



# Media Release

23 March 2026

## **Stories of connection abound in lead up to Spearwood Library golden jubilee celebrations**

Three generations of the La Frenais family have spent many hours at Spearwood Library over the decades and are among many locals excited to celebrate the facility's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this March.

The much-loved Spearwood institution opened on 23 March 1976 and with a monthly average of 8,300+ visitors borrowing more than 10,300 items in 2025, the Coleville Crescent sanctuary is more popular than ever.

Palmina La Frenais began taking her daughter Marie to Spearwood Library regularly from the age of about six in the late 1980s and continued to do so throughout her primary and high school years so she could complete school projects, which she has proudly kept.

Now both women take Marie's two-year-old daughter Amalia Robinson to the library every other week, just for fun.

Several staff members who began working at the Library in the 1970s and 80s also remain on staff at the popular branch and are excited to help celebrate the milestone with the community they have been serving for decades.

A week of free golden jubilee activities will be held at Spearwood Library from 23-28 March 2026, culminating in a community Birthday Fair on Saturday 28 March from 9.30am-4pm.

City of Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett encouraged the community to join in the milestone celebrations which also include a history display, cake-cutting, Storytime, and more.

"Spearwood Library was the City's sole branch for 14 years, followed by Coolbellup Library in 1990 and Success Library in 2000, which relocated to a purpose-built home at the Cockburn Health and Community facility in 2014," Mayor Howlett said.



# Media Release

“Spearwood has undergone some transformations over the year, including an extension opened in 2005 thanks to a generous donation from local businessman, the late John Carcione.

“This enabled the addition of a \$200,000 dedicated children’s section, named the John Carcione Wing which was opened by his wife Maria along with his three sons and their young children.

“In 2018 the City invested about \$280,000 in a renovation that met the contemporary needs of our library-loving community, creating more meeting spaces and training rooms.

“The installation of user-friendly ergonomic shelving which can be moved much more easily than traditional book stacks, allows the library team to change the floorplan to better accommodate the many activities it hosts.

“We look forward to making many more memories at Spearwood Library and can’t wait to join our community in celebrating this wonderful occasion.”

## **Comments attributed to City of Cockburn Service Manager Library, Place and Culture Janette Wright:**

“While Spearwood isn’t the largest of Cockburn’s three libraries, it is a consistent performer for its popular free community activities, and its borrowers loan more music CDs than its two counterparts,” Ms Wright said.

“Spearwood Library also has the most adult fiction books borrowed compared to junior books, roughly 50/50 whereas the other two libraries lend more children’s books. The most borrowed collections are adult fiction, closely followed by picture books and then puppets.

“Spearwood’s popular free community activities include its tech-help Switched on Seniors program, one-on-one ancestry research help sessions, vibrant book and Mahjong clubs, and English conversation and knitting groups.

“Cockburn Libraries have always been a bit fashion forward, adopting new practices and systems right from the beginning! Spearwood was our first, opening as one of



# Media Release

WA's first automated public libraries to use a computerised lending system.

“When life became digitally focused, we ensured there were computers for people to apply for jobs or visas online, and we hold regular sessions so people can gain the digital skills we all need these days.”

**Comments attributed to State Librarian and CEO of the Library Board of WA, Catherine Clark, who began her working life in libraries at Spearwood Library in the late 1980s:**

“While it’s always wonderful to celebrate such a significant milestone for a library, this one is particularly dear to my heart as I was the Children’s Librarian at the City of Cockburn in the late 1980’s, my first appointment as a librarian following graduation,” Ms Clark said.

“I didn’t realise it at the time but the role and people I worked with provided me the opportunity to learn about the importance of knowing the community you serve, the benefits of a high-performing team, and leaders who welcome innovation and are values-led.

“These were all embedded in the culture of the City of Cockburn library service and remain characteristics that are critical for libraries today.

“I often refer to my role as Children’s Librarian as the hardest job I’ve ever done and it continues to provide me with many anecdotes – from the Teddy Bear’s Picnic that attracted hundreds of local children who mobbed the library staff member who I had convinced to dress up in a teddy bear suit, to painting an entire wall of glass in the library with green paint for a jungle-themed Children’s Book Week.

“My early experiences at the City of Cockburn, and in library officer roles at the City of Melville while I was studying, have proved invaluable in understanding the importance of public libraries in communities throughout the State.

“While I have worked in university libraries for a large part of my career, I am now drawing again on these earlier experiences in my role at the State Library of Western Australia as CEO and State Librarian.



# Media Release

“One of the great pleasures of my current role is the opportunity it offers to visit and support the work of public libraries and I’m thrilled that the library where I held my first professional librarian role continues to thrive and innovate.”

## **Comments attributed to three-generations family member Marie La Frenais:**

“When I was in primary school Mum would bring me to the library after she finished work, and I think that was the key positive, that the library was accessible after hours,” Ms La Frenais said.

“Mum wasn't a huge user of the library, it was more about taking me for my schooling needs and now she loves taking my two-year-old daughter to the Wednesday morning Toddlers Sing and Play.

“The library for me has been an accessible and safe space where I knew I could go to help me with learning.

“I feel my daughter now has the opportunity to learn there too. She borrows books, puppets and DVDs every week. We feel very lucky to have this resource so close to home.”

## **Comments attributed to long-term staff members:**

City of Cockburn former Library Manager Linda Seymour first joined Spearwood Library as a work experience student in 1989 and has witnessed enormous change, particularly how technology has expanded access to library services.

“Technology has enabled residents to access the library from home – from eMagazines to eBooks,” Ms Seymour said.

“There was a fear at one stage that the printed book would disappear, but that has proven to be so wrong. Most people still love a physical book, and many read both.”

She said despite automation and digital transformation, the heart of the library has stayed the same.



# Media Release

“Our role as a place of connection is so important. Groups come in to play mahjong, attend drawing classes or to knit, and those social connections really support community wellbeing,” she said.

“As we become more digitally engrossed in what we do at home and at work, human connection is going to be very important, and libraries will have a major role to play.”

Julie Mann, who has worked with Cockburn Libraries since 1979, said she had seen multiple generations enjoy Spearwood Library.

“Children who once came in with their parents are now bringing in their own kids. A lot of people come because it’s a safe, friendly place. They know they can talk to us,” Ms Mann said.

As Cockburn Libraries look ahead to the next 50 years, both Linda and Julie agree that while technology will continue to evolve, libraries will remain a welcoming and inclusive place for community connection, lifelong learning and belonging.

To find out more about the week of free birthday activities, visit the City’s [website](#).

ENDS

For more information contact:  
Media and Communications Advisor  
City of Cockburn  
T: 08 9411 3551  
E: [media@cockburn.wa.gov.au](mailto:media@cockburn.wa.gov.au)