

TO	Administrators and CEO of the City of Greater Geelong
FROM	Save Barwon Heads Community Library group
DATE	13 June 2017
TITLE	Request to change the decision to close Barwon Heads Community Library

Introduction

On 26 April 2017, the Administrators of City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) resolved to close the Barwon Heads Community Library (BHCL) on 30 September 2017. We, the Save Barwon Heads Community Library group, along with a number of other Barwon Heads community groups, are requesting that this decision be changed and that the BHCL remain open.

The decision to close our library failed to take into account ‘the need to measure outcomes’ as outlined in the Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016. This document states that ‘in the past, libraries have relied on quantitative measures’, but states that ‘to provide more rigorous arguments for library funding and to guide future strategy development, data is required to provide evidence of the impact these services have on people’s lives and the value this adds to personal, community and economic wellbeing.’ It is unsatisfactory to fail to observe current practice guidelines, and to overlook or ignore this current information, which was available at the time that the decision to close BHCL was made.

The decision also fails to reflect the message by the Hon. Natalie Hutchins that ‘public Libraries are at the heart of our community’. We would like to see Barwon Heads maintain a strong, vibrant, connected, community enriched by reading, empowered by learning and inspired by information and ideas. More so now than ever, our local communities have a need for social connectedness and the need for a forward thinking model; not one based on figures and assumptions from the past. It is very important for libraries to be in the communities they serve, not to force communities to travel to them.

Our local library is warm and welcoming, a place to feel safe and connected. It is a place of curiosity, contemplation, learning and enjoyment. We want our library to be part of our day to day activity not an activity to be planned a few times per year. Books and libraries should be for everyone every day. We want a community of lifelong learners. This is consistent with the Victorian Public Libraries Strategic Framework 2030.

Since the 26 April 2017 BHCL closure decision, the Barwon Heads Community has unified in it’s resolve to retain the BHCL. We are a willing community, seeking to work with CoGG and the Geelong Regional Library Corporation (GRLC) to explore and reach the full potential of a community library model. There are a number of groups and individuals who are willing to establish a ‘Barwon Heads Community Library Reference Group’ to provide support and assistance to meet current and future needs, working in partnership with CoGG and GRLC. We want to develop a flagship model for Community Libraries which service populations of fewer than 10,000 - 15,000 people. The current climate is ripe for this and our aims are perfectly aligned to the strategic aims of both CoGG and GRLC. The newly appointed Principal of Barwon Heads Primary School, Mr Daniel Vella, is open to exploring and maximising opportunities for community partnerships and engagement.

Changing the decision to close the BHCL is a fair, responsible, appropriate and positive decision. Given that every dollar invested in Victoria’s Public Libraries generates an average return of \$3.56 in the community benefits (Dollar, Sense and Public Libraries 2011), the outcome of this decision will be worth far more than \$58,000 to the current and future Barwon Heads community, as well as communities across the CoGG municipality and beyond.

<p>Recommendations</p>
<p><i>Council is asked to approve the following recommendations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Immediately change the decision to close the Barwon Heads Community Library on 30 September 2017.</i> 2. <i>Ensure adequate funding is allocated for the continuation of the existing BHCL service in the 2017-18 CoGG budget.</i> 3. <i>Acknowledge that Community Engagement and Consultation is required, prior to making a library closure decision.</i> 4. <i>Undertake a review of the measures to assess performance of GRLC Library Services provided across the municipality, ensuring that measures are: reflective of the key aims of the Library Service, are reflective of different Library models (eg Community Library, Branch Library) and are consistent with the Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016.</i> 5. <i>Engage with the Barwon Heads Community Library Reference Group on a quarterly basis, in an engagement and consultation process consistent with the City of Greater Geelong Community Engagement Policy 2014, to review and enhance the service of BHCL, developed as a flagship model for a co-located service within a small community.</i> 6. <i>Ensure that Library Service performance measures are monitored, measured and reported on in a transparent and consistent manner.</i> 7. <i>Undertake a thorough community impact assessment involving community engagement, prior to deciding to close any Library Services in the Municipality.</i> 8. <i>Recognise and use the BHCL as a repository and location for community consultation and information sharing activities.</i> 9. <i>Develop a 3 year plan for a Performance Review of all CoGG Municipal Library services against the newly established KPIs, ensuring community consultation and engagement.</i>
<p>Timing of Decisions</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The decision to close BHCL should be changed immediately, prior to the adoption of the 2017-18 Budget, to ensure that there is adequate funding for the continuation of the BHCL.</i> 2. <i>Following the establishment of updated KPIs (aligned to the Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016), a 3 year Performance Review of the CoGG Municipal Library Network should be undertaken, with full community engagement and consultation.</i>
<p>Financial Implications</p>
<p><i>The CoGG Budget for 2017-18 needs to include \$58,000 for the continuation of the BHCL.</i></p>
<p>Key Issues</p>
<p><i>The request to change the decision to close BHCL is based on the following issues:</i></p> <p>1. NO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION</p> <p><i>The Barwon Heads community was not consulted prior to the decision to close the BHCL. This is inconsistent with Good Governance practices and contradicts CoGG and GRLC Strategic Plans and CoGG's Community Engagement Policy 2014. The lack of community consultation and engagement is also contradictory to Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness principles. The post-decision 'consultation' process about transition arrangements is flawed, as is the 2017-18 Budget consultation process.</i></p> <p><i>COGG's efforts to consult following the decision failed to include recommendations from the community regarding the transition survey content, and furthermore the survey was developed to be completed online with limited ability for people to complete manually, as BHCL was closed during the survey period. The CoGG online budget submission system was unable to distinguish budget submissions from library concerns, preventing a number of people from being able to attend the Budget Submissions Review Panel due to inadequate notice. Both consultation processes</i></p>

restricted the ability of community members to actively contribute to their future.

With reference to the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum in CoGG's Community Engagement Policy 2014, it is unacceptable that we have been engaged at the lowest level of the spectrum and have been merely informed of the decision, with tokenistic consultation taking place after the decision was made. We would have expected to be engaged at the Collaborate and Empower level of this spectrum and we expect this in future community engagements.



The Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016 identifies the importance of engaging the local community. It states:

'The success of the modern library relies upon it having a deep understanding of and close relationships with its local and regional community. Libraries can ensure that the scope, delivery and management of their services responds to local needs and interests and contributes to achievement of meaningful outcomes for library users and the community by:

- *ensuring universal access to libraries within the community and providing safe and trusted public spaces where everyone is welcome*
- *reflecting community needs and aspirations and engaging the community in shaping library services*
- *being a champion of the community's unique cultural identity*
- *creating and nurturing partnerships that build community and individual resilience and capacity.'*

The Barwon Heads community expects CoGG to make decisions based on current best practice, in the best interest of the community. We expect CoGG to comply with these guidelines.

2. MISINFORMATION AND POOR ANALYSIS

Residents of the Barwon Heads community are obviously being unfairly disadvantaged by this decision which is based on poor Key Performance Indicators and inconsistent, inaccurate and misinterpreted data and flawed analysis.

a) Poor Data Quality

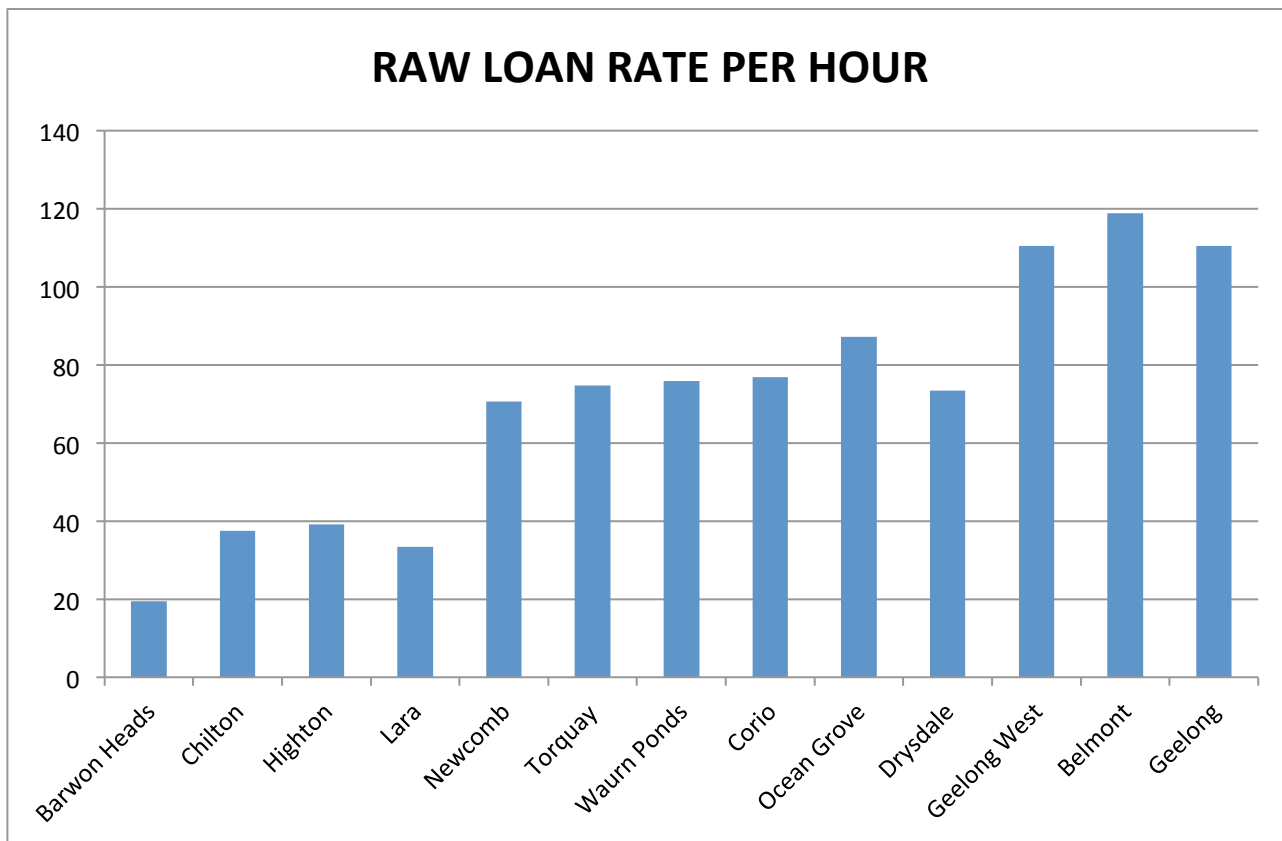
The reported data in the 26 April 2017 Ordinary Meeting of Council Agenda misrepresents the true use of the BHCL. We hold serious concerns regarding the accuracy and consistency of the data collection, reporting and analysis that has led to the decision to close the BHCL. The reported figures do not recognise the unique and scalable model of this co-located service at Barwon Heads Primary School (BHPS).

Examples of data discrepancies are listed below:

GRLC Measures	Data Reported to CoGG	In contrast
No of items borrowed	10852 (loans p/ hr x hrs open x 52)	GRLC 2016 annual report cited BH loans for the year as 39,762
Collection size	6000	In addition to the GRLC collection, >6000 Barwon Heads Primary School books are available to all GRLC members - the collection size is a minimum of 12000.
No of members	600	1290 GRLC members have a Barwon Heads address

While we continue to question the integrity of the reported data, we have used this reported data to conduct the following Data Analysis, for your review consideration.

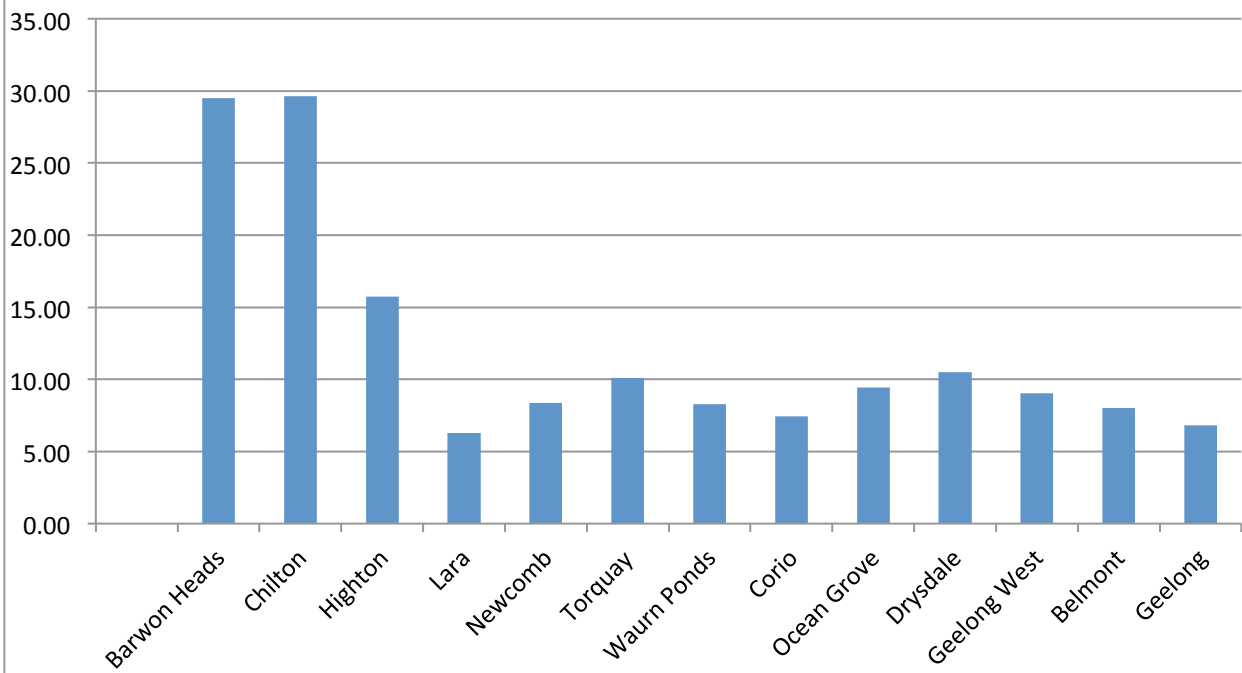
Chart 1 – Raw Loan Rate per Hour reported by GRLC



Comment – These Figures were used by GRLC to recommend to CoGG to close BHCL. They do not accurately reflect the true 'loans rate' performance of the BHCL.

Chart 2 – Loan Rate per 1000 Members

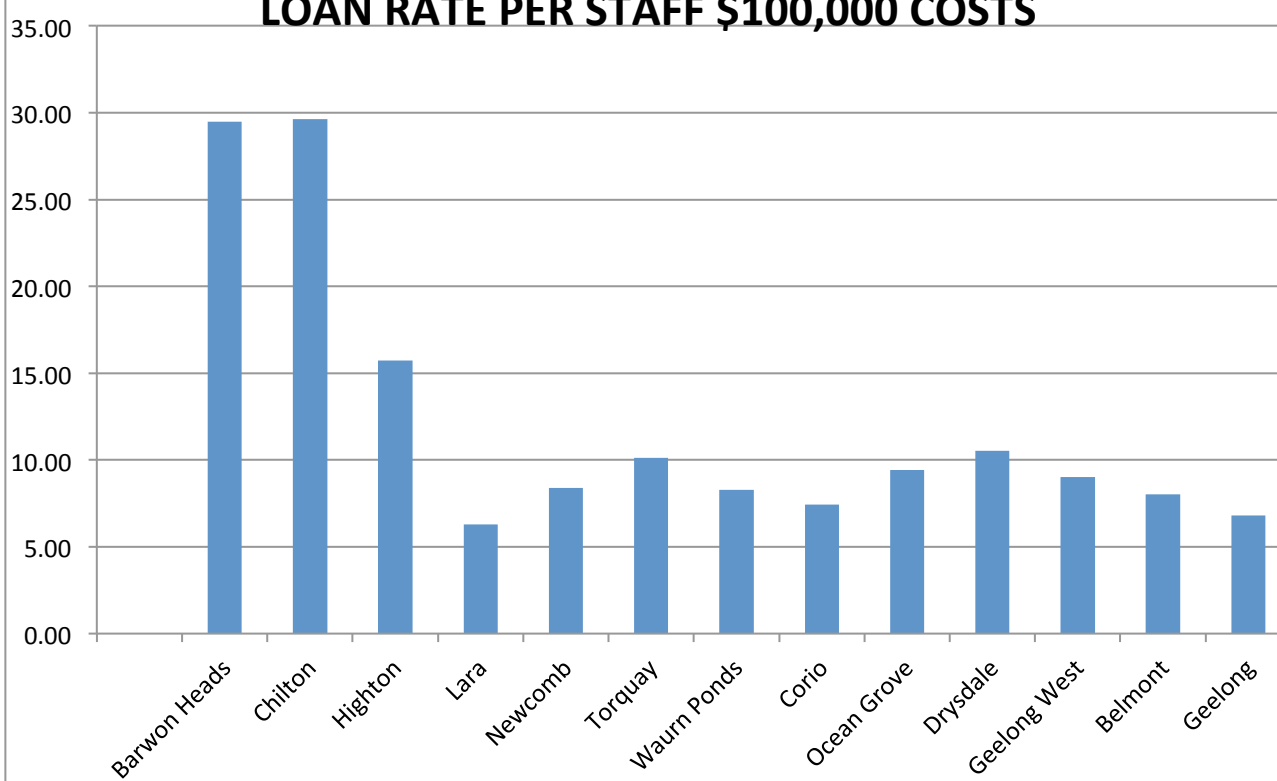
LOAN RATE PER 1000 MEMBERS



Comment – Barwon Heads is a small town with outstanding loan activity by it's Library Members. It is worthwhile noting that a large number of Barwon Heads residents are registered as members of other libraries within the network, but do actually access the Barwon Heads Library and/or are unaware that this might impact the future of the BHCL.

Chart 3 – Loan Rate per Staff 100,000 costs

LOAN RATE PER STAFF \$100,000 COSTS



Comment: Based on the reported loan rate, BHCL is one of the two most cost-effective library services in the CoGG Municipality. The co-located service provides outstanding value for money to the community and to Council.

b) Community vs Branch Library Comparison

The BHCL was established by the community and is recognised as a Community Library, not as a Branch Library. Yet the BHCL is being reviewed against the KPIs for Branch Libraries and compared with Branch Libraries, not Community Libraries. The CoGG Public Library Development Strategy 2009 outlines that Libraries will be developed in partnership and/or co-located with other services. The BHCL is perfectly aligned with this strategy, but this alignment is being disregarded due to a flawed comparison of distinctly different Library models.

The Western Heights (Vines Road) Community Library Service was outside of the scope of the 2015 review as it is a different model. BHCL is also a different model which should also have been outside of the scope of the review. It is not comparable with Branch Libraries, and the attempt to do so compromises the accuracy and validity of the analysis. The term 'non-viable branch' does not apply to a Community Library.

c) Lack of alignment with Australian Public Libraries Standards

The GRLC KPIs that were used as the basis for the closure decision are inconsistent with the Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016. The GRLC KPIs merely measure outputs instead of outcomes, which is outdated and insufficient in 2017. The recommendation to close the BHCL is based on redundant measures of outputs rather than outcomes and this is contradictory to Goal 4 of the GRLC Library Plan 2017-2021.

d) Inconsistent justifications for closures

There are a number of inconsistent justifications that have been cited when communicating the reason for the closure of BHCL. For example:

- *Distance between services - other libraries are in closer proximity to other services than BHCL is to the Ocean Grove Library*
- *Collection size – The reported 6000 items omits the > several thousand BHPS books available*

at the BHCL which are available to be borrowed by GRLC members (we are still trying to obtain this exact figure)

- Western Heights (Vines Rd) Community Library is the only other Community Library and it was considered "out of scope of review", yet BHCL was included in the review

e) No true Cost-Benefit Analysis undertaken

The Andrews State Government recognises the importance of investment in public libraries with the Living Libraries funding of \$4.8million. Minister Natalie Hutchins states that this government 'understands the crucial role that our libraries play in fostering life-long learning and bringing communities together. It is unfathomable that in the context of this funding and recognition of the importance of public libraries, CoGG and GRLC would seek to close a long-standing, co-located library service which costs \$58,000 per annum. This cost represents less than 1% of the annual rates collected from the Barwon Heads residents.

The cost to run the BHCL Service has been considered in isolation from the benefits that the BHCL provides to the community. Every dollar invested in Victoria's Public Libraries generates an average return of \$3.56 in community benefits (Dollar, Sense and Public Libraries 2011). The cost of the current service is known and predominantly unmatched across the municipality in terms of 'value for money'. The cost of alternative service arrangements for residents of Barwon Heads are unknown and unbudgeted for, so the true saving that will be achieved by closing the library is totally unknown.

3. FAILURE TO CONSIDER BROADER, LONG TERM COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND ALIGNMENT WITH COGG AND GRLC STRATEGIC PLANS

a) COGG FUTURE VISION - A Clever and Creative Vision for COGG

The pre-reading for the COGG future vision outlined that "Research into the best communities in the world show they are:

- Connected
- Prosperous
- Creative
- Sustainable and resilient (environmentally, economically and socially)
- Designed for people (easy and safe for all community groups to access the services, amenities and comfort they need)

This is what the Barwon Heads community wants and having a community library in our town is integral to this.

b) Physical Activity

Encouraging Barwon Heads residents to drive to the library or catch the bus is contradictory to the CoGG Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17. The BHCL is an avenue for CoGG to provide and maintain important community spaces and support 'important local assets where people maintain their social connections and be part of their local community'. The Barwon Heads community values and engages in active travel and active lifestyles, in line with the above mentioned plan. Removing the BHCL service from our community will diminish this. Barwon Heads Primary School actively encourages and recognises active travel on a daily and weekly basis. This is totally undermined by the suggestion that Barwon Heads residents drive or bus to Ocean Grove Library. In the words of a 6 year old BHPS student when informed of the closure "but we'll have to drive to another library. They are always telling us to ride or walk, why would they do that?"

The G21 Physical Activity Strategy's mission is 'to encourage more people to be more active more often'. The closure of the BHCL is contradictory to this mission and will negatively impact on the physical activity participation in our community. Accessing Ocean Grove Library in a car or on a bus will decrease community connectedness.



Council encourages walking, riding, scooting and skating to Barwon Heads Primary School and our library. Our school promotes active travel. These are clever choices.

c) Colocation of services

We have an excellent co-located community library model in Barwon Heads. Co-located at the Primary School with no capital investment or maintenance requirement (in fact it has just been renovated by the Primary School). It is not a council asset that could be sold or utilised in another way and CoGG does not pay costs including cleaning, security and utilities. What a wonderful sustainable model. This co-location contributes to cross-generational interaction and this is something that we would like to develop further.

d) Community cohesion & connection

The Municipal model of library service needs to recognise the influence it can have and the contribution it can make to a cohesive community. It is inappropriate to model library services on the basis of us and them. Of course new and developing communities will need libraries. But this should not be at the expense of existing services in long-established, thriving communities. The Unesco Public Library Manifesto 'gives expression to the belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for fostering of peace and spiritual welfare. The manifesto emphasises that public library services should be relevant to local needs and conditions'. This aligns with the strategic goals of CoGG and GRLC. The removal of the BHCL undermines the cohesion and connection within our community and across the broader municipality.

e) Sustainability

We were told that a sustainable library needs to service 10,000 - 15,000 people. But, as a sustainable community we value and protect our diversity and local distinctiveness. We want to meet our needs locally, especially when they benefit all of the community, old and young, and are located so that we can walk and ride, and share and talk. Forcing our active community into cars and onto buses to access a library services undermines sustainability within our town.

f) Access

In coming to the decision to close the BHCL, the Administrators (at the Council Meeting of 26 April), spoke of the distances between existing services within the network, and used the proximity to other library services as a justification for closing the BHCL. The solutions offered by CoGG and GRLC for Barwon Heads residents to access a library, reflect a total misunderstanding of the needs

of the Barwon Heads community and the nature of the use of the BHCL by our community. These solutions are unworkable for many members of the community and will have the impact of isolating residents and totally removing independent library access for residents, or alternatively forcing residents into cars to access their nearest library.

Furthermore, the solutions are contradictory to the CoGG Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17 and the G21 Physical Activity Strategy, both of which promote the importance of active lifestyles and community services and spaces 'where people can maintain their social connections and be a part of their local community'.

Consider the following scenarios, for example:

- **Scenario 1 The after school family visit** – Active travel will no longer be possible for after school family visits to the library. The current afterschool visit to the Barwon Heads library, with a home time of around 4-4.45pm will become completely unworkable due to Bus 55 timetables to access Ocean Grove Library, which results in a home time of 6.45-7pm, thereby missing children's dinner and homework times. Further obstacles to bus usage include difficulty of bus travel with prams, scooters, bikes and the cost of multiple bus fares. This solution is completely unviable and unacceptable.
- **Scenario 2 The walk to the library as a regular weekend activity for an elderly resident** – This outing will be no longer possible for elderly residents of Barwon Heads who do not drive. The inconvenience of the 2 hour bus timetable on a weekend, a potential lack of confidence to use a bus due to safety concerns and the cost of the bus fare will contribute to a loss of independence, increased isolation and diminished access to important services.
- **Scenario 3 The resident who is unable to catch the bus due to mobility restrictions** – There are a number of mobility restrictions that might apply to a residents from a various demographics, whether these be the use of mobility walkers, a physical incapacity to be able to safely board the bus, a double stroller that will not fit on the bus. This will contribute to a loss of independence and increased isolation and diminished access to important services.
- **Scenario 4 The children's story session** – Parents who currently walk with a pram to the library will no longer be able to access the children's story session, due to unworkable bus timetables, mobility concerns to access the bus with a pram and the cost of a family accessing what currently is, and should be, a free community library service. This will contribute to isolation, increase mental health risks, reduce early childhood development, reduce socialisation and community connections, and remove role-modelling to young children on the enjoyment and value of libraries for life-long learning.
- **Scenario 5 The teenager's visit after school** – Teenagers who are currently able to safely walk or ride to the BHCL, in their own community after school to complete homework or access information and services, will now have to having to catch a bus or ride a bike to Ocean Grove after school (during most of the school year, in the dark). The inconvenience and safety issues associated with this will be prohibitive to teenagers continuing to access a public library service.
- **Scenario 6 The grandparent and grandchild visit** – the much loved walk to the library to borrow books will no longer be possible. The benefit and enjoyment that this opportunity affords both grandparent and grandchild is immeasurable and will be sorely missed.

4. LACK ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LIBRARY SERVICE AND LACK OF COMMITMENT TO GENUINELY WORK WITH A WILLING COMMUNITY

CoGG and GRLC are responsible for the service performance of the BHCL. No accountability is being taken by CoGG or GRLC for the performance of the BHCL service, nor for communicating or addressing with the Barwon Heads community, their perception of a 'performance issue'. At the 'Transforming Public Libraries: the 2016 Public Libraries Victoria Network and State Library Victoria planning summit (at which GRLC CEO, Patti Manolis was a participant), the key theme of story-telling and advocacy emerged – 'telling the story of the many ways in which individuals and communities are empowered, inspired and emboldened through the

resources, programs and services they access at their local library' with the need to:

- 'inform policy-makers, decision-makers and funders about the enormous value of public libraries and the many ways in which libraries are already and might further contribute to achievement of major policy goals (e.g. addressing social disadvantage, facilitating digital inclusion, Education State, Creative State) and also to engage people who do not currently use libraries but could benefit from doing so
- grow government, community and business investment in public libraries to enable libraries to expand the reach and scope of their services
- equip library leaders, staff and champions to better tell the public library story.'

We are concerned that GRLC have ignored this important advocacy role in the case of the BHCL.

References

- CoGG, Agenda, Ordinary Meeting of Council, 26 April 2017
- CoGG, Minutes, Ordinary Meeting of Council, 26 April 2017
- CoGG Library Branch Closure Survey, 2017
- CoGG Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17
- CoGG Public Library Development Strategy 2009
- CoGG Community Engagement Policy 2014
- G21 Physical Activity Strategy
- GRLC Annual Report 2016
- GRLC Library Plan 2013 – 2017
- GRLC Library Plan 2017 - 2021
- Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries July 2016
- Victorian Public Libraries Strategic Framework 2030
- Email from CoGG Administrators, Chair Dr Kathy Alexander – 'Review of the Geelong Regional Library Network', 28 April 2017
- Email from GRLC CEO Patti Manolis, 'Important Announcement – Closure of Barwon Heads Library', 9 May 2017
- <http://www.knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au>
- <http://www.goodgovernance.org.au>
- Transforming Public Libraries: the 2016 Public Libraries Victoria Network and State Library Victoria planning summit 2016
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1f8737_e7f2a05ac672472a9f6e503e2cf494bf.pdf
- Dollar, Sense and Public Libraries 2011
http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/downloads/Dollars_Sense_and_Public_Libraries/20110322

Communication

We would like to meet with you to discuss this request. You are welcome to contact us to obtain further information in relation to this request. We ask that you please communicate the outcome of this request to the individuals listed in the Contacts below.

Please note that we will also be submitting a response to the 2017-18 GRLC Budget process to support this request and seek the continued funding of the existing BHCL service.

Prepared and Submitted By:

Save Barwon Heads Community Library group

Bronwyn McIntyre, Annabel Gill, Karen Firth, Rebecca Dalton, Rebecca Martin, Mandy Bridges, Colin Bridges, Sandra Gatehouse, Natale Lewington, Jenny Wallace Smith, Ian Rouse.

Date: 13 June 2017

Contacts:

Bronwyn McIntyre, bronwynmcintyre@hotmail.com, 0409 357 020

Karen Firth, kazfirth@hotmail.com, 0401 487 040
Sandra Gatehouse, sandraandsarah@bigpond.com, 0407 001 055

Submitted with the support of:

Barwon Heads Association
Barwon Heads Playgroup
Barwon Heads Senior Citizens Centre
Bop Bop Parents Group
Barwon Heads Net Set Go
Barwon Heads Auskick
Barwon Heads Fine Music Society
Barwon Heads Chorale
Barwon Heads Community Hall Committee
Barwon Heads Soccer Club
Barwon Heads Cricket Club
Ocean Grove Barwon Heads Little Athletics Club
Barwon Heads Arts Council
Friends of the Bluff
Bellarine Friends of the Hooded Plover
