


Armidale Regional Council Libraries

Strategic Plan 2020-2027



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this
land and pay our respects to the elders past,
present and emerging.

Let us walk together in the footsteps of love
and understanding, valuing diversity & working
towards a better future for our community.

Armidale War Memorial Library

1/182 Rusden Street
Armidale NSW 2350
02 6770 3636
library@armidale.nsw.gov.au

LT Starr Memorial Library

158 Bradley Street
Guyra NSW 2365
02 6770 7123
gsclibrary@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Message from the General Manager	4
Introduction	5
Strategic Alignment	6
Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework	7
Our Community	8
Population by age	8
Geographical area	8
Our Libraries	9
Community Consultation	10
How we consulted	10
Survey	10
Focus groups	10
Social Media	10
What did our Community Consultation tell us?	11
Our Vision	13
Our Priorities	13
Action Plan	14
People: Everyone, every time	14
Place: A safe and welcoming space for all	16
Innovation: Honour the past, serve the present, and embrace the future	18



Message from the General Manager

Armidale Regional Council values the role of our libraries in our community. They provide a safe and supportive place where people can connect, be inspired and learn. We are in challenging times following recent bushfires, drought and the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is in these times in particular that our libraries provide a key community service. They have delivered support, information and a sanctuary for those in need, fostering resilience during our recovery.

The Armidale Regional Council Libraries Strategic Plan 2020-2027 sets a vision for our libraries for the next 7 years.

This strategy has been developed through extensive community consultation and in conjunction with our library team, and demonstrates how our libraries will support our community, and continue to grow and adapt to meet our needs now and into the future.

It is important that as a Council we align the strategies for our services, such as the libraries, with the goals and aspirations of our community. This document has been aligned to our Community Strategic Plan 2027 and it's supporting strategy to 'Provide a network of modern library and learning centre's across the region, including a library service in the Guyra and Armidale town centres which cater for the needs of the community including meeting spaces, accessible internet services and up to date resources'.

Through this strategic plan we set out the actions we will deliver to create a library service that meets the needs of our community, can adapt to changes in our environment and remains relevant for years to come.

John Rayner
Acting General Manager



Introduction

It is a pleasure to deliver this Strategic Plan to our community which will guide our library service for the next seven years.

Our libraries are not just repositories for books; they are a resource that can be used by our community for education, personal wellbeing, and inspiration. Through this strategy we intend to develop the skills of our library professionals and equip them with the resources they need to allow them to introduce interesting, dynamic and engaging programs across our entire community and develop our collections according to community needs. We aim to link with other community groups within our region to enhance library programs or offer assistance to develop their services. We will also seek to meet and exceed the expectations of our rich and diverse community so our libraries continue to be an integral and valuable part of everyday life.

Based on feedback we received during our community consultation period we will continue to improve our physical library spaces, creating a welcoming and vibrant community living

room with spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds. Outreach services will be expanded, so in instances where distance is a barrier to enjoying library services, we will come to you. Our library service will be inclusive and freely available to everyone in our region. The actions in this strategy will ensure our library buildings continue to be a place that feels like home to more people each year - a place where you can connect with others and a place you can seek assistance and support. We will also look for opportunities to celebrate and promote what makes our region special and unique.

To remain current and ensure people living within our region are benefiting from high quality services, we will continue to innovate, adapt and think creatively about our service and how we can benefit and support our community. While honoring the past, new ideas will be welcomed and we will explore emerging technologies to improve our library programs and services.

Our overall aim with this Strategic Plan is to firmly establish our libraries as vital community hubs for connection and collaboration, and to position our service at the heart of our community.



Strategic Alignment

This Library Strategic Plan aligns with Armidale Regional Council's broader strategic plans which are part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

The key Plans within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework include:

A Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 that reflects the input of our community and their aspirations for how we can best continue to grow and prosper. It also demonstrates how we can effectively balance our economic, environmental and social aspirations in a way that fosters creativity and innovation, builds communities, and creates opportunities.

A Delivery Plan 2018-2022 that outlines the principal activities that will be delivered during the term of the Council that achieve the goals and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan.

An Operational Plan that outlines the activities of the Council within the Financial Year, which will contribute to achieving the principal activities of the Delivery Program, and in turn, the goals of the Community Strategic Plan.

The Library Strategic Plan sits within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework as one of a group of tailored strategic plans that align with the Community Strategic Plan goals and aspirations and help to inform the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.



Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The development of the Library Strategic Plan is outlined as an action of the Operational Plan 2019-2020, which states:

“Implement Library Strategic Plan, including new technology and programs at the Armidale and Guyra libraries, to further strengthen their role as a hub for knowledge and learning and a nucleus for social connectivity and inclusiveness.”

This action is part of the Community Strategic Plan goal to provide:

“Community programs, services and facilities meet the needs of the community and provide a safe place to live”.

And the Delivery Program principal activity to:

“Provide a network of a modern library and learning centres across the region, including a designated library service in Guyra and Armidale town centres which cater for the needs of the community including meeting spaces, accessible internet services and up to date resources”.



Our Community

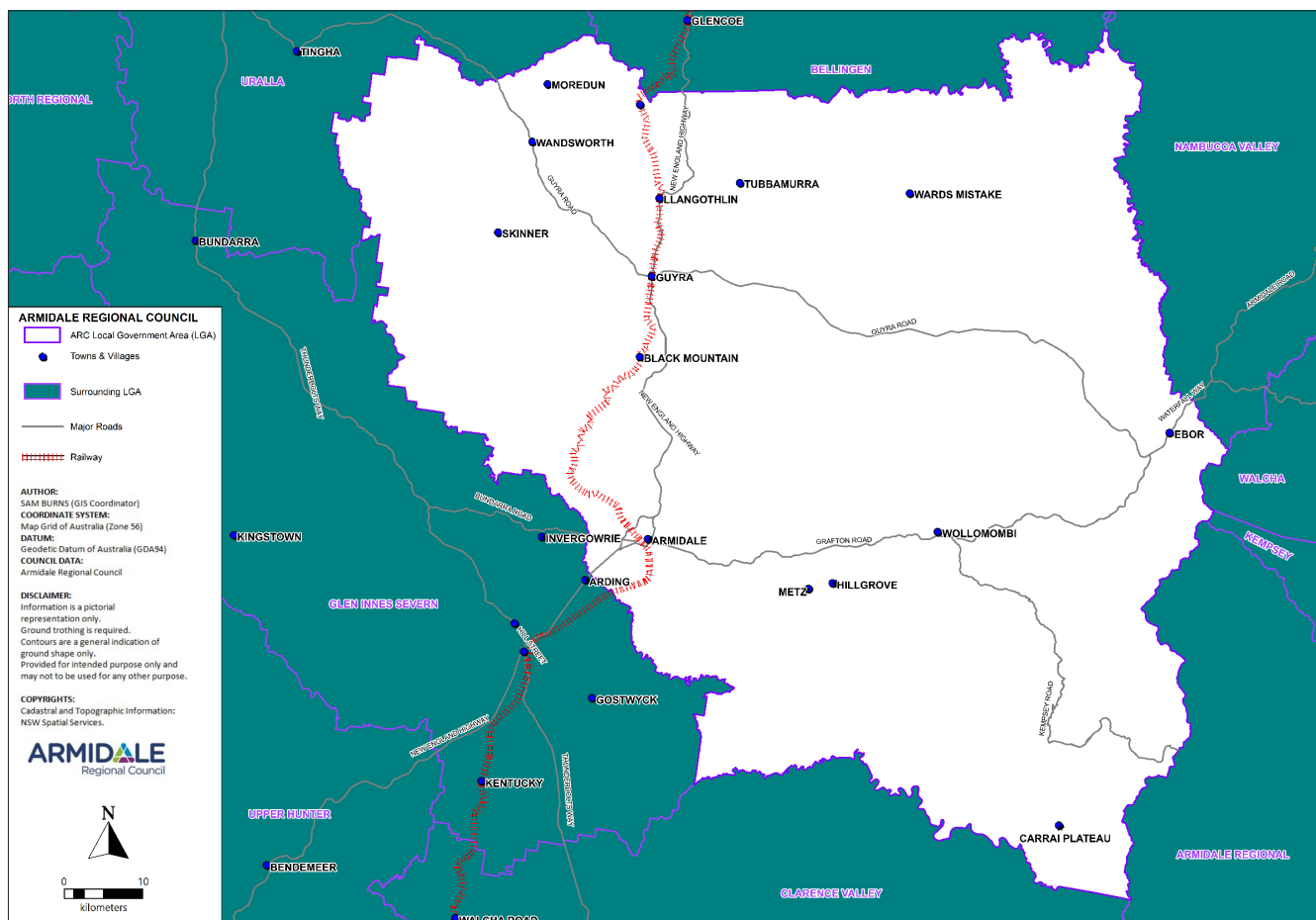
Population Snapshot (as per 2016 census)

Place of usual residence	Number	%	Regional NSW %
Total population	29,449	100.0	100.0
- Males	14,227	48.3	49.2
- Females	15,220	51.7	50.8
Total dwellings	12,739	100.0	100.0
Indigenous population	2,171	7.4	5.5
Australian citizens	25,226	85.7	88.7
Eligible voters (citizens 18+)	19,294	65.5	68.3
Australian-born	23,396	79.4	80.9
Speaks language other than English at home	2,322	7.9	5.7
Overseas-born	3,618	12.3	11.2
Needs assistance due to age or disability	1,525	5.2	6.3

Source: profile.id.com.au

Geographical area

The Armidale Regional Council Local Government area covers an area of 780,700ha. We have two libraries. One located in Armidale and the other in Guyra.



LIBRARY SNAPSHOT

AS AT DECEMBER 2019

11,062 members 

This means 36% of people in the region are library members



120,000 visitors

We welcome approximately 120,00 visitors between Guyra and Armidale annually.

200,000 loans

Over 200,000 physical items are loaned across both libraries annually.



15,485 online loans



The number of online loans continues to grow each year.



Community Consultation

How we consulted

From July to December 2019, Armidale Regional Council actively engaged with our community for feedback on the development of our Library Strategic Plan. Council recognises that people living within the region are important stakeholders in development of our community services.

Our Community Consultation objectives were to:

- Confirm the community's vision for the future of our libraries
- Provide opportunities for the community to participate in our decision making process
- Inform an Action Plan to be included in the Library Strategic Plan
- Evaluate community perception of our current levels of service

To attract feedback from a variety of community members, those that do and do not use our libraries, we engaged with the community in a number of different ways.



Survey

Both paper-based and online surveys were distributed at Council events, online via our website and social media, and also in our libraries.

926 survey responses were received for our general survey and a further 44 responses were received for our dedicated Youth Survey.



Focus Groups

Throughout July and August 2019, we also hosted the following community forums:

- General Community Consultation (Armidale)
20 July 2019: 14 attendees
- General Community Consultation (Guyra)
30 July 2019: 7 attendees
- Aboriginal Community Forum (Armidale)
30 July 2019: 6 attendees
- Youth Forum (Armidale), 31 July 2019: 14 attendees
- General Community Consultation (Armidale)
21 August 2019: 40 attendees



Social Media

All social media feedback and suggestions received between the consultation period were also included in the results.

What did our Community Consultation tell us?

SURVEY RESULTS

GENERAL COMMUNITY SURVEY &
YOUTH SURVEY 2019



78%

of all people surveyed
gave our libraries an
**above average or
higher grading**



86%

of all people surveyed
said staff were **effective**
**in resolving their
problems or questions**



95%

of all people
surveyed said staff
were **friendly and
approachable**



35%

of our visitors would like to see more **adaptable spaces**,
new furniture or a change to the library layout



25%

of people surveyed would like to see
us add more **library programs**

**IN THE FUTURE
OUR LIBRARY
PATRONS WOULD
LIKE TO SEE:**

- > Increased parking
- > SMS reminders for overdue & upcoming events
- > Opportunities to try emerging technology
- > A regular library newsletter

What else would people like to
see in our libraries?

More Children's Activities

More Adult Programs

Café Services

More Promotion of the Library

Longer Opening Hours

Smart Furniture

Virtual Tours

Book Clubs

59% of the youth
surveyed are currently
library members

61% of youth still
borrow our physical
resources

For the full survey results please visit
[www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/
community/arts-and-culture/libraries](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/community/arts-and-culture/libraries)



What did our Community Consultation tell us?

At each of our community focus groups, we asked the same questions. This is what the community told us.

What are your top 3 ideas for the library?

More community programs

Develop our collections – add to and diversify what we already have

Improve accessibility inside and outside of our libraries

Improve our library spaces

Review our opening hours

What do you love about your library?

The library spaces and atmosphere

Our collections

The location of the libraries

Library programs and events

Our staff

Services we provide to the community

Never use the library? Why?

Barriers such as parking, not enough study space or relaxing areas, looking for better programs and services

Opening hours aren't convenient

Cultural issues such as foreign languages not catered for, language barriers, would like to see more culturally diverse programming

Personal reasons such as time constraints, low literacy levels or don't like reading

Accessibility issues such as it's hard to see from the road, better signage throughout town is needed and no bus stop

Cheaper books can be purchased from department stores, books can be purchased online and there is better technology and wi-fi at home

What does a 21st Century library look like to you?

More technology available to use in the library and to loan and take home

Good collection of physical books retained

Programs and library spaces for all ages

Library services remain free

Partnerships with local community groups and connectivity to global libraries

Volunteer programs and internet buddies or help with the use of technology



Our Vision

Our Priorities

The following themes have been developed to shape the future direction for our libraries. They intend to celebrate the role of a public library within a community and support existing and potential partnerships between our libraries and the community. They also aim to provide clear goals that will strengthen the services we provide, keep our libraries relevant into the future, and ensure we continue to adapt to the changing needs of our region.



PEOPLE - Everyone, every time:

Increase community connection to our libraries and deliver a service which engages, educates and welcomes a diverse community.



PLACE - A safe and welcoming space for all:

Provide library spaces which are inclusive, collaborative, adaptive and dynamic and cater to the varying needs of individuals of all ages, as well as our local community groups.



INNOVATION - Honour the past, serve the present, and embrace the future:

Include adaptive technologies in the delivery of our services and include new technology in the development of physical and digital spaces which continue to exceed the expectations of our community.



PEOPLE:

Everyone, every time

Increase community connection to our libraries and deliver a service which engages, educates and welcomes a diverse community.

Action No.	Action	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
A1	Launch a volunteering program	Year 1	ARC & Community Members
A2	Build a Higher School Certificate study program for young people in our community	Year 1	ARC & School Students
A3	Develop and maintain an engaging and dynamic library web page	Year 1+	ARC
A4	Develop an online newsletter to promote library programs, events and services	Year 1+	ARC
A5	Foster a collaborative and supportive relationship with Friends of the Library groups supporting our libraries	Year 1+	ARC & community members
A6	Maintain and expand a program of engaging and dynamic community programs for people of all ages with a focus on learning and personal development	Year 1+	ARC & community members
A7	Develop relationships with all local educational facilities. Explore partnerships which can enhance or expand the services provided to our library members	Year 1+	ARC & local educational institutions
A8	Regular professional development and networking opportunities will be sought for staff to keep their skills current and in line with new and emerging library trends	Year 1+	ARC
A9	Collaborations with other areas of Council such as Museums, Visitor Information Centre, Customer Service and Community Services will be strengthened to deliver high quality and relevant up to date local information to our library users	Year 1+	ARC



A10	Library users will be given regular opportunities to provide feedback and suggestions to encourage continual improvement of our library service and our collection	Year 2	ARC & community members
A11	Promote individual library staff as key information resources in our community and showcase their unique skills, encouraging direct community engagement.	Year 2	ARC
A12	Expand Readers Advisory services. Use skilled staff to promote and match digital and physical resources to all library users.	Year 2+	ARC & community members
A13	Deliver regular outreach programs to isolated schools and community groups within our region	Year 2+	ARC & community members
A14	Develop a strong social media presence to actively encourage engagement with libraries	Year 2+	ARC
A15	Develop a program of sustainability themed workshops and programs aimed at educating the community about protecting and caring for the environment	Year 2+	ARC
A16	Review opening hours across both libraries, ensure hours reflect the needs of the community	Year 2+	ARC & community members
A17	Actively engage with the local Aboriginal community to assist in the development of Aboriginal resources and collections which showcase the unique story of our area	Year 3+	ARC & Community Members
A18	Actively engage with the local multicultural groups to assist in the development of our collection. Expand our collection of resources in languages other than English	Year 3+	ARC & Community Members
A19	Seek out and appoint ARC library ambassadors to promote our libraries to the wider community	Year 3+	ARC & Community Members



PLACE:

A safe and welcoming space for all

Provide library spaces which are inclusive, collaborative, adaptive and dynamic and cater to the varying needs of individuals of all ages, as well as our local community groups.

Action No.	Action	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
B1	Enhance the physical environment through the introduction of more comfortable, attractive and vibrant furnishings	Year 1+	ARC & community members
B2	Maintain a relevant collection in line with emerging trends that is responsive to our community's needs and wants.	Year 1+	ARC & community members
B3	Develop spaces within the libraries that are dedicated to direct community engagement and promotion	Year 1+	ARC & community members
B4	Continually improve staff customer service skills to achieve and maintain a high level of customer satisfaction	Year 1+	ARC & community members
B5	Review the Northern Tablelands Cooperative Library Service relationship and seek additional benefits for our community from this relationship such as joint grant applications and cost sharing arrangements	Year 1+	ARC, NTCLS & community members.
B6	Continue to streamline and improve processes between our library branches to ensure the community receives an effective and efficient service at all times	Year 1+	ARC & community members.
B7	Improve the street presence of our libraries to ensure they are easy to find and inviting	Year 1+	ARC & community members.
B8	Remodel our circulation desks to create warm and welcoming entrances that celebrate the resources and facilities the libraries have available	Year 2	ARC & community members
B9	Introduce café services in the libraries	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B10	Encourage a more diverse use of our libraries by developing new spaces built for purpose.	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B11	Incorporate technology into furnishings to provide increased accessibility and connectivity to patrons, i.e. connected study pods and 'smart' furniture	Year 2+	ARC & community members



B12	Install modern, purpose built library shelving in both libraries that is modular and adaptive to enable more comfortable and dynamic use of the library space	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B13	Create more individual and small group reflection and study areas	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B14	Provide infrastructure for the safe display and celebration of artistic and historical materials and objects	Year 2+	ARC & local Arts and Culture groups
B15	Review the physical layout of the libraries with a view to creating engaging and adaptable multipurpose areas	Year 2+	ARC
B16	Provide display space in each library primarily aimed at promoting and welcoming our multicultural and diverse community	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B17	Provide multilingual signage and instructions	Year 2+	ARC & community members
B18	Conduct a review of the library stack storage area and create guidelines for how this space is best used into the future	Year 2+	ARC & community members.
B19	Review internal operations and develop a new library policies and procedures manual to improve workflows and assist in the development and training of staff	Year 2+	ARC
B20	Review parking facilities at the Armidale Library; explore possibilities to make parking easier and more accessible	Year 3+	ARC & community members
B21	Develop local history collections in both libraries, both physical & digital, aimed at preserving and protecting significant and unique local information	Year 3+	ARC & community members
B22	Seek grant funding for a dedicated library van which can be used to deliver library outreach programs and services to all areas of our region	Year 4+	ARC & community members



INNOVATION:

Honour the past, serve the present, and embrace the future

Include adaptive technologies and seek innovative ideas to use in the delivery of our services and include new technology in the development of physical and digital spaces which will continue to exceed the expectations of our community and keep our Libraries relevant to future generations.

Action No.	Action	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
C1	Implement PC Booking Software across both libraries	Year 1	ARC & community members
C2	Implement a Library App which provides 24/7 connectivity with our library services	Year 1	ARC & community members
C3	Facilitate the licensing of community published material and make it available within our collection in a digital format	Year 1+	ARC & community members
C4	Review our online resources to meet community needs and expectations within budget limitations	Year 1+	ARC & community members
C5	Diversify the collection to include other resources of value to our community	Year 1+	ARC & community members
C6	Explore the use of technology to improve our internal processes and improve our level of service to the community	Year 1+	ARC & community members
C7	Be proactive in seeking out and inviting new experiences and interesting programs to our libraries for the education and enjoyment of our community	Year 2	ARC & community members
C8	Provide convenient and modern technology charging and connectivity stations for community use	Year 2+	ARC & community members
C9	Fit out the Armidale Maker Space as a multi-purpose area which encourages the use of technology for education, creativity and recreation activities	Year 2+	ARC & community members



C10	Provide technology that facilitates easy use of our resources and materials to all members of the public. This may include adapting the delivery and format of these items to persons with special needs	Year 2+	ARC & community members.
C11	Develop a new collection development policy to reflect modern standards and community needs	Year 2+	ARC & community members
C12	Provide accessible multilingual online & virtual materials to meet community need	Year 3+	ARC & community members
C13	Investigate the potential for the installation of sound proof pods in the libraries for community use, for projects such as oral histories and pod casting	Year 3+	ARC & community members
C14	Facilitate the provision of culturally and linguistically diverse training to community groups to encourage confident engagement with technology	Year 3+	ARC & community members
C15	Evaluate the provision of electronic equipment to home library users	Year 3+	ARC & Community Members
C16	Make available, electronic devices to allow more comprehensive engagement of people with disabilities	Year 4+	ARC & community members



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