



Libraries help people to find work

Melton City Libraries' Job Lab program, which is taking the dread out of the job search for a generation of residents, is part of Melton City Council's push to improve local employment opportunities. HAYLEY MARTIN tells us how her libraries remain relevant to their community.

In library circles we're used to hearing that a great library service should be outward looking and use community need as a source of inspiration when developing programs. Job Lab is a case in point. In 2013, it became clear that residents needed to continually improve their skills, although many residents were already using library-based technologies in their job-seeking efforts. Around the same time, the council's economic development team launched a job search portal, Melton Jobs Hub, to help residents connect with local jobs. Acting as a node, Melton City Libraries launched Job Lab in 2014. This fortnightly program aims to engage local jobseekers with genuine careers and résumé advice, technology assistance and an introduction to Melton Jobs Hub.

Providing a qualified careers advisor and librarian to assist attendees one-on-one, Job Lab has grown over the last three years into a funded partnership between Djerriwarrh Community and Education Service and Melton City Libraries. Now taking place weekly, sessions alternate between Melton and Caroline Springs library branches. Staff offer assistance for up to seven people in each two-hour session, and attendances are regularly at capacity.

The success of the program has influenced Melton City Libraries' broader programming. By evaluating client needs, the library service has developed programs targeted to professionally skilled migrants, and it offers specialised résumé assistance.

It's difficult to determine the exact socio-economic impact of Job Lab, but – based on anecdotes, expressions of thanks and the camaraderie between attendees – we can confidently state that this program is helping to build a stronger community. We were delighted when a client

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LIBRARY SERVICE?

Hayley Martin and Emmanuel Kot Job at Melton Library and Learning Hub during a Job Lab session.

recently visited us to say thanks after receiving assistance on her résumé, which helped her to secure an education support job. Other clients have told us of the sense of dread that overwhelms them when they complete a job application, especially after being out of work for a long time. Others, who experience declining opportunities in their sectors, fear moving into a new field. For these clients, Job Lab has been an important gateway to new tools and confidence.

More and more, public library services are helping to build resilient communities. Programs such as Job Lab connect people with opportunities that give them the knowledge and skills they need to participate now and in the future. To succeed in this role, a great public library service must look beyond its own walls. By responding to local emerging needs with inventive programming, libraries stay relevant and significant in the everyday lives of the people in their community. 🌐

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