**New Library and Community Hub in the Munro building, Queen Victoria Market**

**Executive summary:** Community and staff engagement report

**Introduction**

The City of Melbourne is developing a new community library at the Munro site, in the heart of the Queen Victoria Market precinct. The Council wanted to find out how people might use this new and exciting space, what they would like to see there and how they feel the library can contribute to their community.

Community engagement was carried out January-March 2022, using an online survey on the Participate Melbourne website, face-to-face surveys with the public at existing libraries and pop-up libraries, and stallholders at the Queen Victoria Market were invited to participate in the survey via the Queen Victoria Market newsletter.

Overall, 318 community member responses were received on the survey.

Concurrently, City of Melbourne libraries staff, and the Creative City branch, were asked for their thoughts and hopes for the new library. More than 50 responded, providing a rich input based on professional experience and passion.

**Key findings**

Similar ideas were repeated across different questions. The most prominent themes across the engagement are summarized below.

**Insights from community members**

* Respondents were enthusiastic about the new library, praising the location and convenience. They wanted it to showcase local history and make the most of its connection to the market.
* The new library was seen to offer an opportunity for a sense of connection and community, as a non-commercial space to spend time, and a ‘third place’ or alternative to working from home.
* The community wanted to ensure the library is a welcoming, accessible place where people from different cultures and generations can connect, and where resources and services cater to all groups.
* Respondents reiterated that a diverse offering of events, programs and activities could enhance community connection and learning. Suggestions encompassed a variety of topics, such as author talks and literary events, personal development and wellbeing, skills and education like IT and languages, and workshops for practical skills and artistic hobbies. Respondents often noted these should be free or low-cost.
* The resources of the library were named as a key benefit, with respondents requesting a wide-ranging and diverse selection of books – with quality books in languages other than English – as well as eBooks, magazines, newspapers, and resources for education and research.
* A range of spaces and facilities were desired for different uses – these included quiet places to relax and read, bookable meeting rooms, the makerspace, a café, co-working/study areas, and areas for children to relax, interact, and play.
* Amenity and layout were commonly discussed. While there were differences in priorities, it was evident that separation of areas was critical to ensure high-activity zones did not disrupt other uses. Respondents wanted quiet, relaxing reading areas with comfortable chairs and good lighting. A few requested that these areas be separate from working or computer areas. Other amenities included stable Wi-Fi, good lighting, lots of greenery, space to sit outside in the shade, and good ventilation.
* The library was seen as a place to foster the arts and creativity, both through exhibiting and incorporating local art into the design and facilitating creativity by providing a makerspace including equipment and classes.
* Respondents who talked about services for children wanted to see a range of activities, sensory stimuli, and interesting play-spaces, playgroups, storytimes (in different languages), music groups, children’s books and learning opportunities.
* Spaces where everyone, including adults, could play were suggested, with board games and games like table tennis.
* Various other specific facilities were suggested, either as part of the makerspace or separately. These included a music studio (soundproof), a photography studio, a kitchen, a kitchen appliance library, an urban garden, a tool library, and new technology like 3D printers.

**Insights from City of Melbourne library staff**

* **Level 1:** to be a great study space, Level 1 was described as needing varied and modifiable spaces and furniture to accommodate a range of study preferences and uses. Staff wanted to see sufficient charging and power points, comfortable as well as practical and accessible furniture, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Additionally, staff reported that the lobby ought to welcome and entice patrons, as well as provide space for showcasing the collection in ways which generate intrigue.

* **Level 2:** a great customer experience was thought to be provided when the collection was displayed in easy-to-see and accessible ways, and when staff were welcoming, friendly and approachable. Staff wanted to see good light and airflow on Level 2 and reported that patrons were most likely to use this area for browsing, and for quiet reading and/or study.

Staff had multiple staffroom suggestions, calling for enough pleasant space to relax and enjoy tea/coffee and food, while also wanting to be able to work, store items, and find quiet spaces for reflection, meetings, or phone calls.

* **Level 3:** a great children’s library was seen as being one in which much attention was paid to layout and ‘zoning’. Staff wanted to see a well provisioned area with bright, durable materials used and a lot of themed displays to catch and hold children’s attention.

They wanted to see the rooftop area used in ways that offered a point of difference from usual library operations, such as for physical play or activities, wet or messy play, or for unique events.

* **Collections and programs:** there were an array of suggestions as to which programs and activities might be suitable. These included education or training related sessions (e.g. IT/digital literacy, employability, health and wellbeing, and food). It was important to staff that these had both utility and broad appeal to a range of demographics.

Enabling the borrowing of toys, tools or kitchen equipment was suggested, and there was agreement that audio visual collections could be scaled back (i.e. DVDs and CDs). Staff reported that book borrowing would be enticed when face-out displays were maximised, and attractive themed displays showcased topical issues.