



# AGENDA

## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

### 13 JUNE 2024

MEMBERSHIP: Councillors J Black, L Burns, S Chowdhury, M Dickerson, V Etheridge, J Gough, R Ivey, D Mahon, P Wells and M Wright.

The meeting is scheduled to commence at 5.30 pm.

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Page

<b>CCC24/29</b>	<b>LEAVE OF ABSENCE (ID24/1145)</b>	
<b>CCC24/30</b>	<b>CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (ID24/1146)</b> In accordance with their Oath/Affirmation under the Act, and Council's Code of Conduct, Councillors must disclose the nature of any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest which may arise during the meeting, and manage such interests accordingly.	
<b>CCC24/31</b>	<b>PRESENTATION BY RUGBY NSW - OUTCOMES IN COMMUNITY FROM THEIR HUB AT FORMER DUBBO CITY BOWLING CLUB. (ID24/1204)</b> The Committee will receive a presentation from Rugby NSW.	
<b>CCC24/32</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MEETING 9 APRIL 2024 (ID24/1008)</b> The Committee had before it the report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held 9 April 2024.	3
<b>CCC24/33</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MEETING 13 MAY 2024 (ID24/1086)</b> The Committee had before it the report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee meeting held 13 May 2024.	7
<b>CCC24/34</b>	<b>MACQUARIE REGIONAL LIBRARY QUARTERLY REPORT - JANUARY 2024 TO MARCH 2024 (ID24/1040)</b> The Committee had before it the report dated 15 May 2024 from the Manager Macquarie Regional Library regarding Macquarie Regional Library Quarterly Report - January 2024 to March 2024.	11

**CCC24/35 WELLINGTON CAVES SERVICE REVIEW MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (ID24/1167) 20**

The Committee had before it the report dated 30 May 2024 from the Manager Regional Experiences regarding Wellington Caves Service Review Management Response.

**CCC24/36 TENDER FOR THE DUBBO AQUATIC LEISURE CENTRE - REFURBISHMENT AND UPGRADE OF 50 METRE POOL AND WATER SLIDE PLANT ROOM (ID24/1176)**

The Committee had before it the report dated 2 June 2024 from the Manager Recreation and Open Spaces regarding Tender for the Dubbo Aquatic Leisure Centre - Refurbishment and upgrade of 50 metre Pool and Water Slide Plant Room.

*In accordance with the provisions of Section 9 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1993 the Chief Executive Officer is of the opinion that consideration of this item is likely to take place when the meeting is closed to the public for the following reason: information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business (Section 10A(2)(c)).*



DUBBO REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

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## Report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee - meeting 9 April 2024

**AUTHOR:** Governance Officer  
**REPORT DATE:** 14 May 2024

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The Council had before it the report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held 9 April 2024.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held on 9 April 2024, beadopted.



**REPORT  
DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
9 APRIL 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Black, P Wells, the Director Community, Culture and Places, the Manager Community Services, the Community Development Officer - Seniors and People with Disability, the Manager Infrastructure Strategy and Design, S Ellis (Community Representative), V Avila (Community Representative), D Sparrow (Community Representative), K Letcher (Community Representative) and P Settree (Community Representative).

Councillor P Wells assumed the Chair of the meeting.

The proceedings of the meeting commenced at 5.17 pm.

**DAIAC24/10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY (ID24/548)**

Councillor P Wells delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.

**DAIAC24/11 LEAVE OF ABSENCE (ID24/545)**

Requests for leave of absence were received from Councillor S Chowdhury, L Haksteeg (Community Representative), K Slabon (Community Representative), N Rust (Community Representative), R Mason (Community Representative) who were absent from the meeting due to personal reasons.

**DAIAC24/12 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (ID24/546)**

There were no Conflicts of Interest declared.

**DAIAC24/13 REPORT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MEETING 14 FEBRUARY 2024 (ID24/547)**

The Committee had before it the report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held 14 February 2024.

**OUTCOME**

**That the report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held on**

30 October 2023, be noted.

**DAIAC24/14 DISABILITY PARKING STRATEGY, PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND MOBILITY PLANS (ID24/608)**

The Committee had before it the Dubbo and Wellington Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMP).

**OUTCOME**

1. That the address by the Manager Infrastructure Strategy and Design on the PAMP and the Dubbo CBD Parking Strategy be noted.
2. That PAMP and CBD Parking strategy should include opportunities for community consultation via YourSay on the DRC website platform.
3. That the Manager Infrastructure Strategy and Design will engage a consultant by the end of May 2024 to design the scope of work for the new combined PAMP's.
4. That Committee Members work with Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability to further develop the PAMPs.

**DAIAC24/15 REVIEW OF CURRENT DUBBO AND WELLINGTON MOBILITY MAPS (ID24/609)**

The Committee was addressed by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability.

**OUTCOME**

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  1. That the address by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability be noted.
  2. That the Community Development Officer for Seniors and people with disability to engage IT, Strategic Partnerships and Engagement and Economic Development teams with regards to updating of existing mobility maps.
  3. That community committee members provide comments to the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability with regard to updating of existing mobility maps.

**DAIAC24/16 SITUATIONAL REPORT - DUBBO AND WELLINGTON DISABLED AMENITIES (ID24/610)**

The Committee was addressed by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability.

**OUTCOME**

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  1. That the address by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability be noted.
  2. That the committee note the update provided with regard to the damage to public amenities.

**DAIAC24/17 SITUATIONAL REPORT ON DISABILITY PLAN (ID24/611)**

The Committee was addressed by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability.

**OUTCOME**

- 1. That the address by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability be noted.**
- 2. That it be noted that current the Disability Inclusion Action Plan ends in 2025.**
- 3. That the Community Development Officer will undertake the implementation and development of the DIAP.**

**DAIAC24/18 ACCESSIBILITY TRIAL ACROSS COUNCIL WEBSITES (ID24/622)**

The Committee was addressed by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability.

**OUTCOME**

- 1. That the address by the Community Development Officer, Seniors and People with Disability be noted.**
- 2. Accessibility Widget trial is open until 6 May 2024 for community feedback.**

The meeting closed at 6.21 pm.

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CHAIRPERSON



DUBBO REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

## Report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee - meeting 13 May 2024

**AUTHOR:** Governance Officer  
**REPORT DATE:** 24 May 2024

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The Council had before it the report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee meeting held 13 May 2024.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee meeting held on 13 May 2024, be adopted.



**REPORT**  
**MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**13 MAY 2024**

**DUBBO REGIONAL  
COUNCIL**

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**PRESENT:** Councillors M Wright, S Chowdhury, the Director Community, Culture and Places, the Manager Community Services, the Manager Recreation and Open Space, G Ganguly (Community Representative), A Leggett (Community Representative), L Brennan (Community Representative) and M Ramirez (Community Representative).

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

R Elhage (Coordinator - Multicultural Community Liaison Officer Program NSW Police Force) and the Administration Officer Community Culture and Places.

Councillor S Chowdhury assumed the Chair of the meeting.

The proceedings of the meeting commenced at 4:05pm.

**MAC24/8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY (ID24/828)**

Director Community Culture and Places delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.

**MAC24/9 LEAVE OF ABSENCE (ID24/827)**

There were requests for leave of absence received from J Campbell, J Ebba, N Sedghi, and M Sutton who were absent from the meeting due to personal reasons.

**MAC24/10 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (ID24/945)**

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**MAC24/11 REPORT OF THE MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MEETING 12 FEBRUARY 2024 (ID24/291)**

The Committee had before it the report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee meeting held 12 February 2024.

**OUTCOME**

**That the report of the Multicultural Advisory Committee meeting held on 12 February 2024, be noted.**



**MAC24/12 MULTICULTURAL GARDEN MILESTONES (ID24/946)**

The Committee was addressed by the Manager Recreation and Open Space.

**OUTCOME**

1. An Update was received from Director Community, Culture and Places and Manager Recreation and Open Space on the public consultation process.
2. That Council resolution is required to proceed.
3. That funding is not allocated in the draft budget to any stage of the Multicultural Garden although the community can assist the progress of this project by viewing and commenting on the two concept designs.
4. That the proposed site of the Multicultural Garden is nearby the proposed Wiradjuri Centre and the Committee should consider this moving forward.

**MAC24/13 UPDATE ON CURRENT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE DUBBO REGION THROUGH THE MULTICULTURAL LIAISON OFFICERS NSW POLICE (ID24/947)**

The Committee was addressed by the Coordinator - Multicultural Community Liaison Officer Program NSW Police Force (MCLO Coordinator).

**OUTCOME**

1. That the address by the MCLO Coordinator be noted.
2. That the Manager Community Services invite Multicultural Community Liaison Officers unit and Orana-Mid Western Area Command to attend the next Multicultural event to be held in the Dubbo Local Government Area.
3. That the MCLO Coordinator provide the Manager Community Services with information on how the Multicultural community can access MCLO services that caters to different language and cultural groups for distribution among Committee members.

**MAC24/14 MIGRATION TO THE ORANA REGION AND ORANA DESIGNATED AREA MIGRATION AGREEMENT (ID24/948)**

The Committee were to be addressed by the CEO Regional Development Australia.

**OUTCOME**

**The presentation did not proceed due to the Chief Executive Officer, Regional Development Australia being unable to attend.**

**MAC24/15 FUTURE MULTICULTURAL STRATEGY (ID24/957)**

The Committee was addressed by the Director Community Culture and Places.

**OUTCOME**

1. That the address from the Director Community Culture and Places be noted.
2. That a Multicultural Strategy be developed aiming for the 2025/2026 Operational period.

**MAC24/16 COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION PLAN**

The Committee was addressed by the Director Community Culture and Places.

**OUTCOME**

1. That the address by the Director Community Culture and Places be noted.
2. It was noted that a reference group has been established to assist with the development of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the role the Committee when contributing to the community engagement element.
3. That a Youth Action Plan will be developed later in the calendar year.
4. That the Director Community Culture and Places distribute the Community Safety survey to the Committee members for their response.

The meeting closed at 5:11pm.

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CHAIRPERSON



## REPORT: Macquarie Regional Library Quarterly Report - January 2024 to March 2024

**DIVISION:** Community, Culture and Places  
**REPORT DATE:** 15 May 2024  
**TRIM REFERENCE:** ID24/1040

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly Report</li> <li>Provide update</li> </ul>	
<b>Issue</b>	Macquarie Regional Library Quarterly activities report	
<b>Reasoning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government Act 1993</li> <li>NSW Library Act 1939</li> <li>NSW Library Regulation 2018</li> </ul>	
<b>Financial Implications</b>	Budget Area	Community, Culture and Places - MRL
	Funding Source	Member Councils to MRL partnership NSW Government Subsidies and Grants
	Operating Income	\$3,611,393 - 2023/2024 Budget Estimate
	YTD Expenditure	\$2,706,257
<b>Policy Implications</b>	Policy Title	Member Councils Community Strategic Plans MRL Strategic Plan 2021-2024
	Impact on Policy	Operational Oversight
<b>Consultation</b>	Regional Library Service	Community & Library Surveys Public Exhibition of MRL planning documents

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Towards 2040 Community Strategic Plan is a vision for the development of the region out to the year 2040. The Plan includes six principle themes and a number of objectives and strategies. This report is aligned to:

- Theme: 5 Liveability
- CSP Objective: 5.4 Our community has access to a full range of educational opportunities
- Delivery Program Strategy: 5.4.3 Access to a high standard of library services and facilities is available
- Theme: 5 Liveability
- CSP Objective: 5.4 Our community has access to a full range of educational opportunities

Delivery Program Strategy: 5.4.1 Access to a variety of high quality education facilities, opportunities and choice is available

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Macquarie Regional Library Performance Report for January 2024 to March 2024 be noted.**

*Craig Arms*  
Director Community, Culture and Places

*KM*  
Manager Macquarie  
Regional Library

## BACKGROUND

The Macquarie Regional Library (MRL) performance report provides a quarterly update on the library's activities and is drawn from the Member Councils' Community Strategic Plans and the MRL 2021-2024 Delivery and Operational Plans. The update report provides quarterly results for various indicators, including a financial snapshot, new memberships, loans, visitations and regional initiatives.

## REPORT

### **Public Libraries and People Experiencing Homelessness – Charles Sturt University Project**

A research project headed by Dr Jane Garner is underway to understand the role in the lives of people experiencing homelessness and the attitudes and experiences of library staff and library visitors who support and share spaces with this group.

Dr Garner has found that public libraries need guidance on interacting with people experiencing homelessness and is working with the NSW Public Libraries Association to write policies to assist library services across Australia in formulating and or amending existing library policies.

### **Library Impact Research – State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW)**

SLNSW is researching the value and impact it has for the community, including onsite and digital services and services available through the network of NSW local council public libraries.

The social value outcomes provided by libraries will be a key focus of the project; however, other outcomes for communities (economic, cultural, or environmental) are also in scope. It is envisaged that the results will be used to:

- Promote an understanding of library impact on communities, Government, and councils.
- Demonstrate the value of continued investment in library infrastructure and services.
- Assist with the promotion of library services to new audiences and under-service communities.

### **Public Libraries - National Advocacy Campaign**

The *Libraries Transform* Campaign was soft launched recently. Monthly themes will focus on resources, including editable posters, postcards, and social media templates to attract and engage people with their local library.

### Early Literacy Program – Birth to Five – Read and Thrive

NSW literacy rates are some of the lowest in Australia, according to the report *Learning Starts at the Local Library: The Role of NSW Public Libraries in Solving the State's Early Literacy Crisis*. NSW Public Libraries Association (NSWPLA) and public libraries continue to work through this issue. Next steps include:

- Survey all NSW public libraries to ascertain current programming and media stories around literacy and programming.
- NSWPLA continues to seek meetings with Ministers regarding *Birth to Five – Read and Thrive* advocacy.
- Media releases for public libraries use.

### Public Library Statistics – State Library of NSW Annual Statistical Report

*Public Libraries Statistics* is an annual compilation of statistical data highlighting the usage and activities of public libraries in NSW. The 2022-23 report and data tables are available at [https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/pl\\_statistics\\_2021.pdf](https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/pl_statistics_2021.pdf)

### Narromine Local History Volunteer Award (Narromine Library)

Norma Meadley has been named Seniors Local Achievement Award recipient for the Dubbo Electorate this year. This award recognises her 22 years of tireless service to the Narromine Local History Group and the three days she volunteers from the Narromine Local History Room. State Member Dugald Saunders presented Norma with the award at the Narromine Library.



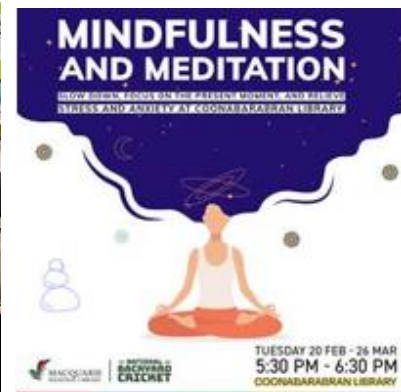
### NSW Public Libraries Annual Conference

The NSW Public Libraries conference will be held 12-15 November in Coffs Harbour. The Conference Theme is *The Power of Opportunity: Leadership, AI, You*. The conference is a

major annual library event attended by councillors and library staff from across NSW and interstate.

### **Mindfulness and Meditation Program – Coonabarabran Library**

A series of weekly evening sessions on mindfulness and meditation were held at the Coonabarabran Library. The program was designed to promote relaxation and well-being, with the library receiving \$1,500 in funding from the National Backyard Cricket Grant provided by the LBW Trust – the charity behind National Backyard Cricket.



### **Macquarie Regional Library Staff Development Day**

Branch libraries and service points closed for a day in February 2024 for an all-staff training day. Thirty-four library staff from across the member councils' library region to Dubbo for the training day.

Dubbo Regional Council People's Safety and Culture team provided a half-day behavioural assessment session (DiSC profiling) focusing on understanding yourself and others' behaviours and communication styles. The training is a support tool to ignite cultural change and inspire lasting behaviour changes that positively shape the workforce. Other sessions included refresher training on various library databases and tools and staff presentations. The DiSC workshop was the favourite session of the day for all participants.



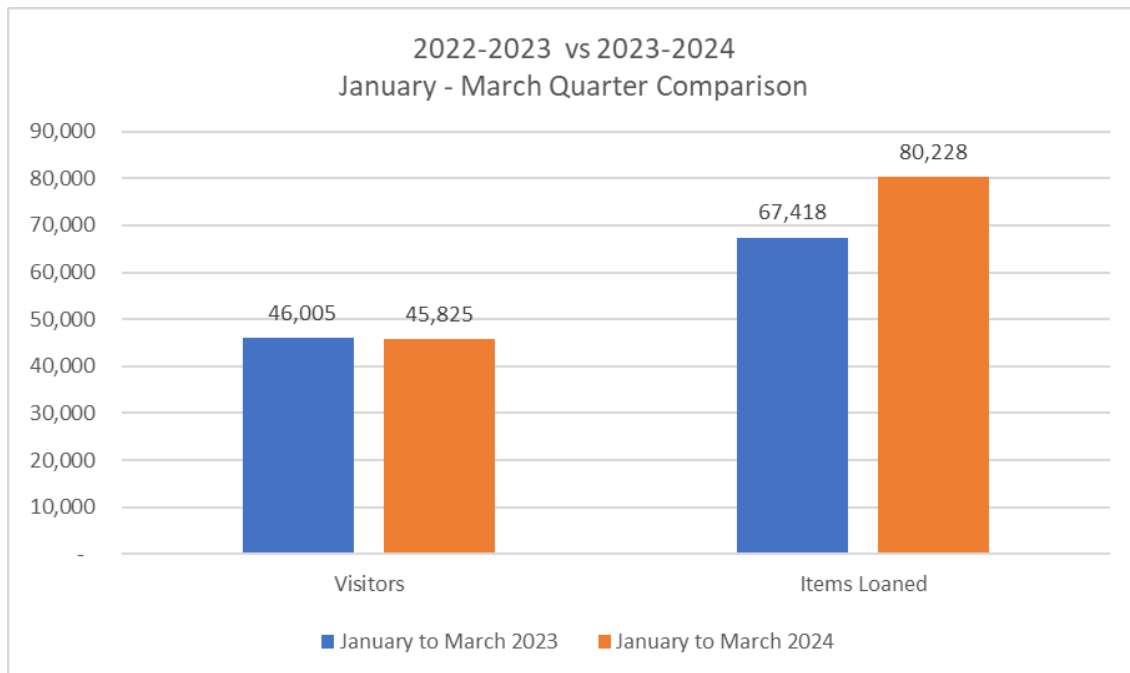
Library Team members at the all staff training day.



MRL Regional Office team members Sarah Tilbrook and Kathryn McAlister presenting a session.



**January to March Quarter Comparison 2022/2023 and 2023/2024**  
**Visitor Numbers and Items Loaned**

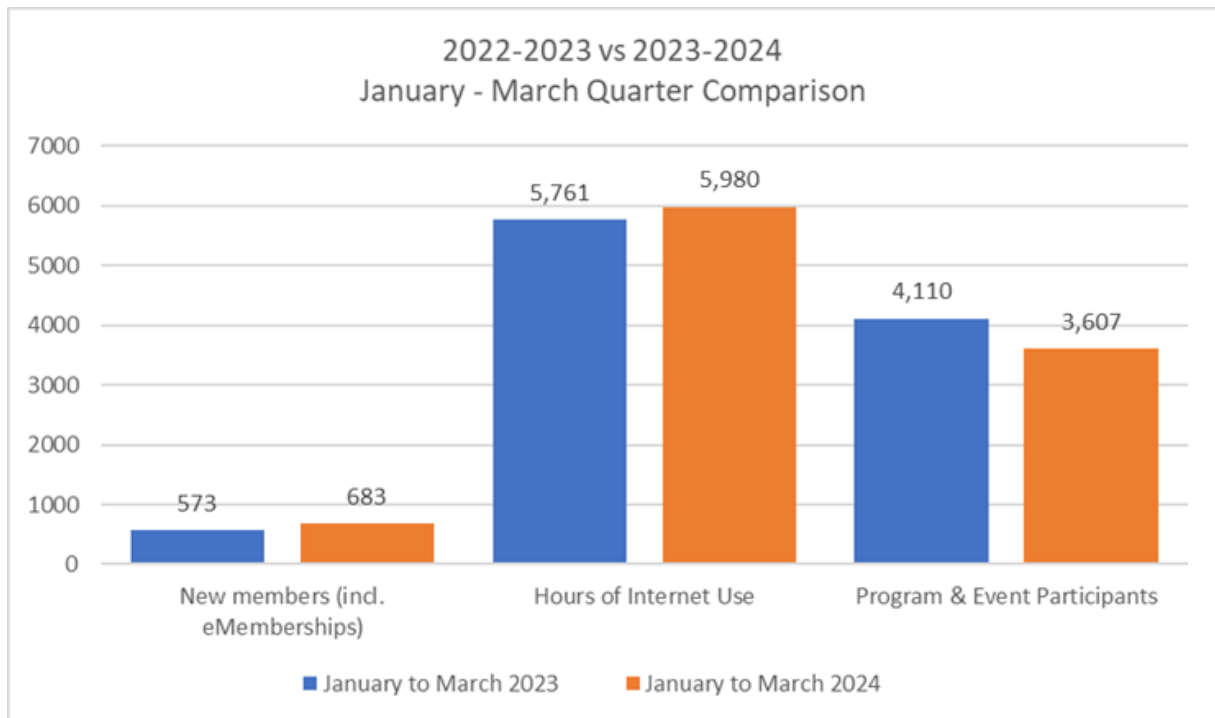


The 2023/2024 reporting period is inclusive of statistics for online newspaper and magazine loans from two library databases *Pressreader* and *Newsbank*. These loans account for 12,595 of the total 80,228 loans for the period.

Additionally, physical collection selection processes are under review, and a move towards self-selection and targeted purchasing is now in place to improve collection relevance and meet customer needs. A focus on Standing Orders offered by book supplier 'profiling' in previous years for efficiency had resulted in items that did not meet customer needs and, therefore, lower stock turnover. Purchasing additional physical copies of popular items to meet demand has been implemented to increase customer satisfaction.



**January to March Quarter Comparison 2022/2023 and 2023/2024**  
**New members, Internet use and Program Participant Numbers**



There is a decrease in Program and Event Participant numbers in the March 2024 quarter compared to March 2022/2023. The library's focus in 2023/2024 is improving core library services of customer experiences, reference and information services and digital literacy. Between 2020-2023, the library had an external focus on community outreach programs and events. The renewed emphasis on core library services ensures the library does not duplicate programs, events, and activities offered by other council sections and organisations. Significantly, this will assist the library service in retaining long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

## MRL Loans, Membership and Visitation Statistics

January – March 2024



45,825 visitors



5,951 hours of internet use



25,243 online database searches



683 new borrowers including eMemberships



4,270 information requests



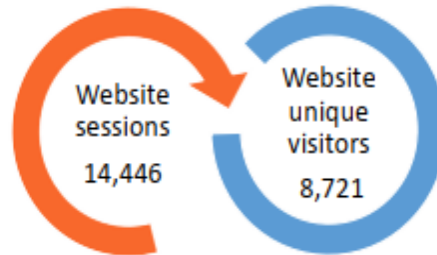
80,228 items borrowed



This includes 26,271 eBooks, eMagazines eFilms and eAudio

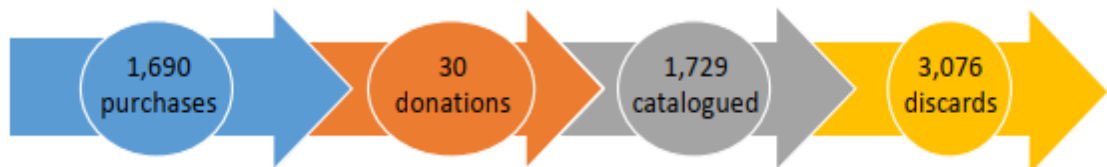


7,679 logins



3,605 participants attended 253 programs and events

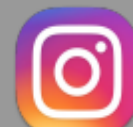
### RESOURCES



128 posts  
2,841 followers  
5,614 engagements



40 tweets  
1,000 followers  
939 impressions



128 posts  
1,130 followers  
611 engagements

MACQUARIE REGIONAL LIBRARY 2023-2024 Operational Plan – July 2023 to March 2024

Objective - Provide quality services to Macquarie Regional Library communities					
Key Measures of Success					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% of customers view their library as satisfactory</li> <li>Percentage of registered users to the total population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits to the library per capita</li> <li>Number of <a href="#">loan</a></li> </ul>				
Legend:	Completed	On Track	Delays	Not yet Commenced	No progress
Action	Date	Status			
<b>Strategy</b>					
<b>1. MANAGEMENT SERVICES</b>					
1.1 Governance procedures for provision of professional and effective services are appropriate					
1.1.4 Produce an MRL Annual Report including the audited statement of accounts	September 2023				
1.2 Financial resources for provision of professional and effective services are sufficient					
1.2.1 Submit draft budget to MRL member councils	April 2024				
1.2.2 Undertake quarterly budget reviews	Quarterly				
1.2.3 Seek grant and subsidy opportunities to obtain full benefits for the Library Service	Ongoing				
1.2.4 Review MRL Revenue Policy [Fees and Charges]	March 2024				
1.3 Evaluation and planning for strategically managed services					
1.3.1 Review the MRL 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan and Delivery Program	March 2024				
1.3.2 Develop MRL Annual Operational Plan	March 2024				
1.3.3 Complete annual SLNSW Public Libraries Statistical Return	September 2023				
1.3.5 Review MRL policies for consistency with policy, legislative, and best practice	March 2024				
<b>2. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT</b>					
2.1 Professional and effective services delivered by skilled and informed staff					
2.1.1 Develop annual staff training program	September 2023				
2.1.2 Conduct an all staff development and training day	November 2023				
2.1.4 Review and report biennially on the Operational Capability [staff numbers and staff hours]	October 2023				
<b>3. SERVICES &amp; PROGRAMS</b>					
3.1 Customers have access to a full range of high-quality programs and services					
3.1.1 Review the opening hours of all branches/service points biennially	October 2023				
3.1.2 Review member database annually	July 2023				
3.1.3 Collate visitation and attendance at programs and events at each branch and service point	Monthly				
3.1.4 Review provision of services, programs, and collections, particularly for target and diversity groups	September 2023				
3.1.6 Review biennially Local and Family History Services	May 2024				
3.1.7 Review MRL website and branding	December 2023				
3.1.8 Produce comprehensive quarterly statistical reports on library activities at branches and service points	Quarterly				
3.1.9 Compile a quarterly overview report on programs, services, and special events	Quarterly				
<b>4. COLLECTIONS</b>					
4.1 Customers have access to current and relevant library collections					
4.1.1 Undertake analysis and report on annual statistics, collection profiles and usage	August 2023				
4.1.3 Review shelf-ready services biennially	March 2024				
4.1.5 Complete collection stocktake	April 2024				
<b>5. MARKETING</b>					
5.1 Customers have access to current services, programs and resources					
5.1.1 Review and develop an annual Marketing Plan	December 2023				
<b>6. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</b>					
6.1 Information technology enables staff and customers to access required information and library processes					
6.1.2 Report annually on current and future information technology needs	November 2023				
6.1.3 Undertake biennial review of the Information Technology Plan	November 2023				
6.1.4 Review business continuity, technology plans and strategies	April 2024				
<b>7. LIBRARY SPACES</b>					
7.1 Branches are welcoming, safe, accessible and responsive to community needs and building standards & guidelines					
7.1.1 Undertake annual inspection of buildings to ensure compliance with Work Health Safety (WHS) requirements	October 2023				
7.1.2 Review equipment requirements for branches and service points	October 2023				
7.1.3 Undertake a comprehensive review of MRL buildings against SLNSW building standards and guidelines	October 2023				
7.2.1 Undertake a biennial review of the MRL Emergency & Disaster Response Plans	April 2024				
<b>8. SUSTAINABILITY</b>					
8.1 Library services meet sustainability needs of the community					
8.1.1 The Library supports sustainability initiatives	Ongoing				



DUBBO REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

## REPORT: Wellington Caves Service Review Management Response

**DIVISION:** Community, Culture and Places

**REPORT DATE:** 30 May 2024

**TRIM REFERENCE:** ID24/1167

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek direction or decision</li> </ul>	
<b>Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellington Caves Service Review Management Response</li> </ul>	
<b>Reasoning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellington Caves Service Review has been undertaken internally through the Strategy, Partnerships and Engagement Division of Dubbo Regional Council.</li> <li>A decision on the direction of the ongoing operational and strategic path of the tourist attraction and accommodation business for future operations.</li> </ul>	
<b>Financial Implications</b>	Budget Area	Regional Experiences
	Funding Source	Wellington Caves & Caravan Park Function Potential for external funding streams for major capital works and programs.
	Proposed Cost	\$0
	Ongoing Costs	As per forward adopted budget.
<b>Policy Implications</b>	Policy Title	N/A
	Impact on Policy	N/A
<b>Consultation</b>	Audit Risk Improvement Committee (ARIC)	Presentation at April meeting.
	Staff	Service Review Provided. Team Meetings with Manager and Director.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Towards 2040 Community Strategic Plan is a vision for the development of the region out to the year 2040. The Plan includes six principle themes and a number of objectives and strategies. This report is aligned to:

Theme: 3 Economy

CSP Objective: 3.1 Visitor economy growth is supported

Delivery Program Strategy: 3.1.1 Diverse and unique tourism opportunities are explored, developed and supported

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Theme:	3 Economy
CSP Objective:	3.1 Visitor economy growth is supported
Delivery Program Strategy:	3.1.3 Visitor accommodation is available
Theme:	5 Liveability
CSP Objective:	5.6 The diversity of our heritage, cultural services and facilities are maintained and promoted
Delivery Program Strategy:	5.6.3 Items of heritage significance are protected, conserved and adapted for re-use where appropriate

### RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the CEO undertake the development of a Capital Works Program, Operational Improvement Program and Funding Strategy to address the twenty (20) recommendations of the Wellington Caves Service Review through a path of continuous improvement through product and business investment and development as part of Dubbo Regional Council's financial budget development.**
- 2. That, as the two businesses develop, and resources are made available, the CEO investigates opportunities to expand commercial, scientific and operational partnerships including funding opportunities through government funding streams, philanthropic support and voluntary planning agreements (VPA).**
- 3. That the CEO investigate the value to the Wellington Caves of World Heritage Listing. This would include evaluating the impacts, implications and benefits to determine if an application should be pursued. A suitable timeline and appropriate resource allocation would need to be determined.**
- 4. That Manager Regional Experience develop a stage 1 investment program to refurbish/upgrade existing infrastructure for a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with renewable prospects for the value of \$5,000,000.**

*Craig Arms*  
Director Community, Culture and Places

*JA*  
Manager Regional  
Experiences

## BACKGROUND

### Brief History points:

- 1826 – First record of Caves - image of Wellington Caves
- 1828 – First written report of the Caves
- 1830 – Discovery of first Megafauna fossil sparking international interest
- 1878 – First guided tour of Cathedral Cave – 146 years of tourism
- 1884 – Preservation of the Caves was dedicated, under the control of the Department of Mines
- 1885 – First caretaker of the Caves appointment by Department of Mines
- 1894 – The Australian Museum took control of the Reserve from the Department of Mines
- 1906 – Trusteeship of the Caves and Reserve were transferred to the Macquarie Shire (Council has been managing and responsible for Wellington Caves for 118 years)
- 1960s-1970s – Caravan Park was constructed in stages
- 1990 – Wellington Caves registered on the Register of the National Estate for scientific and historical significance
- 1996 – Opening of the Phosphate Mine as a tourist mine
- 2016 – Amalgamation of Wellington and Dubbo Council
- 2016 – Flinders University commence their Fossil Dig in Cathedral Caves
- 2019 (November) – Opening of the Visitor Experience Centre
- 2020 (March onwards) COVID operational and Social Distancing impacting operations
- 2021 (Jan – May) – Mouse plague impacting operations
- 2021 (July) – Partial temporary closure of the Phosphate Mine
- 2021 (August) – COVID Closure impacting operations
- 2022 (October) – Complete temporary closure of Phosphate Mine due to significant weather/flooding impacts
- 2022 (September) – Significant flooding in lowest level of Cathedral Cave
- 2022 (October) – Subsidence issues identified in Cathedral Cave

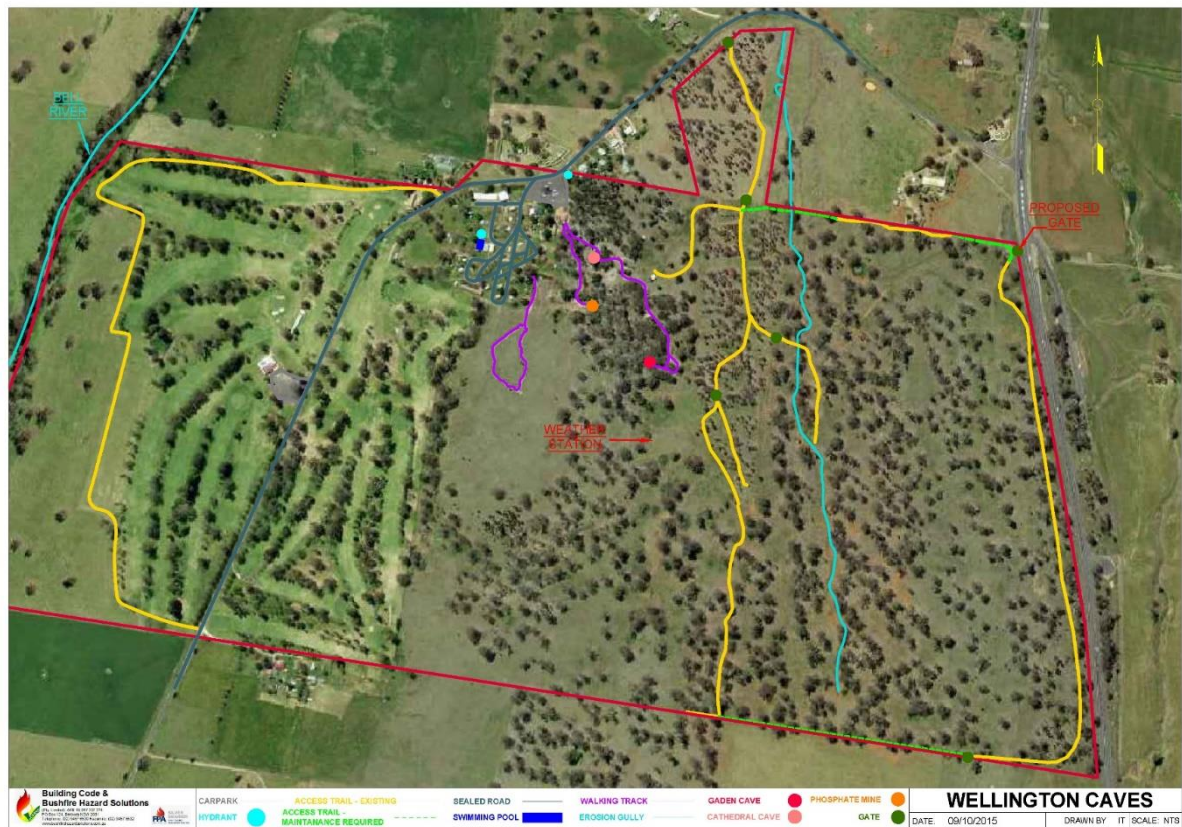
### Business Background:

The Wellington Caves Reserve is located within the Wiradjuri tribal area. Reserve covers 380 acres or 154 hectares and incorporates lots 333 (Golf Course), 334 (Caves) and 335 (Caravan Park). While the Reserve includes the golf course, the Wellington Caves business operates on lots 334 and 335 with 333 (golf course) currently leased to the Wellington Golf Club.

The Wellington Caves have an interesting and varied history. They were first discovered by Europeans around the time of the convict settlement of Wellington, with the first European record of the caves produced in 1826.

Fossil discoveries in the 1830's resulted in international interest and significance of the site. The first official guided tours commenced in 1885 and by 1888 over 1,500 people visited annually. From 1914-1918 a phosphate mine was in operation. A kiosk was constructed in the 1930's and a caravan park in the 1960's.





## Operations

The Wellington Caves Reserve was gazetted as crown land in 1989 for the dual purpose of:

### Public Recreation and Environmental Protection.

These two purposes are at the core of the Wellington Caves business and are interdependent. Guided and self-guided tours, along with other visitor experiences, provide an opportunity to create a connection between the visitor and the natural environment. This connection is key to creating understanding, appreciation and resulting in the protection of the Wellington Caves.

The powerful reach of that connection can stretch further than the site and create positive behavioural change for the wider environment. It is integral to the business that the two objectives are considered together. Ensuring the business operates in a sustainable and environmentally conscious way and is proactive about conservation and protection ensures the natural assets, which attract the visitors, are protected, and it also allows for greater interpretation of the site.

### Environmental Protection

Preservation and conservation of the Wellington Caves Reserves natural and cultural heritage includes:

- Promotion of scientific research
- Management of the flora and fauna
- Minimise visitor impact on the Reserve

### **Public Recreation – Visitor Experiences**

Wellington Caves offers a range of visitor experiences to the public, groups and educational visitors. An Interpretation Plan outlining the visitor experiences offered and future direction of the visitor experience of the site has been developed. By having an endorsed strategic vision for interpretation at Wellington Caves, there is an agreed mechanism for planning and integrating interpretation into all activities which communicate with a public focus. Regular review of interpretation strategies and plans is necessary to ensure that the messages which are presented to visitors align with Wellington Caves' evolving objectives and respond to changing visitation patterns, demographics, expectations and needs.

### **Guided Tours**

Guided tours have been conducted at Wellington Caves for more than 146 years. The Caves are one of the major tourist attractions in the Dubbo Region of New South Wales.

Wellington Caves offers three distinct tours. It is an advantage for Wellington Caves that each tour is unique and has its own character and story to tell. Having three unique products allows for greater ability to engage guests in multiple tours as well as increase their dwell time, spend and the opportunity to create positive behavioural change. Pricing is structured to encourage visitors to partake in multiple tours.

### **Cathedral Cave:**

The Cathedral Cave tour takes visitors through the sites' largest and most well-known show cave. Visitors learn about cave and crystal formation before seeing the altar, a 15m high crystal feature. The tour takes visitors 43m underground. Highlights of the tour include The Altar, thunder cave, and the well. Cathedral Cave is Wellington Cave's most popular tour.

### **Fossil and Phosphate Mine Tour (Currently Closed due to weather damage)**

The Fossil and Phosphate Mine tour takes visitors into a historic mine which operated over 100 years ago. The intriguing story is mystery around what the miners were really up to. The tour then takes visitors into bone cave, giving them a glimpse back in time as they discover and learn about the giant animals that once roamed the continent, Australia's Megafauna.

Cave tours gives guests the opportunity to hold real fossils and see a replica Wonambi (giant snake), Diprotodon skeleton replica and Thylacaleo skeleton replica.

*The Phosphate and Fossils tour is Wellington Cave's second most popular tour. This tour is wheel chair and pram accessible.*

### **Gaden Cave:**

Gaden Cave is the most highly decorated cave. This tour gives guests the time to immerse themselves in the underground and explore and discover the fascinating crystal structures. It also incorporates a nature walk to the entrance of the cave. *The Gaden Cave tour is Wellington Cave's third most popular tour.*

### **Visitor Experience Centre (VEC)**

A welcome precinct including a customer service and ticketing area, Discovery Lab, Megafauna room, Café, Souvenir shop and amenities. Provide an engaging, educational and



exciting visitor experience for guests. Provides a space for educational experiences and research through the creation of an Educational Discovery Lab. Protects and conserve historic artefacts, fossils, and material collected from the Wellington Caves Reserve. Catalogs and house all the written material pertaining to the history and scientific research of the Wellington Caves Reserve

### **Discovery Lab**

A classroom style experience offering hands on experiments, fossil digs and interactive learning to compliment the cave tour experience. This program is available to school groups, specialty groups and the general public as a paid ticket experience.

### **Megafauna Room**

Interactive free space for visitors to experience the evolving history of the site through virtual reality and hands on experiences. Exploring through geological time from 400 million years ago to the arrival of the First Australia's, this experience aims to enhance guided tours and provide additional opportunities onsite to increase visitor dwell time. The Megafauna Room is an award-winning exhibition taking the 2022 MAGNA Award for Best Permanent or Gallery Fit Out in Australia.

### **Fossil Trail:**

The fossil trail is a free self-guided experience where guests can discover and learn about sea creatures that lived in the warm, shallow seas that used to cover the area over 400 million years ago. Visitors collect a guide from the Visitor Experience Centre and follow along as they walk the fossil trail, which has fossil-rich limestone dotted along the paths.

### **Self-Guided and additional Activities**

The number of self-guided activities that visitors can partake at their leisure are offered (although limited). During off-peak periods, fewer tours are offered. This means visits especially the drive-by visitors that are traveling through, don't always have time to wait for the next tour, resulting in missed opportunities for spend and engagement with visitors.

### **Café**

The Caves Café provides a food and beverage offering to visitors and accommodation guests. The café also provides a catering service to groups, events, conferences and functions.

### **Caravan Park Accommodation & Amenities**

A \$1.12 million upgrade to the accommodation and facilities at Wellington Caves was undertaken from September 2016- February 2017, utilising funding from Infrastructure NSW and \$710,000 of funding from the former Wellington Council. The accommodation is currently rated as 3.5 stars.

Wellington Caves and Holiday Park offers a range of accommodation and amenities to suit different traveller's needs and price points:

- 36 powered sites
- 25 Camp sites
- 7 Caves suites

- 7 Golf View suites
- 3 park cabins
- Recreation room
- Swimming Pool
- Camp Kitchen
- Toilet Amenities
- Campfire Pits
- BBQ areas

#### Previous Resolutions of Council

21 March 2024

That the report of the meeting held on , be adopted.

The Service Review was presented to the Audit Risk Committee on 4 March 2024 by the Director Strategy, Partnerships and Engagement.

#### REPORT

In response to the Service Review of the Wellington Caves & Caravan Park undertaken by the Strategy Partnerships and Engagement division, the Manager Regional Experiences has undertaken a management response to the report and the twenty (20) recommendations detailed within the review.

The Management Response analysed eight (8) strategic approaches to the operational and capital delivery of the Wellington Caves tourist attraction and the accommodation offering thought the operation of a caravan park and motel rooms. These included:

1. Discontinue All Services
2. Business as Usual (no change, do nothing, base case)
3. Reduce All Service Levels
4. Invest Caves Tourism Business / Reduce Service Levels of Caravan Park Business
5. Invest Caravan Park Business / Reduce Service Levels of Caves Tourism Business
6. Invest Caves Tourism Business / Discontinue Service of Caravan Park Business
7. Invest Caves Tourism Business / Lease Caravan Park Business
8. Invest Caves Tourism Business / Invest Caravan Park Business

In undertaking the management response, other opportunities were considered as part of the decision process but more importantly the path moving forward for capital and operational continuous improvement. Other opportunities considered includes:

#### New Revenue Streams

- Night Tours
- Premium Fossil Experiences
- Free Tour Upgrades (bushwalk, bike, cart)

### New Premium Experiences

- Paleo Fossil Digs such as those offered through [Eromanga Megafauna Dig | Ancient Odysseys](#).

### New Free of Charge Product Lines

- Boardwalk
- Improved Fossil Trail

### Government Grant pathways

- State and Federal Grant Schemes
- Philanthropic Partnerships/Pathways
- Planning Agreements

### Funding Pathways (examples)

- Jenolan Caves (\$30m+ State and Federal Government Funded)
- Wombeyan Caves (State Government Funded \$9.6m)
- Wolgan Glow Worm Tunnels (State Government Funded \$4.15m)

### Research Partnerships

- Flinders University– Palaeontology
- Australian Museum – Palaeontology
- UNSW – Hydrology/Geology

### Commercial Partnerships

- Operational Partnership
- Marketing Partnerships with the Caravan Park

### State/World Heritage Listing

- Undertake benefit/implication review

### Consultation

Consulted with	Concerns Raised	Response
Audit Risk Improvement Committee	No Concerns Raised	N/A
Caves Staff	Risks around staff employment	To be addressed as part of business development, continuous improvement and fund
	Impacts to Visitor Experience	To be addressed as part of business development, continuous improvement and funding strategy.
	Risk to natural assets of site	Undertaken as part of update

		to Environmental Plan, Capital Development Approvals and Research Partnerships.
<b>Director Partnerships and Engagement</b>	<b>Strategy, and</b>	No Concerns Raised
		N/A

### Resourcing Implications

Total Financial Implications	Current year (\$)	Current year + 1 (\$)	Current year + 2 (\$)	Current year + 3 (\$)	Current year + 4 (\$)	Ongoing (\$)
a. Operating revenue	1,121,560	1,213,062	1,243,378	1,273,949	1,305,799	TBA
b. Operating expenses	-1,811,284	-1,860,554	-1,909,045	-1,954,894	-2,002,301	TBA
c. Operating budget impact (a – b)	-627,151	-647,492	-665,667	-680,945	-696,502	TBA
d. Capital Expenditure	127,467	295,273	317,273	317,273	317,273	TBA
e. Total net impact (c – d)	-499,684	-352,219	-348,394	-363,672	-379,229	TBA
Does the proposal require ongoing funding?			Yes			
What is the source of this funding?			General Rates and Revenue			

**Table 1.** Ongoing Operational Financial Implications (2025/26 Draft Budget Forecast)

**Note:** Table 1 does not include Capital improvements proposed to be investigated as part of a business development and continuous improvement program.

### Eight Options Considered:

Options	Risks	Pros/Cons
<b>Discontinue All Services</b>	Reputational Risk (Community, Tourism and Scientific industries) Financial Risk Site Environmental Risk	<b>Con:</b> Impact to Visitor Economy (up to \$20m per annum) Reputational Risk to Council  <b>Pro:</b> DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability (no further operational and capital investment to Wellington Caves and Caravan Park).

<p><b>Business as Usual (no change, do nothing, base case)</b></p>	<p>Reputational Risk (Community, Tourism and Scientific industries) Financial Risk (escalation) Site Environmental Risk Employee Safety Risk Employee Turnover Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Impact to existing staff (burnout, employee turnover) Minimal opportunity for Business Development &amp; Growth (Opportunity Risk)</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> No change to current DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability (Note: likely ongoing increases to operational and maintenance costs)</p>
<p><b>Reduce All Service Levels</b></p>	<p>Reputational Risk (Community, Tourism and Scientific industries) Financial Risk (escalation) Site Environmental Risk Employee Safety Risk Employee Turnover Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Impact to Visitor Economy (up to \$20m per annum) Reputational Risk to Council Significant impact to current revenue levels and reducing opportunity to increase.</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> positive impact to DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability. Reduction in operating budget.</p>
<p><b>Invest Caves Tourism Business / Reduce Service Levels of Caravan Park Business</b></p>	<p>Reputational Risk Financial Risk Site Environmental Risk Opportunity Risk (Caravan Park) Employee Loss/Angst Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Impact to Visitor Economy (reduction in beds in Wellington) Reputational Risk to Council Likely to result in some staff being redeployed or displaced.</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> Positive impact to DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability (savings in Caravan Park).</p>
<p><b>Invest Caravan Park Business / Reduce Service Levels of Caves Tourism Business</b></p>	<p>Reputational Risk (Community, Tourism and Scientific industries) Financial Risk Site Environmental Risk Opportunity Risk (Caravan Park) Employee Turnover Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Impact to Visitor Economy (Decrease tourism dwell time and income) Reputational Risk to Council – including staff impacts.</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> Positive impact to DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability (savings in Caves operations).</p>

<p><b>Invest Caves Tourism Business / Discontinue Service of Caravan Park Business</b></p>	<p>Reputational Risk Financial Risk Site Environmental Risk Opportunity Risk (Caravan Park) Employee Loss/Angst Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Impact to Visitor Economy (reduction in beds in Wellington) Reputational Risk to Council Likely to result in some staff being redeployed or displaced.</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> Positive impact to DRC Long Term Financial Sustainability (savings in Caravan Park).</p>
<p><b>Invest Caves Tourism Business / Lease Caravan Park Business</b></p>	<p>Opportunity Risk (Caravan Park) Financial Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Increased investment required through DRC Long Term Financial Planning</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> Business development opportunity through investment, increased revenue. Business and staff supported with appropriate resourcing to sustain growth (Caves) Commercial lease may result in some staff being redeployed or displaced.</p>
<p><b>Invest Caves Tourism Business / Invest Caravan Park Business</b></p>	<p>Financial Risk</p>	<p><b>Con:</b> Increased investment required through DRC Long Term Financial Planning (Additional funds required, taken from other parts of organisation to match grant application and capital/operational improvements)</p> <p><b>Pro:</b> Business development opportunity through investment, increased revenue. Business and staff supported with appropriate resourcing to sustain growth.</p>

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**Preferred Option**

Management response has identified the option to *Invest Caves Tourism Business / Invest Caravan Park Business* as the most preferred option.

**Risk Mitigation Strategy:**

The development of both the Caves Tourism Business and the Caravan Parks Accommodation Business does come with an element of financial risk to the organisation. If the development of the business exceeds the efficient delivery of the attraction or accommodation, this would place undue financial pressure on the organisation and its competing financial priorities.

To mitigate this impact, the strategy must consider the financial impacts to the organisation in the development of ongoing, continuous improvement and the funding strategy attached to those improvements. This will be undertaken in line with the organisations ongoing financial sustainability within its annual budget preparation.

Additional funds for large capital improvements will be applied for through state and federal funding streams and philanthropic partnerships. Examples of this internally are funds received for the Wellington Caves previously, the Old Dubbo Gaol and the Wiradjuri Cultural Tourism Centre. External examples of funding received for similar attractions include government funding for Jenolan Caves, Wombeyan Caves and the Wolgan Glow Worm Tunnels. Councils' contribution to any funding stream would need to be determined as part of annual budget preparations to consider in the context of all Councils commitments.

Upgrades to the Caravan Park, as outlined in the Business Development Strategy 2022, identify costs and funding strategies. Additional funds may be sourced through government funding streams or potential planning agreements. Identified in the plan are the cost benefit returns of those investments. Funds allocated to the caravan park upgrade would also be assessed as part of Councils budget development.

Operational changes may also include several additional revenue streams to the tourism attraction and caravan park businesses. These changes would be assessed as part of the efficient delivery of the continuous improvement and business development. Although increased expenditure may be required to implement these new initiatives, undertaking these within existing operating budgets would be a priority.

**Community Benefit:**

Community benefit of Dubbo Regional Councils ongoing development and investment into the Wellington Caves & Caravan Park is evident. The Caves is a much loved, and important strategic tourism asset for Wellington and the Dubbo Region. With an estimated \$20million annual impact to the Regional Visitor Economy, councils yearly operating investment is value for money. Ongoing Capital investment is required, but the importance of the site in a community sense, tourism and scientific will position the Council in a strong position to apply for funding opportunities across several financial streams including State and Australian Government investment in Tourism, Accommodation, Culture, Scientific and Economic Development. This investment from external pathways will help Council deliver this important asset to the Wellington Community.

**Funding Opportunities Strategy:**

In the development of the Capital Works Program, Operational Improvement Program and Funding Strategy, over \$14m worth of investment has been identified across the caves and caravan park businesses. This investment includes a combination of asset renewal of existing infrastructure and new experience, interpretation and amenities across both sites.

The ongoing development of the business has identified the following priorities, although investment is not required immediately for all site improvements. Priority needs to be given to asset renewals, with a longer-term approach to the delivery of site improvements. This will also give the organisation the opportunity to secure external funding opportunities as part of the development funding strategy.

Asset Renewal	Site	Value
Phosphate Mine refurb (and Interpretation)	Caves Attraction	\$1,800,000
Sibbalds Cottage	Caves Attraction	\$460,000
Fossil Trail	Caves Attraction	\$750,000
Wayfinding (site)	Caves Attraction	\$200,000
Carpark refurb,landscaping	Caves Attraction	\$350,000
Caves Lighting Upgrade	Caves Attraction	\$190,000
Security and Lighting Upgrade	Caravan Park	\$150,000
Road Infrastructure	Caravan Park	\$200,000
Fencing	Caravan Park	\$130,000
Irrigation Project	Caravan Park	\$167,400
Camp Kitchen Refurb	Caravan Park	\$80,000
Amenities Block Refurb	Caravan Park	\$220,000
Pool Refurb	Caravan Park	\$330,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$5,027,400</b>

Site Improvements	Site	Value
Karst Boardwalk	Caves Attraction	\$2,000,000
Corridor Timeline Project	Caves Attraction	\$360,000
Foyer/Café Interpretation	Caves Attraction	\$380,000
McCavities Experience	Caves Attraction	\$175,000
Touchscreen	Caves Attraction	\$150,000
Playground	Caves Attraction	\$1,200,000
Fossil Research/Experience Site	Caves Attraction	\$880,000
BDS Stage 1	Caravan Park	\$579,600
BDS Stage 2	Caravan Park	\$579,600
BDS Stage 3	Caravan Park	\$1,159,200
BDS Stage 4	Caravan Park	\$703,800
BDS Stage 5	Caravan Park	\$896,400
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$9,036,600</b>

**Planned Communications**

Staff to be informed of operational and capital investment pathway through ongoing meetings as the development and continuous improvement program is implemented.



**Next Steps**

Manager Regional Experiences, in partnership with Wellington Caves Operational Team undertakes the development of a Capital Works Program, Operational Improvement Program and Funding Strategy to address the twenty (20) recommendations of the Wellington Caves Service Review through a path of continuous improvement through product and business investment and development as part of Dubbo Regional Council's financial budget development. Ongoing development of the Wellington Caves and Caravan Park businesses include investigates opportunities to expand commercial, scientific and operational partnerships and an investigate the value to the Wellington Caves of World Heritage Listing.