

<b>SPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>  <b>20 JUNE 2018</b>	<b>4</b>
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## FRIENDS OF CAIRNS LIBRARIES VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**It is recommended that Council notes the progress of the Friends of Cairns Libraries Volunteer Program.**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Friends of Cairns Libraries (FOCL) is a volunteer Council program officially founded in 2004. The focus of the program is to:

- enhance and support Library Services
- contribute towards enriching the lives of individuals in the community.

FOCLs support equity of access, early literacy and community engagement of library services in various ways, including the delivery of outreach and specialist activities. This report provides an update on the activities and highlights of the past 12 months, with particular emphasis on the growth and successes achieved.

2017 key achievements included:

- Seven new volunteers, taking the total number of FOCLs to 26
- An additional 18 potential FOCL candidates
- FOCL deliveries to Homebound members increased 36%
- New volunteer shirts were ordered and distributed to FOCLs
- Update of Cairns Libraries website information
- Recognition of contribution on International Volunteer Day
- Christmas celebration to thank members for their efforts

### **BACKGROUND:**

Council noted a report in relation to the establishment and purpose of a new library volunteer program called Friends of Cairns Libraries on 17 June 2004. Cairns Libraries then successfully launched their volunteer program which supported the goals of Library Services.

Initially FOCLs focussed on the specific areas of the existing Homebound and Seniors' services. The group subsequently expanded its reach to support children's activities such as Storytime and Baby Rhyme Time. The volunteer program continued to expand and in 2011 volunteering was included as a key component of the Cairns Libraries Strategic Business Plan 2011-2016. During this time, the volunteers played a vital role

in library services and the community which included the provision of Homebound deliveries.

Noteworthy milestones during that time included a transition away from a satellite library model at aged care facilities: instead providing personalised Homebound deliveries for all members. This initiative resulted in improved use of volunteer time and library resources; as well as enhanced services for Homebound members in aged care facilities.

The FOCLs not only fostered warm relationships with their customers, they were active advocates for Cairns Libraries. This included their involvement in monthly Conversation Cafés at Smithfield since inception in early 2014. Furthermore, the invaluable storytelling support of FOCL Anne Andrews at Babinda Library made it into the local media, with a complimentary write up featured in the June 11 edition of the Innisfail Advocate in 2014.

A major 2014 highlight was the 10 year anniversary celebration of the FOCL program, where Mayor Manning delivered a personal address to the FOCLs acknowledging their contribution.

Overall, the focus has been to maximise volunteer contribution to assist staff deliver sustainable services to the community. Opportunities to investigate future volunteering models will form part of the Strategic Library Review process currently underway. It is envisaged that the new strategy will set out a vision and approach to support volunteering in library services and provide a framework to ensure Cairns Libraries continues to collaborate and work effectively with this vibrant group of people within the community.

### **COMMENT:**

The FOCLs are a carefully vetted, select group of volunteers whose value to Cairns Libraries and the community is greater than what can be measured in hours of contribution. Once part of the team, many FOCLs remain with Cairns Libraries for years, indeed some even become recipients of the Homebound library service as their circumstances change over time. The current longest serving volunteer has been with Cairns Libraries since long before the program was formalised.

### What is a library volunteer?

In accordance with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) 2017 statement on voluntary work in library and information services, the use of volunteers for specific purposes is acceptable but must never compromise the quality of service provision, nor replace paid employment in any way. Cairns Libraries volunteer program aligns with corporate, state and federal objectives including:

- Australian Library and Information Association's (2017) Statement on voluntary work *"Library services can be enhanced by well supported volunteers and providing volunteers with meaningful community roles is a legitimate function of a public library service."*
- State Library of Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines Staffing Standards (2008).

- Volunteering Australia's National Standards on Volunteer Involvement (2015). Volunteers provide their own vehicles; willingly supply their time, friendliness and petrol without any financial compensation given by Council.

### Outreach participation

#### *Homebound library service*

The goal of the Homebound library service is to provide access to resources and information for people in the community who are unable to access the library in person due to either a temporary or permanent disability. The service is supported by volunteers who collect resources from Cairns Libraries fortnightly, deliver the resources to Homebound recipients, and then bring the "returns" back to Cairns Libraries. The Homebound library service also includes alignment with:

- Australian Library and Information Association's (ALIA) Guidelines for Australian Home Library Users (2000); and
- State Library of Queensland (SLQ) Disability Service Standard (2009).

The value of the program to the Homebound library members is evidenced each year via Council's community consultation, Voice of Our Customer survey. The survey consistently indicates positive outcomes whilst members' feedback reaffirms Cairns Libraries high standard of service. Feedback has included comments about the friendliness of the volunteers and also the importance of the service to the recipient's lives (See Appendix 1).

#### *Pop-Up libraries*

The Pop-Up libraries are designed to bring the joy of libraries and reading to the community at community events and festivals. With support from Cairns Libraries team members, library volunteers assist in achieving success with popup libraries at events such as Cairns EcoFiesta, Teddy Bear's Picnic and First5Forever.

### Specialist participation

#### *Children's events*

Children's events are another growth area in Cairns Libraries which volunteers have assisted in supporting. These events have included the popular Fun Palace and Brick by Brick National Capital Exhibition; as well as programmed activities such as Storytimes, Baby Rhyme Times, school holiday activities and coding and robotics workshops.

#### *Adult events*

The focus on adult events has included volunteer participation to support library programming such as:

- craft workshops including 5000 Poppies and One Million Stars to End Violence projects;
- social events like Conversation Cafes;
- learning programs such as TechKnow, Family History and Wartime walks; and
- community involvement programs such as Seed Library, Seniors Week and Australian Reading Hour.

### Recruitment and selection

Targeted recruitment is a consistent focus in recruitment and selection of volunteers. The process ensures that volunteers are likely to succeed in their role, and that they have the required skills and abilities to meet the expected clearly defined positive outcomes.

The Library Service also has a Volunteer Coordination Manual and Volunteer Participation Guide in place that covers and supports matters such as application and recruitment, police checks, safety procedures, communication, relationship management and Code of Conduct. All new volunteers are inducted to the program to ensure that they are aware of standards and expectations.

### Benchmarking

Cairns Libraries has a team of active volunteers, who assist in delivering programs and activities. The information below has been sourced from State Library of Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin 2016-2017 and benchmarks Cairns Libraries with comparative Queensland library services.

Council	Number of Volunteers	Average Number of Hours Per Volunteer Per Week
Sunshine Coast	385	0.93
Toowoomba	128	1.29
Cairns	19	1.35
Ipswich	62	1.53
Townsville	75	1.97
Redland	N/A	N/A

Although the Cairns Libraries volunteer base is small, the number of hours per volunteer is strong and consistent with other Councils, except Sunshine Coast who have high volunteer numbers, however, operate on a lower capacity per volunteer.

Cairns Libraries low volunteer numbers indicates a potential for capacity to expand the volunteer base. Ongoing community interest in volunteering supports this: an additional four volunteers have been inducted in the past two months, and a further four are in the process of being recruited to the FOCL program.

Three year growth

Year	Total number of Cairns Libraries volunteer hours	% Increase	Number of Cairns Libraries Volunteers	% increase
2015	757	-	12	-
2016	599	-20.6%	19	58%
2017	979	64%	26	36%

Although there was a drop of 20.6% in total number of volunteer hours from 2015-2016, the level of FOCL contribution has continuously risen throughout 2017.

Between 2016 and 2017 there was a 36% increase in the number of participating FOCLs and a 64% increase in hours of participation. This increase can be attributed to improved engagement supported by the Network Services Librarian as a program coordinator, together with Cairns Libraries team members.

**OPTIONS:**

Option 1: (Recommended)

It is recommended that Council notes the progress of the Friends of Cairns Libraries Volunteer Program.

Option 2

That Council requests additional information / clarification about a specific aspect of the volunteer program.

**CONSIDERATIONS:**Risk Management:

Risks in relation to the volunteers are mitigated through the effective use of Council's Volunteers Administrative Instruction to ensure consistency and equity.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Cost to Council in continuing the FOCL program is marginal partly due to the generosity of the participants donating their time and financing their own vehicle expenses. Professional staffing is included as part of the Library Services operational budget. Other expenses incurred within budget include:

Expenses	Amount
Volunteer Shirts	873
Annual thankyou morning tea and gift for volunteers	997
Annual gift for Homebound library members (approx \$3 per member)	189
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$2,059</b>

Local businesses are used to source supplies as required.

These minor operational expenses are offset by the positive outcomes the volunteer program consistently achieves including:

- Positive social interaction for recipients;
- Improved information access for recipients;
- Personal fulfilment for volunteers;
- Advocacy for libraries by volunteers;
- Increased capacity for service provision by libraries due to augmented manpower; and
- Council support for community endeavours.

#### Community and Cultural Heritage:

The continuation of growth in the FOCL program will benefit the community by taking into consideration the following factors:

- Census data for the Cairns region (ABS, 2016) indicates an aging population who will likely become the mainstay of the volunteer pool; while also conversely comprising majority of recipients of Homebound services; and
- Council *Administrative Instruction – Volunteers* (#595250) states Council’s intent “to encourage and provide the opportunity for all members of the community to undertake volunteer work and to ensure that all volunteers feel rewarded and recognised as having contributed significantly to the community through its programs and services”.

The program falls clearly within Council’s Corporate Plan Strategic Goals: 4. *Community and Culture* and 5. *Serving the Community*.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

##### Voice of Our Customer

Feedback is sought annually from Homebound library members. The information is collected and reviewed by Council and actions developed and implemented. Customer response to the Homebound service has consistently been very positive, an outcome attributable to the service provided directly to recipients by the volunteers.

The results of the 2017 survey indicated:

- 100% overall customer satisfaction
- 100% satisfaction with the friendliness and helpfulness of their volunteers
- 100% of respondents rated the Homebound service as being important to them.  
(See Attachment 1)

Feedback is also regularly sought from staff, volunteers and service recipients to ensure the ongoing satisfaction of the service. Overall feedback is very positive with people particularly noting the friendliness and helpfulness of the volunteers. In addition, consultation is undertaken through benchmarking other libraries and via email groups in an attempt to remain aligned with current national service provision.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Voice of Our Customer Survey results
2. FOCLs new shirts
3. Heritage walk at City Library
4. School holiday program at Gordonvale Library
5. 5000 Poppies Project at Manunda Library
6. Seed sorting alongside Green Space our Place volunteers at Stratford Library
7. Storytime at Babinda Library
8. Australian Reading Hour at Earlville Library and Smithfield Library
9. FOCL Christmas Party at Stratford Library



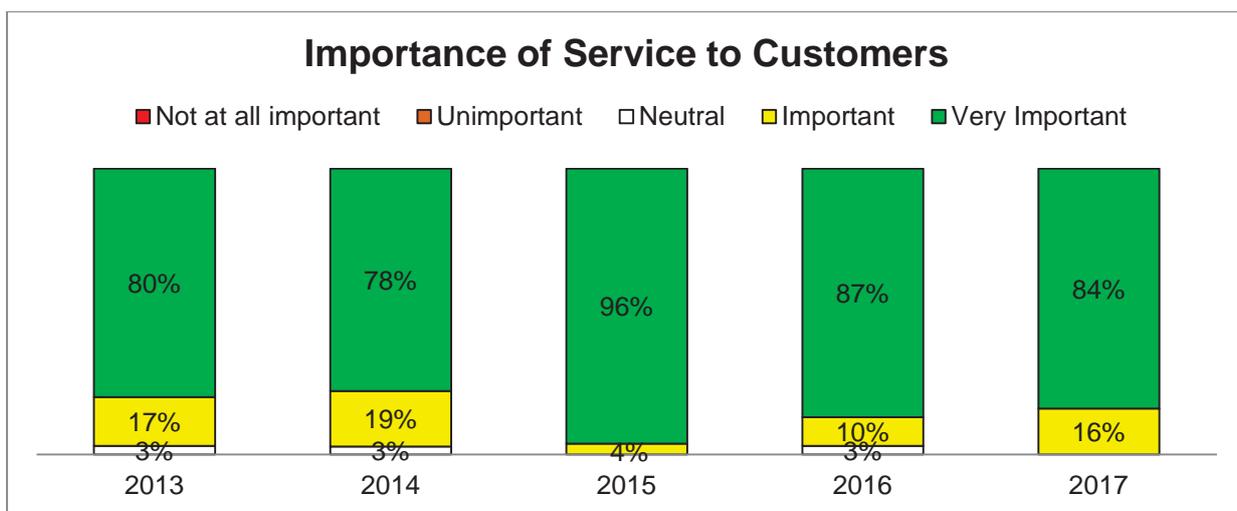
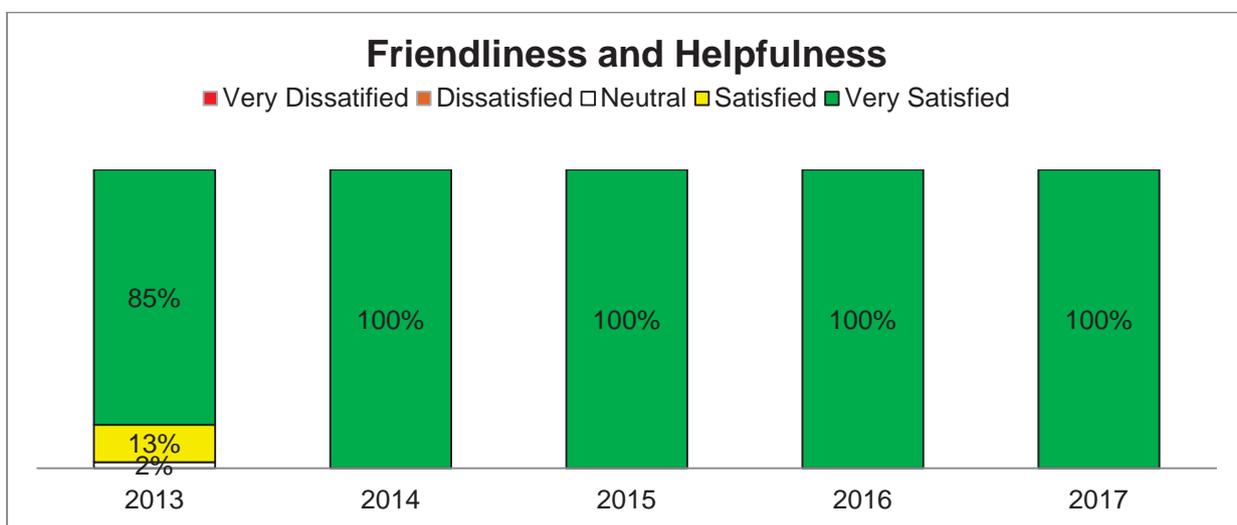
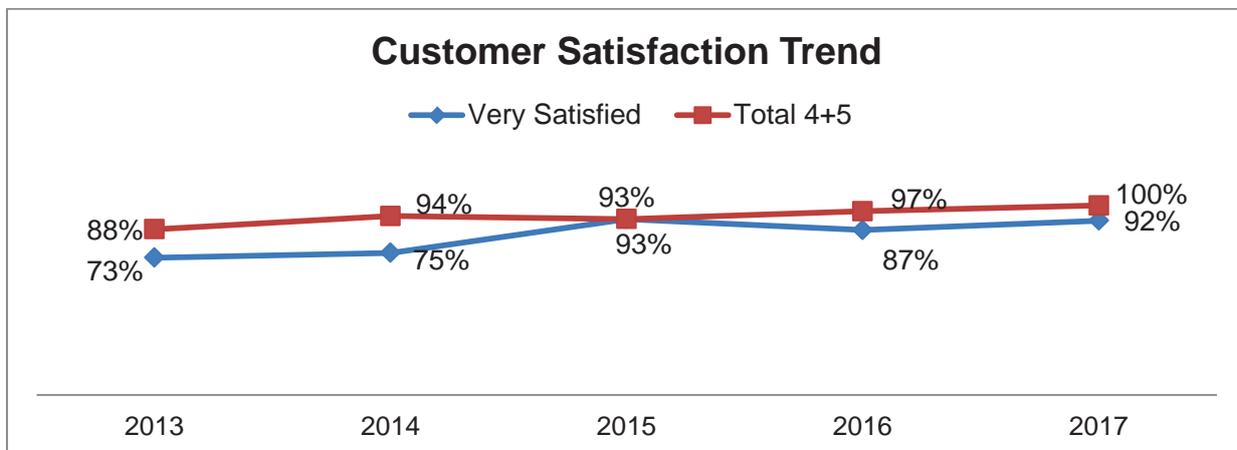
Brett Spencer  
Manager Community Development



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**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Voice of Our Customer Survey



Attachment 2: FOCLs new shirts



Attachment 3: Heritage walk at City Library



Attachment 4: School holiday programs at Gordonvale Library



Attachment 5: 5 000 Poppies Project at Manunda Library



Attachment 6: Seed sorting alongside Green Space our Place volunteers at Stratford Library



Attachment 7: Storytime at Babinda Library



Attachment 8: Australian Reading Hour at Smithfield Library



Attachment 9: FOCL Christmas Party at Stratford Library

