

Casey Cardinia Public Libraries uses Census data to tailor library collections for Punjabi speakers

The City of Casey is one of Victoria's largest and fastest growing areas. Casey Cardinia Libraries, with seven branches and a popular mobile library, provides services to the diverse community of more than 420,000 people.

From Hampton Park right through to Pakenham, the libraries offer meeting places where people gather, share news and make connections.

Library Information Services Coordinator, Michelle McLean, said they use Census data to help identify language needs in the local community.

"In 2016, Census data for the local government area showed a dramatic increase in Punjabi speakers," said Mrs McLean. "The data showed 6,695 people stated they spoke Punjabi at home compared to 2,531 people in 2011."

Given the number of Punjabi speakers moving into the local Cranbourne area, the team used this data, along with survey information, to source Punjabi books and materials.

"We invited Punjabi speaking locals to an event so they could recommend items from the sample collection that interested them," said Mrs McLean.

A new language collection was then launched and continues to be used by this growing community.

"We use Census data about languages people speak at home to tell us which communities may benefit from library services," said Beth Luppino, General Manager Customer Experience. "We look at the top four or five languages spoken in our communities, as well as emerging ones."

The library team noticed a trend in the use of the less common Oromo language, an Afroasiatic dialect.

"While it's only a small number of library users, we added to our bilingual book collection and sourced other language support materials to cater for this group," said Ms Luppino.

"Census data helps us form a picture of the community," said Ms Luppino. "It helps tell us who our audience is so we can plan relevant activities, programs and collections. It also encourages people who are newly arrived in Australia to get a free library membership."