

5.1.1 Service Centres and Library 12-month Trial

Authorised by Acting General Manager Business Excellence

Conflict of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Executive Summary

Council is required by the *Local Government Act 2020* (Act) to deliver services in accordance with the service principles in Part 5 Section 106 of Act. This report provides Council with information on how the customer service centre and library services have been used across a 12-month trial period.

Council, at its meeting held on 8 November 2022, considered a report on the findings and recommendations of the Service Review - Service Centres and Libraries and endorsed a 12-month trial period. The trial commenced on 3 January 2023 and remains in place until Council determines how services will be delivered in the future. The trial has included increased investment, additional services, and minor changes to opening hours.

This report forms part of the decision-making process for Council as to future service provision. It was part of the recommendation adopted by Council in initiating the trial.

Overall, data collected across the trial suggests there has been similar use of services by the community. While use fluctuates across sites (day-to-day and throughout each day) there is no overriding trend to suggest the services are not being used across available opening hours.

Call Centre Officers are now co-located at more remote sites. This has supported service coverage in small teams, ensuring sites remain open, library programs are offered, and online services and customer response processing is supported. This also supports an efficient use of team resources to provide these services to the community. Library programs have recommenced in Mallacoota and Omeo.

Community sentiment expressed as feedback from library users and Friends groups continues to indicate that hours should not be reduced.

The introduction of a second mobile service has increased Council's reach into more remote communities, nursing homes and schools with smaller populations by more than 40%.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. receives and notes this report and all attachments pertaining to this report;***
- 2. approves the continuation of opening hours for the Service Centres and Libraries based on the trial hours;***
- 3. approves making the two-vehicle mobile library service an ongoing service; and***




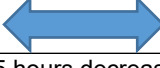




4. notes that data will continue to be collected on library and service centre use to inform future service delivery improvements and efficiencies, and will be tabled with Council as required.

Background

On 8 November 2022, after a detailed review of customer service and library services over two years, Council approved changes to the delivery of customer service and library services for a trial period of 12 months. The trial commenced on 3 January 2023 and included:

- Minor changes to opening times (refer **Table 1**).
- Investment in a second mobile library vehicle to increase service provision to remote, vulnerable and school communities.
- Council allocating an additional \$240,000 budget to support the trial.

Table 1: Opening hours comparison

Site	Pre-12-month trial	12-month trial	Difference
Bairnsdale Library	9.30 am to 6.00 pm Monday – Friday (Thursday to 9.00 pm); Saturday 9.30 am to 12.00 pm	9.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday – Friday (Thursday to 9.00 pm) and 9.00 am to 12.00 pm Saturday	3 hours increase a week 
Bairnsdale Corporate Centre	8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	2.5 hours decrease a week 
Lakes Entrance	8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday – Friday	9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	2.5 hours decrease a week 
Mallacoota	10.00 am to 2.00 pm Monday and Tuesday; 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm Wednesday, Thursday and Friday	10.00 am to 2.00 pm Monday and Tuesday; 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm Wednesday, Thursday and Friday	Same 
Omeo	8.30 am to 5.00 pm (lunch break closure had commenced prior to trial)	9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday – Friday (closed 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm)	2.5 hours decrease a week 
Orbost	8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday – Friday	9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	2.5 hours decrease a week 
Paynesville	8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday - Friday	2.5 hours decrease a week 
Mobile Service	1 vehicle, 29 locations	2 vehicles, 51 locations	Extra vehicle and 22 locations 

**Call Centre hours (8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday – Friday) did not change. After-hours calls are serviced by an external contractor and on-call arrangements.*

As part of the initial service review, improvements were made to data collection to better inform future service delivery decisions. This data is presented as infographics and with comparison to the previous year, refer **Attachment 1**.

Interim data from the service review was presented to a Council meeting on 8 November 2022 and was publicly available.

Library services

Public sentiment for retaining existing opening hours throughout the service review was strong from a discreet group of library users.

This sentiment is supported by the results of the Victorian Public Library Survey and Victorian Public Library Census. Led by Public Libraries Victoria in 2022 across all Victorian public libraries formed the basis of the [‘Inside our Public Libraries’ report](#). Locally, community engagement for the service review demonstrated that East Gippsland holds its library services in high regard.

Self-service scanners

An initiative at the Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance libraries was the installation of self-service scanners. The scanners have enabled staff to move away from the loans desk, be on hand to help community members, and have greater flexibility to complete tasks within the collection.

Uptake in use has been consistent across Bairnsdale (two scanners) and Lakes Entrance (one scanner) with scanners in both locations responsible for about 25% of total loans.

Self-scanners accommodate 25,000 loans per quarter in Bairnsdale and 9,000 in Lakes Entrance. Loan volumes at other centres (Omeo 500 loans per quarter, Orbost 3,200, Paynesville 4,000, Mallacoota 1,000) do not warrant self-scanner investment.

Loans

Analysis of library loans across all sites indicates loans are stable or increasing across most sites, particularly Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance, and are returning to pre-pandemic numbers. Loans at more remote sites are only marginally lower when comparing 2023 to 2022.

There is no significant difference, on average, as to when customers choose to borrow library items. Quieter loan days are, on average, about 75% of the volume of busier days.

Programs

Library programs are offered at all sites and have been reestablished at Omeo and Mallacoota during the past 12 months. The reintroduction, which has been supported by the community, has been possible due to the changes in the team structure at these sites.

Mobile service delivery

The trial supported a mobile service delivery model that reached more locations and offered not only library services but other Council services such as payments, enquiries, and community engagement opportunities.

The service commenced 22 May 2023 with the schedule of existing and new locations trialed for six months. Schedules were reviewed in November 2023.

The increase from 29 locations to 51 has resulted in Council providing easier access to services for people in their own communities, and an increase in people accessing these services over and above the usage rates for the previous single service.

Visitation has increased and library loans are up, while engagement opportunities have included place-based support, project updates, and third-party support services.

Service centres and call centre

The change in operating hours for the Corporate Centre has had no impact on the community or operations.

Walk in traffic has increased to 14,991 (2022-23) from 11,687 (2021-22) and 9,077 in 2020-21 (COVID-impacted), which indicates that more in-person transactions are being conducted at the Corporate Centre than in the previous two years. Pre-COVID (2019 calendar year) walk in traffic was 14,753 at the Corporate Centre.

The co-location of call centre shifts across all service centres has provided additional resources at more remote sites with small teams. This has had a positive impact, limiting site closures and program cancellation due to planned and unplanned leave. It has supported the reintroduction of library programs at Omeo and Mallacoota. It also supports succession planning and capability uplift across our teams especially in remote areas.

Walk in enquiries across all sites are a mix of payments, pet registrations, rates enquiries, permit lodgements. The volume and request type fluctuates depending on the time of year and payment and registration cycles for key items such as rates and pet registrations.

Lakes Entrance

The change in opening hours (9am to 5pm) has had no impact on the community or operations.

There has been a small increase in door count numbers, with customers returning to use the centre post-pandemic.

Mallacoota

Opening hours were unchanged during the trial and the VicRoads agency service ceased on 31 January 2023.

Door count has fallen quarter-on-quarter in 2023 and is below 2022 levels. This is due to the absence of VicRoads agency services and a change in the delivery method of visitor information services.

All measures are down on previous years, except for program attendance (reinstated in 2023).

Because of the already reduced opening hours at this site there is little excess capacity to be reallocated.

Omeo

The change in opening hours (9am to 5pm and 1-hour lunch closure) has had no impact on the community or operations.

VicRoads agency service ceased on 31 January 2023, and the Bendigo Bank agency closed in March 2023. This has had a direct correlation to the significant reduction in door count.

Mornings are the busiest time, with the reintroduction of library programming being the major positive indicator in what is a downturn in customers.

Due to the Bendigo Bank and VicRoads services no longer being provided by the Omeo Service Centre, spare capacity of the team has been directed to support such things as

processing online application forms, Customer Response activities, and assisting in the development of library programs.

The Omeo Service Centre also supports the Omeo Mountain Bike Coordinator and Place Facilitator with administrative support, meetings, and promotional activities.

Orbost

The change in opening hours has had no impact on the community or operations.

There has been a small increase in customers every quarter of 2023 above 2022 figures, while library activities are on par with 2022.

The Orbost team supports the East mobile service delivery vehicle that operates out of Orbost with library stock supplies, reservations, administration and promotions.

Paynesville

The change in opening hours has had no impact on the community or operations. One user of the community hall was initially impacted by the change in opening time; however, this has been resolved.

Library activities are generally up, except for loans. The latter would be explained by the proximity to the Bairnsdale Library (including public transport links) and digital borrowings.

Consistent and improving door count data has shown an intent by the community to use the centre.

Customer Response

Separate to the service review, Council initiated a Customer Response project in 2023, with the intent to improve customer response quality and timeliness. Resourcing from within the Omeo Customer Service Team now supports this work as noted above.

Legislation

As of 1 July 2021, all provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* commenced. Some provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989*, that have not been repealed, will remain applicable until such time as they are revoked.

This report has been prepared in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020*, section 106 Service performance principles.

The implications of this report have been assessed and are not considered likely to breach or infringe upon the human rights detailed in the Victorian Government's Charter of *Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Gender Impact Statement

In preparing this report the Victorian *Gender Equality Act 2020* has been considered. The implications of the report have been assessed and are compliant with the obligations and principles of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

Collaborative procurement

Not applicable to this report.

Council Plan

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following strategic objectives set out in the Council Plan 2021-2025:

Strategic Objective 1: 1.1 Council strives to provide equitable access to their services, support and facilities.

Council Policy

Council has a Service Review Policy that was adopted in August 2021. The policy provides direction in relation to service performance principles stated in Section 106 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Resourcing

Financial

On 8 November 2022, Council endorsed an additional \$240,000 to implement the trial which increased customer service resourcing and added the second mobile service.

The major additional service is for the second mobile service centre, which Council secured Victorian Government funding, through the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program, to assist in the purchase and fit out of. The continuation of the second vehicle service requires a full-time resource.

Throughout the trial, productivity savings have been identified and implemented through different ways of working and better resource allocation.

To make the customer service trial arrangements permanent, an investment of approximately \$124,000 is required, this is partly to fund the additional mobile service centre.

If the recommendation is supported, cost offsets must be identified to fund this additional investment.

Human Resources

The trial included the allocation of call centre shifts to be co-located and spread across Omeo, Orbost, Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, and Paynesville service centres. This provides additional co-located resources to ensure consistent delivery of services. Having a multi-skilled workforce at service centres provides flexibility to adapt and supplement resources and limits centre closures.

There are no staff losses because of the recommendations in this report.

Risk

The risks of this proposal have been considered. The outcome may prompt a range of responses from the community, which will be managed with proactive communications to user groups and the public.

Economic

There are no economic impacts because of the officer's recommendations regarding the provision of council services.

Social

East Gippsland has three incorporated 'Friends of the Library' groups – Bairnsdale, Paynesville and Lakes Entrance – who volunteer their time to support community use of the library.

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) recognises that 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.

The change in hours has not impacted volunteering within the libraries.

Environmental

There are no environmental impacts identified because of the recommendations in this report.

Climate change

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Engagement

Council shared interim data for the first three quarters of the trial period in December 2023. This was promoted through a media release in local newspapers, and the data made available on Council's website and directly to Friends groups. There has been no feedback on the data provided, or additional media interest generated. This contrasts with media interest and campaigning around the time of the trial period decision in 2022.

Community members and representatives of Friends groups have addressed Council through public questions at Council meetings on occasions throughout the trial. Customers attending mobile services have been canvassed on that service in developing the current schedule.

Options

1. Adopt the continuation of opening hours and service provision from the 12-month trial, including an additional annual investment of \$124,000, as outlined in the finance section of the report. **(Recommended)**; or
2. Return opening hours and service provision to pre-trial arrangements, except for external agency services. This will require additional investment; or
3. Reduce opening hours (as per November 2022 recommendation) at some centres as a cost-saving initiative but keep the second mobile service centre. This will result in a saving of \$124,000; or
4. Reduce opening hours (as per November 2022 recommendation) at some centres as a cost-saving initiative and discontinue the second mobile service centre. This will result in a saving of \$216,000.

Attachments

1. Customer Service and Library Infographics 12 Month Trial 2023 [5.1.1.1 - 9 pages]

East Gippsland Shire Council

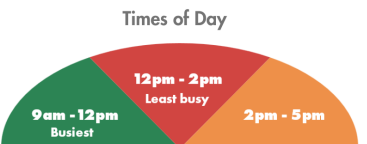
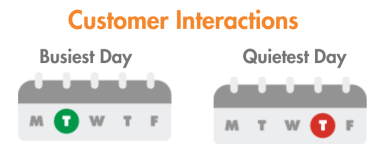
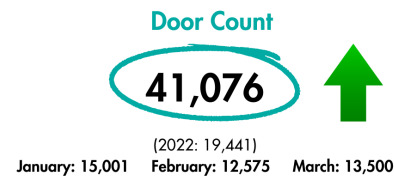
Service Centre & Library Data

January-December 2023

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Bairnsdale Library

January-March 2023

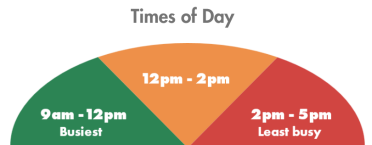


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	3,445	2,133
Loans	26,174	27,738
New members	228	224
Program attendance	782	784
Computer bookings	3,754	908

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

April-June 2023

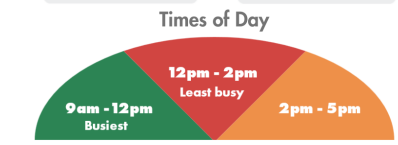
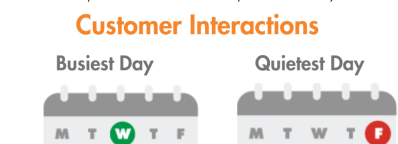


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	3,627	2,770
Loans	22,121	26,612
New members	211	214
Program attendance	1,614	1,231
Computer bookings	1,879	1,338

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

July-September 2023

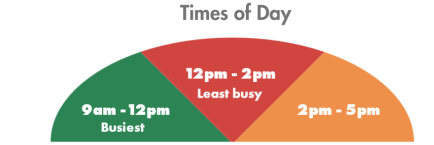
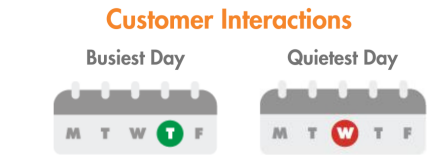
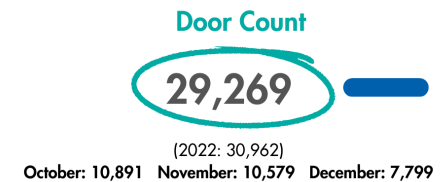


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	3,921	3,246
Loans	29,587	24,624
New members	213	251
Program attendance	1,329	1,359
Computer bookings	1,946	1,721

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

October-December 2023



Library

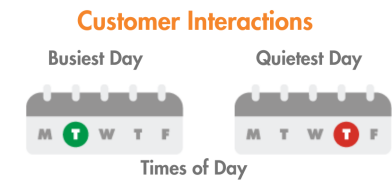
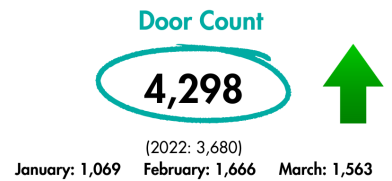
	2023	2022
Enquiries	4,042	3,175
Loans	27,750	28,630
New members	190	180
Program attendance	1,113	1,110
Computer bookings	1,740	1,593

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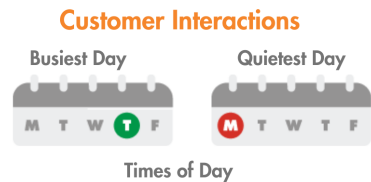
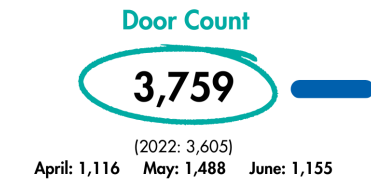
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Corporate Centre

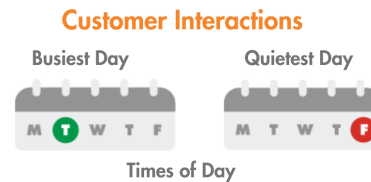
January-March 2023



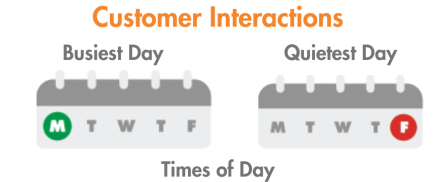
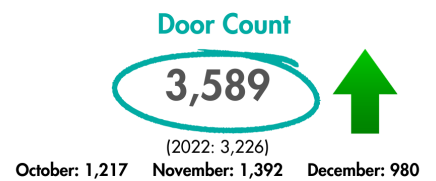
April-June 2023



July-September 2023



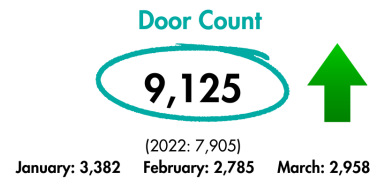
October-December 2023



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Lakes Entrance

January-March 2023



Customer Interactions



Times of Day

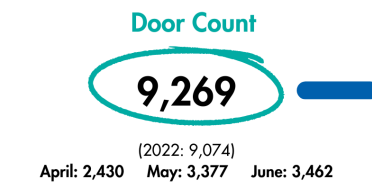


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,941	804
Loans	9,546	8,283
New members	76	53
Program attendance	219	217
Computer bookings	1,607	490

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

April-June 2023



Customer Interactions



Times of Day

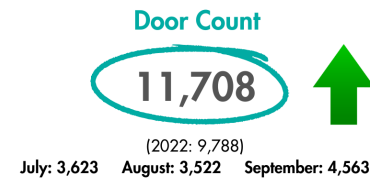


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,582	1,663
Loans	7,604	8,150
New members	74	77
Program attendance	480	543
Computer bookings	775	659

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

July-September 2023



Customer Interactions



Times of Day

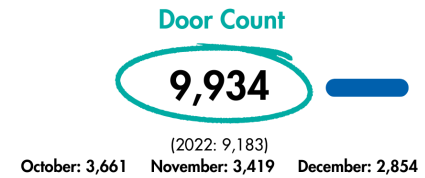


Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,552	1,315
Loans	9,552	8,550
New members	69	97
Program attendance	379	586
Computer bookings	820	830

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

October-December 2023



Customer Interactions



Times of Day



Library

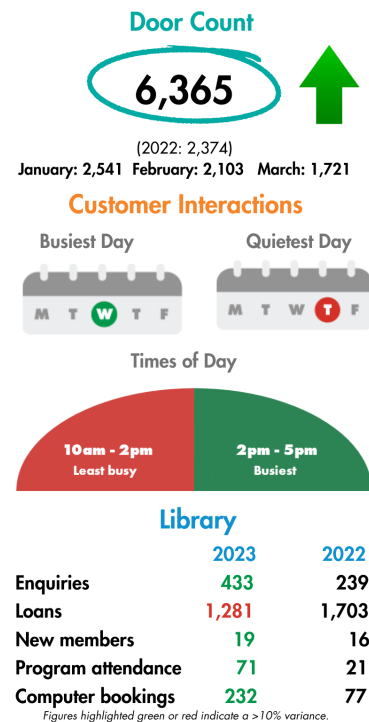
	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,059	1,120
Loans	9,735	7,232
New members	63	61
Program attendance	361	441
Computer bookings	759	761

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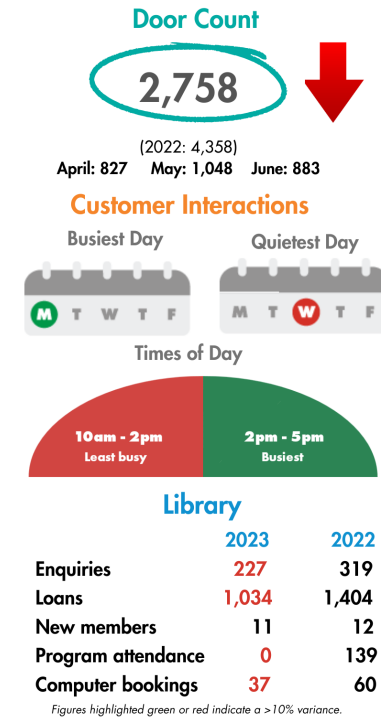
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Mallacoota

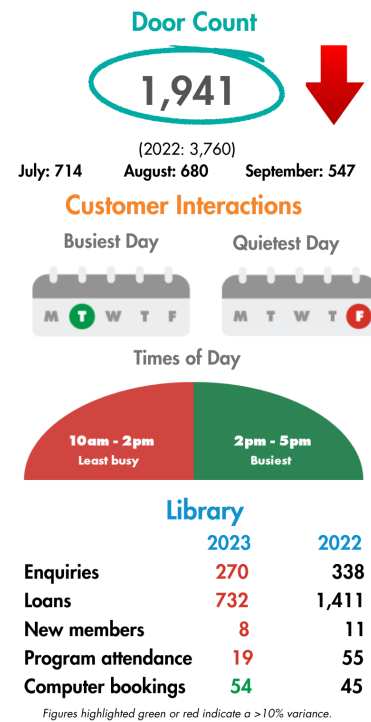
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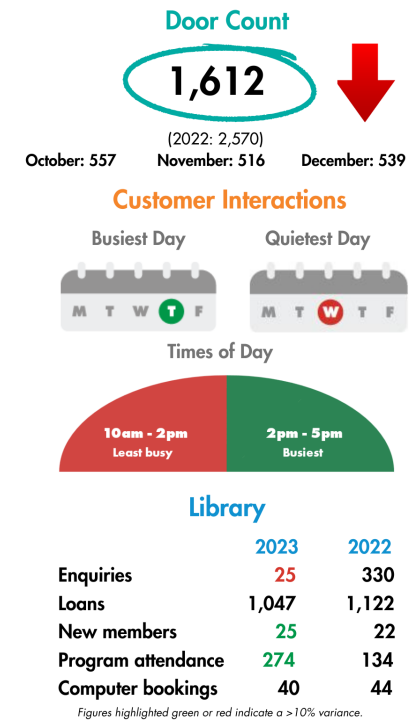
April-June 2023



July-September 2023



October-December 2023



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Omeo

January-March 2023

Door Count

3,931 

(2022: 2,713)

January: 1,351 February: 1,097 March: 1,483

Customer Interactions



Times of Day



Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	146	212
Loans	502	703
New members	7	1
Program attendance	15	15
Computer bookings	63	38

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

April-June 2023

Door Count

2,660 

(2022: 2,548)

April: 1,042 May: 926 June: 692

Customer Interactions



Times of Day



Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	144	387
Loans	510	622
New members	10	5
Program attendance	295	43
Computer bookings	27	35

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

July-September 2023

Door Count

1,947 

(2022: 2,827)

July: 669 August: 625 September: 653

Customer Interactions



Times of Day



Library

	2023	2022
Enquiries	98	286
Loans	522	748
New members	11	4
Program attendance	255	137
Computer bookings	27	47

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

October-December 2023

Door Count

2,176 

(2022: 2,852)

October: 683 November: 851 December: 642

Customer Interactions



Times of Day



Library

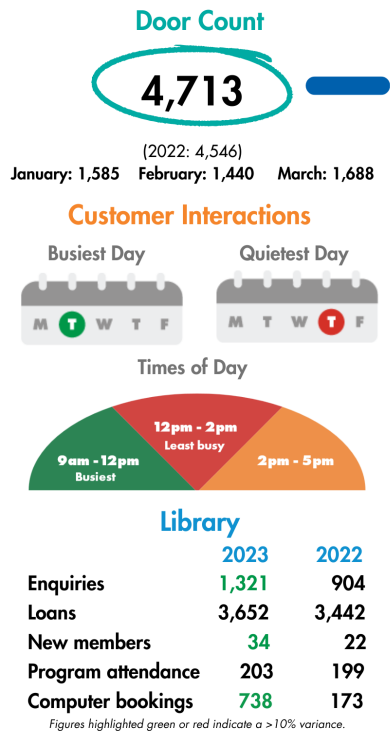
	2023	2022
Enquiries	25	153
Loans	509	718
New members	9	3
Program attendance	275	248
Computer bookings	34	37

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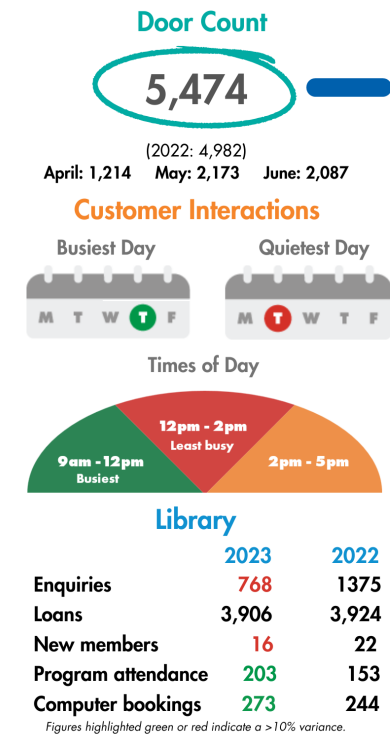
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Orbost

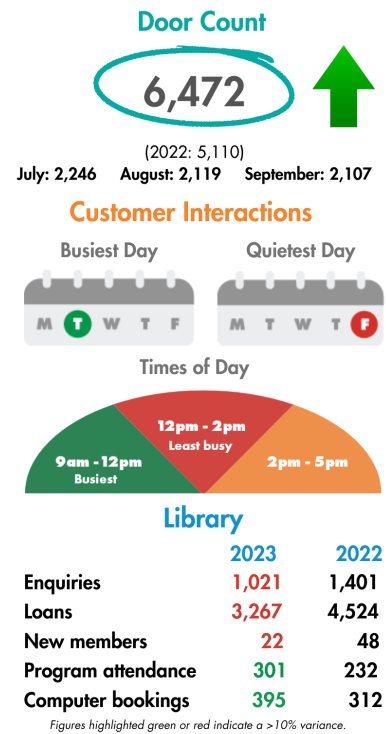
January-March 2023



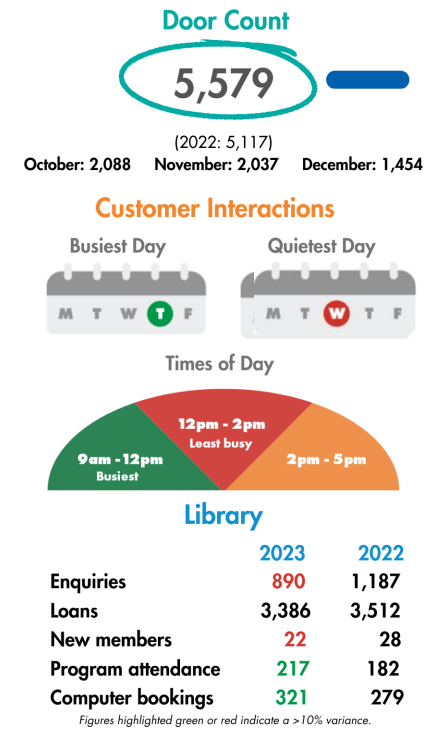
April-June 2023



July-September 2023



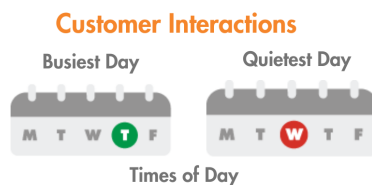
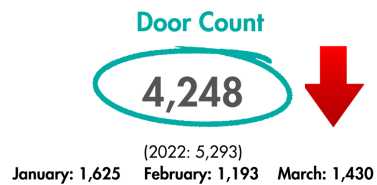
October-December 2023



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Paynesville

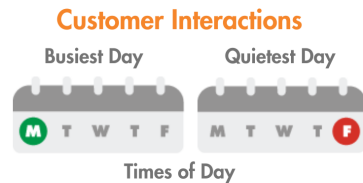
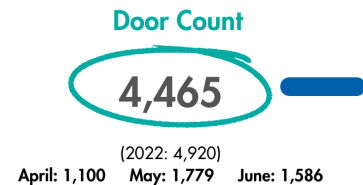
January-March 2023



Library	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,935	798
Loans	4,570	5,309
New members	41	30
Program attendance	285	284
Computer bookings	543	177

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

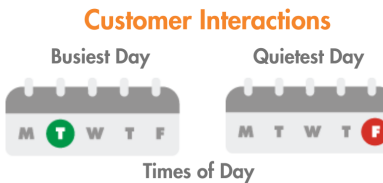
April-June 2023



Library	2023	2022
Enquiries:	1,250	935
Loans	4,070	4,639
New members	41	32
Program attendance	804	351
Computer bookings	228	225

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

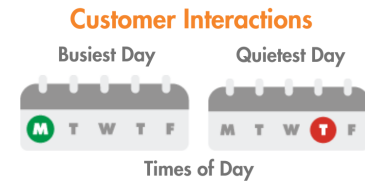
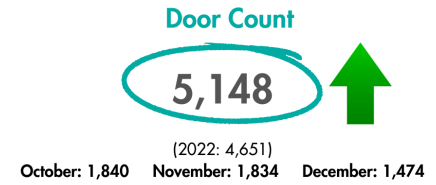
July-September 2023



Library	2023	2022
Enquiries:	1,503	1,148
Loans	3,807	5,293
New members	44	37
Program attendance	640	477
Computer bookings	293	275

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

October-December 2023



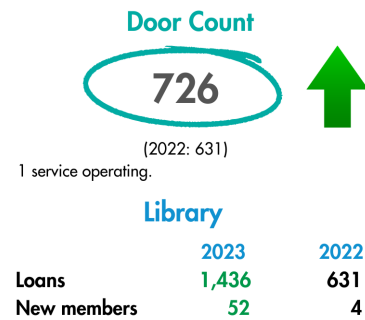
Library	2023	2022
Enquiries	1,592	1,030
Loans	3,521	4,186
New members	17	22
Program attendance	577	441
Computer bookings	236	231

Figures highlighted green or red indicate a >10% variance.

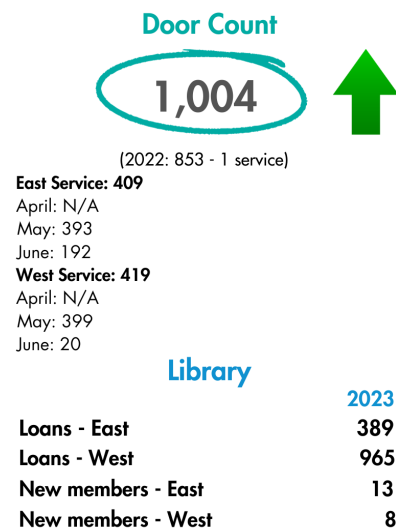
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND LIBRARIES

Mobile Service

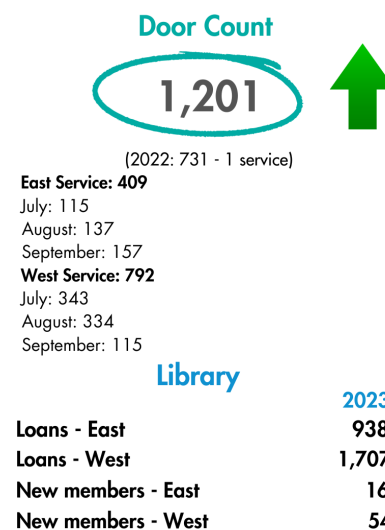
January-March 2023



April-June 2023



July-September 2023



October-December 2023

