

## **Watsons Bay Library – Access hours project : Analysis of consultation results.**

### **Appendix 1**

A period of community consultation was held from 5 November 2023 – 11 December 2023 to both inform members of the community about the proposal for extended access hours at Watsons Bay and to gather feedback. Consultation activities were advertised widely, via a direct email campaign to Watsons Bay members, printed collateral at all Libraries and other Council locations and inclusion in the Woollahra Libraries e-newsletter. During this time, 50 members of the community provided feedback on the proposal using the 'Your Say' platform, printed surveys and in conversation to staff at pop up events, with the results showing support for and interest in accessing the library during hours outside of those currently offered and with no staff onsite.

The majority of respondents, 69% indicated that they lived within the Watsons Bay postcode area with 94% being users of Watsons Bay Library. Many positive comments were received about the Library including:

*"It's wonderful to have small library with such a great non-fiction collection. Browsing and borrowing is a real pleasure as there are never too many people around and the library is so easy to navigate because of its size. I can always find a book to browse or borrow. Given Watson's Bay proximity to amenities and needing to drive for most things in life, it is excellent and really special having a library that I can walk to."*

*"I just love this tiny local library. Thanks for your efforts to make it even better."*

*"It's very beautiful and sweet - also lovely having it open to the grass play area and the cafe - great for us mums!"*

The consultation revealed that 80% of respondents also visited Paddington and Double Bay Libraries for two main reasons, the larger collection and the longer hours. In fact when asked to rate their satisfaction with current operational hours at Watsons Bay only 29% responded positively with commentary supporting the need for an extension of hours:

*"need longer open hours 7 days 24/7"*

*"Its a great place but under utilised. There is scope for an increase in the number of programs available, particularly in the evenings when working folks can attend."*

*"The library is rarely open. It could be a terrific hub if it offered more hours and activities."*

*"i'd like it if the opening hours were consistent so I didn't need to look up the hours everytime I go. 3 different sets of hours for 5 days seems crazy"*

Members of the community were specifically asked if they would be interested in attending Watsons Bay Library at additional times, without staff onsite. The majority of respondents (66%) answered 'yes' to this question. Interestingly those who answered negatively cited concerns about the perceived loss of staff at Watsons Bay. There is no doubt that staff, their advice and their ability to make community connections are valued and many comments received support this. Printed and online collateral stated that there was no intention to reduce the staffing levels at the Library.

## Security and operational requirements

A key component of this project is a complete security upgrade. This will help to protect library equipment, resources and patron safety during unstaffed hours. This will be achieved by:

- signage
- exterior lighting upgrade
- discrete placement of surveillance equipment (CCTV)
- upgrade of duress alarms
- boosting mobile phone coverage to ensure ease of access to the building and emergency services if needed. The library is in a mobile phone black spot.

During the community engagement period, Library customers were asked what additional protections would make them feel safe to use the library outside of existing hours. Only 22 respondents answered this question with 11 indicating that they were satisfied with the security measures proposed and a further eight made suggestions for items such as emergency buttons and entry logs, which will already be included in the operating model.

Library members will apply to be a user of the system and complete an induction process before being granted access. A member authentication system that will check library barcodes against the Library Management System will be used to unlock the door, so that the community can utilise the space, collections and equipment. A similar door unlocking system is currently being used at Double Bay Library to manage access to study rooms. Members will be able to issue books using the self-service kiosks that are currently in place at all Woollahra Libraries. It is proposed that the extended Watsons Bay hours be delivered at times when Double Bay is open so that phone support will be available from staff onsite at Double Bay Library.

Library members will be approved to use the service if they:

- Have an active Library membership with no restrictions in place.
- Are aged 16+ with permission from a parent guardian for members under the age of 18.
- Have updated contact details.
- Completed compulsory viewing of an orientation video that highlights safety measures and what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Have acknowledged terms and conditions including accepting responsibility of any guests they may bring into the space.

## Hours of operation

Consultation on this project also included gathering data on our member's preferences for opening times and available staff hours. It was clear from this that there was a leaning toward regular weekend and weekday morning access.

Given the current development consent restrictions do not allow for Sunday operations, the following hours are proposed:

Day	Current hours (staffed)	Proposed hours	Unstaffed additional hours
Monday	2.00pm – 5.00pm	9.30am – 5.00pm	9.30am – 2.00pm
Tuesday	9.30am – 5.00pm	9.30am - 5.00pm	
Wednesday	12.00pm – 7.00pm	9.30am - 7.00pm	9.30am – 12.00pm
Thursday	9.30am – 5.00pm	9.30am – 7.00pm	5.00 – 7.00pm
Friday	2.00pm – 5.00pm	9.30am – 5.00pm	9.30am – 2.00pm
Saturday	Closed	10.30am – 4.00pm	10.30am – 4.00pm
Sunday	Closed	Closed	
Total hours per week	29	48	19

Aligning the opening hours each weekday morning will decrease the confusion currently experienced by Library customers. Survey respondents also indicated enthusiasm for a staff presence at Watsons Bay Library on a Saturday. While we would potentially be able to ask staff to adjust their rosters so that this can be achieved, an additional cost of approximately \$6,372 would be required in order to pay staff the required Saturday 25% shift loading.

As indicated in the Councillor briefing on 16 October 2023, following the installation of equipment, a six month trial will be held to evaluate the effectiveness of the model and if further expansion of the program is warranted. Following the trial, adjustments to the project may be recommended and further community engagement will be sought to determine whether a change to the DA at Watsons Bay is required, especially to facilitate access on Sundays.

This trial may also be used as a test case for managing community access to other facilities across the Woollahra LGA.