and government.</p>

No.	Continuous Improvement: Activities or Initiatives
Library service	<p>1. Public libraries incorporate a health and wellbeing focus into strategic and operational planning.</p>
	<p>2. Public libraries actively collect and showcase health and wellbeing data to evidence our work and impact.</p>
	<p>3. Public libraries offer suitable and accessible spaces and infrastructure to health and wellbeing providers to deliver services in public library settings.</p>
	<p>4. Public libraries and partners co-design and deliver physical literacy and healthy habits programs for community members in public library settings. Examples include yoga classes, music therapy and cooking classes.</p>
	<p>5. Public libraries offer programs with a mental health and wellbeing focus. Examples include programs that encourage reading for pleasure, meditation and conversation groups.</p>
	<p>6. Public libraries continue to develop, encourage, facilitate and deliver programming focused on building and sustaining social connection. Current examples include craft circles, morning tea, Libraries After Dark and Knit and Knatter.</p>

EVIDENCING OUR WORK AND IMPACT



Ultimately, we aim to empower, support and connect our communities and partners for a healthy, thriving Victoria. To deliver on this commitment, we will track and evaluate our health and wellbeing work and the positive changes this helps create.

We will monitor, collect and evaluate different data types, including:

- Qualitative insights and quantitative data
- Data from our partners and local government
- Statewide as well as individual library information and experiences.

As part of our ongoing evaluation focus, we have commissioned:

- A statewide survey of Victorian public library users that gathers data and feedback on how their use of the library contributes to their sense of social connection, mental wellbeing and physical health
- A major independent research project on the value of engagement in Victorian public library services in terms of the impact on people's overall quality of life, and the value to society of the health benefits of public libraries.

At the local level, we will provide training to Victorian public library staff in how to evaluate health and wellbeing programs, with a focus on impact measures; and, through the annual statistical survey of Victorian public libraries, we will collect relevant data, such as:

- Number of health and wellbeing programs
- Number of health and wellbeing partnerships
- Number of people using library digital resources, e.g. computers, tablets, internet
- Number of local and statewide advocacy campaigns about health and wellbeing
- Case studies of health and wellbeing programs, campaigns and partnerships

This framework was written during a time of change and challenge for community health and wellbeing in Victoria for use across changing community health and wellbeing conditions. Looking to the future, we look forward to partnering and supporting better community health and wellbeing outcomes. This framework will strengthen our commitment, coordination and collaboration in health and wellbeing.

OTHER RESOURCES



The following resources have helped inform the development of the libraries for health and wellbeing strategic framework:

1. *A collective force for health and wellbeing: Libraries, health and social care*, Scottish Library & Information Council, The Alliance, National Health Service Scotland (2019).
2. *Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States*, Holt-Lunstad, J., Robles, T.F., Sbarra, D.A. (2017), <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Famp0000103>.
3. *Are libraries effective settings for accessing health information?*, NSW Ministry of Health, Sax Institute (2016).
4. *Australian libraries support the Sustainable Development Goals*, Australian Library and Information Association (2018).
5. *Creative Communities: The cultural benefits of Victoria's public libraries*, State Library Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria Network (2014).
6. *Growing a movement: Healthy kids, healthy communities*, Active Living by Design (2014).
7. *Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care*, State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (2016).
8. *Loneliness: A new public health challenge emerges*, VicHealth (2018), <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness>.
9. *Physical activity and sedentary behaviour*, Australian Government, Department of Health (2017), <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-active-evidence.htm>.
10. *Public libraries as partners for population health*, Morgan A.U., Dupuis R., D'Alonzo B., Johnson A., Graves A., Brooks K.L., McClintock A., Klusaritz H., Bogner H., Long J.A., Grande D., Cannascio C.C. (2016).



11. *Reading and literacy for all: A strategic framework for Victorian public libraries*, State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria (2021).
12. *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System: Final report*, State of Victoria (2021).
13. Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, Commonwealth of Australia (2021).
14. *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Final report*, State of Victoria (2016).
15. *Scenarios of health engagement experiences and health justice in rural libraries*, Mehra B., Scott Sikes E., Singh V. (2019).
16. *Statistics: General statistics*, Beyond Blue (2018), www.beyondblue.org.au/media/statistics#:~:text=Message%3A%20One%20in%20seven%20young,in%20the%20last%2012%20months.
17. *The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries*, Fujiwara D., Lawton R., Mourato S. (2015).
18. *The medical risks of obesity*, Pi-Sunyer, X. (2010), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2879283/.
19. *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, United Nations (2015).
20. *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023*, State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (2019).
21. *Victorian Public Libraries 2030 strategic framework*, Public Libraries Victoria Network (2013).
22. *Victorian Public Libraries: Our future, our skills*, State Library Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria Network (2014).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Project Team

Project sponsor: Debra Rosenfeldt, State Library Victoria
Project management: Jacqui Horwood, State Library Victoria
Project coordinator: Nadyne Eggleton, State Library Victoria
Project consultants: Heather Morecroft, Shaun Mascarenhas and Felicity Green, Spark Strategy
Editor: Barbara Vaughan, Barbara Vaughan Publishing Services

Project Workgroup

Natalie Brown, Greater Dandenong Libraries
Georgina Earl, Moreland City Libraries
Jane Grace, Kingston Library Service
Beth Luppino, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation Jenny Mustey, Campaspe Regional Library Service Premal Nirajan, Eastern Regional Libraries
Anne-Maree Pfabe, Melbourne Library Service
Celia Rice, Moonee Valley Libraries
Carolyn Long, State Library Victoria

Address inquiries to:

Library Sector Team – State Library Victoria
328 Swanston Street, Melbourne, VIC, 3000, Australia

slv.vic.gov.au
publiclibraries@slv.vic.gov.au

This report is available online from State Library Victoria, slv.vic.gov.au, and Public Libraries Victoria, plv.org.au.

© 2025 State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria



© 2025 State Library Victoria and
Public Libraries Victoria

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* and subsequent amendments, and no part may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means or process whatsoever without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in 2025, fact and figures published were correct at the time of printing.