

Impact Report

APRIL 2019 - JUNE 2021

LIBRARY OF STUFF MULLUMBIMBY



Acknowledgement of Country

Mullum Cares INC. proudly acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to Australian life and how this enriches us.



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Introduction to the Library of Stuff

The Library of Stuff is a membership-based community operation that shares infrequently needed items with its members who are predominantly households and local not-for-profit (NFP) organisations. We began sharing reusable cups, plates, bowls, and cutlery after 100 sets of reusable bamboo items were donated by a local festival in April 2017. These items allow other NFP's to save money and avoid waste at their events. In 2018 we secured funding to purchase some tools, camping gear, board games and flood recovery assets, secure adequate insurance and introduce a comprehensive lending software that enabled the launch of formal and financial memberships for both NFP's and households. The range of items in the inventory has continued to grow and now includes the additional categories: nonfiction books, sporting equipment, kitchen appliances, injury & illness support, and an impressive range of power and hand tools for DIY and gardening activities.

The obvious side effect of supporting our members to reduce their consumption and waste is the financial savings they experience which is invaluable to our household members and allows the NFP's we support to spend these savings on their primary purpose and grow their impact. Our current focus is on developing an efficient and effective Care & Repair Strategy to maintain our inventory and ensure it serves our members for as long as possible. We are designing Working Bee events that will facilitate these activities and both the membership and broader community will be invited to participate and revitalise the diminishing habit of actively caring for our belongings rather than simply using them until they fail and then replacing them.



Our Purpose



The Library of Stuff* is a project of Mullum Cares Incorporated.

Mullum Cares is a not for profit organisation that inspires and enables consumer demand for conservation.

*The Library of Stuff is referred to as "the Library" throughout this document

Mullum Cares Purpose

Is to protect and enhance the natural environment by promoting the sustainable use of products manufactured for human consumption. To achieve this we design and deliver programmes and projects that:



Inspire and enable our community to actively avoid products that are designed to be single use or of poor quality.



Keep products already made in use as long as possible and maximise their utility by sharing and caring for them in a dogged and determined fashion.



Reduce the disturbance of the natural environment caused by the extraction, production, transport and disposal of goods produced for human consumption by reducing demand for more.



The Library of Stuff maximises the utility of infrequently used items by sharing them amongst our members. This directly reduces the demand for more of these items to be required to meet our communities needs. We partner with the Mullumbimby Repair Cafe (for items out of warranty) and the local retailers we purchase our goods from to keep them in use as long as possible.

Why the Library

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Mullum Cares a brief history

Mullum Cares launched in 2015 harnessing the growing consumer demand for radical action on single use plastics. After designing and delivering a Town Wide Plastic Free July campaign that resulted in the reduction of single use plastic bags and straws supplied by Mullumbimby traders and the successful crowdfunding for a filtered water bottle refill and bubbler unit for the main street, the organisation was approached by the Byron Spirit Festival to assist their intention to hold a plastic free festival in April 2017. The program now called Waste Free Catering was designed to move events directly from single use food and beverage containers to reusables instead of the trend at the time which was to transition from single use plastic to single use compostable. Mullum Cares always rejected the premise that single use cups, plates, bowls and cutlery was a desirable long term solution to food and beverage container waste. The Byron Spirit Festival seeded the Library of Stuff by donating 100 reusable bamboo cups, plates, bowls and cutlery sets. These were used at their event in 2017 and have been regularly used by Library of Stuff members since then.

Between April 2017 and April 2019 these catering assets were stored in Mullum Cares founder, Sasha Mainsbridge's garage, and lent to local NFP organisations for their events. It took a long time to find a place for the Library and a software to manage the lending activity. In 2018 we were donated a large shed (but not the land to put it) and we found the software we now use to manage the lending activity - myTurn. We moved quickly to secure 15K grant funding from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) to cover the costs of reerecting the shed, the first year's insurance and the purchase of a base stock of tools and other equipment intended to support our community in the event of major flooding.



Granted the funds to support Mullum Cares to:

- 1 Increase access to resources that support community recovery after emergencies and disasters.
- 2 Reduce waste through access to the affordable hire of equipment and resources.
- 3 Support low income earners and residents in financial stress to have access to tools, resources and equipment.

Unfortunately the shed we were donated by Chincogan Real Estate never found a suitable place to be erected so we sought approval from FRRR to spend this funding on purchasing a large trailer to support our Library of Stuff members and other Mullum Cares activities. In early 2019 a chance meeting with the Director of the Byron Region Community College (BRCC) resulted in a space being generously made available for the Library to launch alongside the Mullumbimby Repair Cafe at the BRCC in Mullumbimby. By October 2019 we had outgrown that space and jumped at the opportunity to move the Library into the Mullumbimby Scout Hall. We have now reached capacity with this space allocated to us at this site but are hopeful our application to take on the lease of the entire building will be successful and allow us the use of additional space to grow our inventory and our impact. We will find out the result of this application in February or 2022.



How we make a difference

We started supporting the Byron Shire community in April 2017 and started measuring our impact in April 2019. This is what we've recorded since then.

[All data is current until June 2021]

Loans since we started...

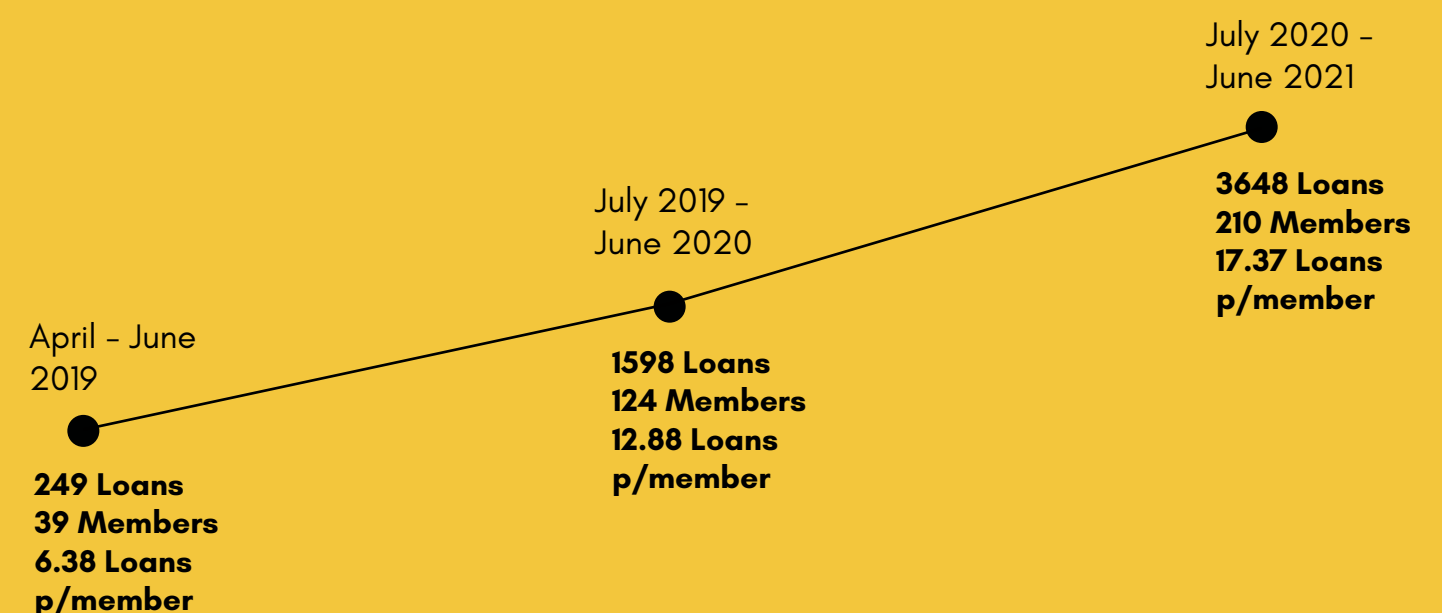
5495

Loans

2718 

Saved products from being manufactured

Members are using the library more and more and it's becoming a habit to check what we have at the library before purchasing new items.



Volunteers:

1864 
Total volunteer hours




15 
Current volunteers helping to run the library.

+100
Hours contributed per volunteer [on average]

Apart from the volunteer hours needed to operate the Library, there were countless volunteer hours spent preparing for the Library to open. Since then, in addition to the hours we open to our members, there has been a mammoth volunteer effort dedicated to setting up systems, processes and the physical spaces at the Library. We would like to warmly thank all volunteers for all of their support, hard work and dedication to the cause. We value them immensely and simply couldn't exist without them.

What members save:

Total amount \$ members saved by using the Library*

\$16,092 2018-2019	\$410 per/member	39  members
\$100,025 2019-2020	\$1177 per/member	85  members
\$345,645 2020-2021	\$3114 per/member	111  members

* *We analysed all loans and used the replacement cost of the item as the basis for our calculations. Where a member borrowed the same item more than once only the first occurrence was included in our calculations.

Our inventory

When we launched our household membership in April 2019, we had 100 items in our inventory.




Categories:



Top 10 most popular items and how many times they've been borrowed:



Our Members

April 2019 June 2019	39  members
July 2019 June 2020	124  members
July 2021	210  members

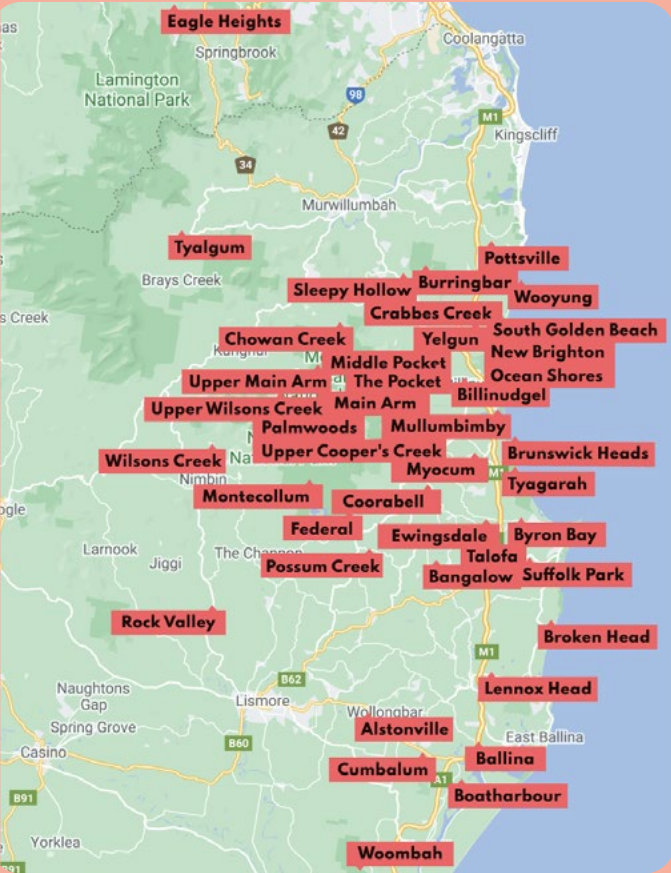
Since April 2019, we have had a total of 235 active members.* This includes 33 Not for Profits. Our initial goal was to reach 100 members in the first year which we achieved easily by April 2020 but the impact of Covid has stalled our hopes for this growth to continue at a similar rate. Of particular note is the significant loss of NFP members who relied on the Library for their community engagement outreach events.

* Active members are members that have an active membership at some point during that financial year

About our membership:

Library of Stuff members come from 29 suburbs, across the Byron Shire and beyond. We have members that travel far to use the Library.

80% of our members have kids at home and whilst more membership names are registered as female names, it's more usual when there's a male partner that they are more often seen collecting and returning items to the Library.



Our community organisation members

Our Library has amplified the conservation efforts of many community partners by providing sponsored membership and access to our items, particularly our event inventory.



We asked members what they would have done if the Library didn't exist...

"I wouldn't be able to afford to buy the items that we need."

"Some jobs would go without being done."


"I would have ended up buying more things if the library didn't exist."

"I wouldn't be able to have access to quality items."


A few stats from our recent annual survey:

84% 
of respondents use the library to save money.

85% 
of respondents said they have saved money by avoiding to buy stuff since becoming a member.

94% 
of respondents use the library to reduce their impact on the planet.

93% 
of respondents said that the membership fee is affordable.

77% 
of respondents strongly agreed that their life is way better with a Library of stuff membership.

Many respondents said that they use the library to do things that they wouldn't be able to otherwise do so easily or at all, like DIY projects

56% home repairs **58%** gardening

Love from Members:

"Library of stuff, library of stuff, it's the place to go coz the planet has had enough" Song
Melissa



'This is an awesome initiative! It's been really helpful for my household, and has helped so many in the community. I joined because my lawnmower broke and I didn't want to buy another one. But it's opening up heaps of possibilities for me and my housemates.' Paul

I am very grateful for The library of stuff. It's existence enables me to mend, maintain and create things that I otherwise wouldn't be able to do because I can't afford the tools, or to pay someone to do those things for me. I find the volunteers helpful, kind and patient, even under stress.
Prem Rani



The library is a place full of hope for us as a community. It is a practical answer to issues relating to reducing our individual consumption, stepping away from a monetary only exchange. And the conversations and community have helped me personally enormously. -
Sarah

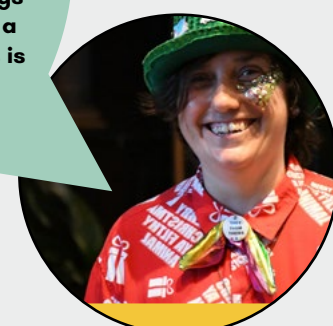
I am super proud to be in a community that has a Library of Stuff. I see it as one of our greatest social, economic and environmental assets for all the positive behaviour change it inspires and makes possible. It is a service that positively connects me to my community and to my impact on the planet. The beneficial ripple effects of a service like this cannot be fully measured but they are truly game changing. We borrow so much great stuff that we need each year to run Renew Fest and also for our Resilient Byron events, which saves us money and the expense of storing this gear ourselves. It also helps us as organisations to live our values related to full system regenerative change and this is a really great feeling. Much gratitude and respect to Sasha Mainsbridge and the volunteers who run the Library. Ella, Renew Fest



Library of Stuff is the answer to becoming more ecologically friendly and financially savvy. Every town should have a Library of Stuff. It's essential and I can't imagine myself going without a membership. Anna



As a small not for profit, we have found the Library of Stuff to be an incredible resource. Having access to such a great range of items, which we could not have afforded to buy, has been really important for our functioning. Additionally, the sense of community and connectedness that the library brings cannot be understated. They are doing a fabulous job at reducing waste, but this is actually just the tip of the iceberg of the services they provide to the community.
Aiden, Queer Family Inc.



The library of stuff is a great example of a solutions multiplier. Sustainable use of resources, fair share of resources, localisation and it builds community.
Sharon





It's extremely convenient and handy and I don't have the variety of stuff they have that I only use infrequently so it's very convenient to borrow things as I need them and give them back for someone else to use. Dom

The library has enabled me to use quality tools to do home repairs that otherwise I'd have to have bought, and would have probably bought cheap rubbish. It's a fantastic resource for someone who has lost work due to covid. It's also a nice community. Rob



The LOS makes sharing rather than buying stuff possible and affordable. I am so honoured to be a part of a community that is taking active steps and creating solutions to support us to live with less. Thank you. Tash



An excellent community service which helps us to live more sustainably. Gabrielle

Gabrielle



I love the Library of Stuff because the library allows us to borrow things instead of buying them. As a mother living in an age of consumerism, I'd like my children to grow up learning to limit their consumption and to value a more minimalist lifestyle that puts the welfare of the Earth before having the next shiny new toy. I think the library demonstrates that there is another path. We can share and repair. Kids these days are desperate for hope for the future of their planet and The Library of Stuff provides that hope. It illustrates a practical way that we all, as members, can make a difference in the world. Dominique



The Library of Stuff is an initiative that gives hope to transition back to a less individualistic future, and that shows how there are alternatives to the over-consumption led by modern lifestyles. To me, being a member is so useful and it's a statement of caring for the collective in so many ways. Mahi, Seabin Foundation

Mahi, Seabin Foundation

The library is such a wonderful community resource and waste reduction initiative and learning to share is such simple yet effective action. I hope libraries like this spring up in every town. Tora

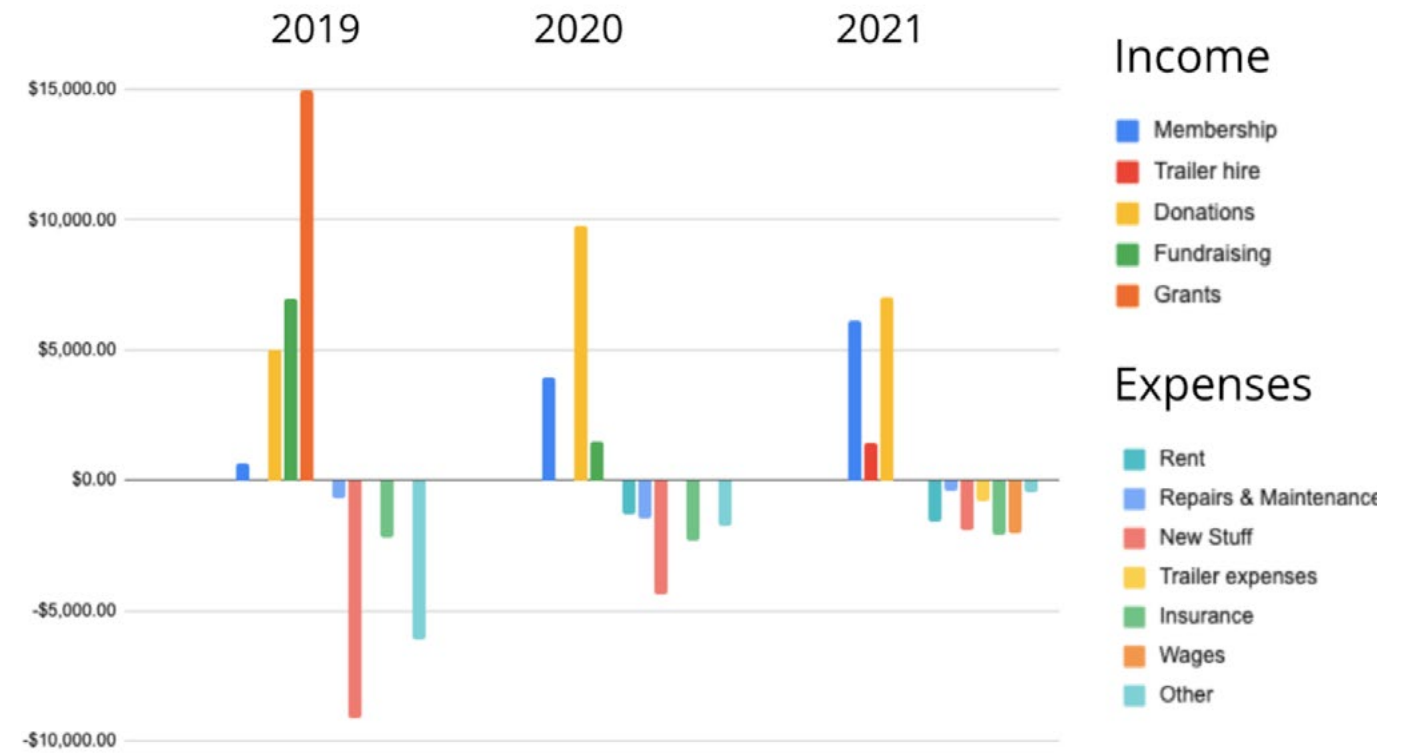
Tora



I love the Library of Stuff, being a member helps me being less wasteful and, as a plus, everytime I come in I get to chat with the lovely volunteers. Antonella



The money stuff



The Library of Stuff has been supporting local NFP's and organisations since April 2017 with its Waste Free Catering stock. In 2018 Mullum Cares secured a 15K grant from FRRR to grow the inventory to include power tools, gardening tools, flood recovery items and a screen free family fun category. Once this funding was secured we took off! Even though it took a long time to secure a site the promotion and community engagement we undertook resulted in a generous 5K donation from a founding member (who repeated this the following year and is now a significant benefactor, ensuring the Mullum Cares Project Manager position is funded).

Splendour in the Grass provided an opportunity that allowed us to raise 10K for the Library and the inventory swelled to capacity by mid 2020. Since then, we have had to lay low whilst waiting for more space. We only seek growth through word of mouth as the sweet spot where we have enough stuff to sufficiently service our members is not far off being exhausted. We are currently tendering to secure the lease on a council building that will give us 50% more space. The harsh reality of a community library like ours is that the membership fees only cover the cost of our insurance, rent and other general operating expenses. If we double our membership it is hard to imagine that the service will be sustainable with 100% volunteer operating staff. A paid coordinator is required but we believe this must be funded separately. Currently we are using a specific donation from another community member to pay a Library of Stuff Impact Amplifier for 10 hours a week for a year. They have co-ordinated and created most of the content for this report and supervised its design. The Mullum Cares Project Manager is tasked with designing and delivering other projects that will diversify the organisations activities and generate income that can underwrite any losses from the Library including the cost of a coordinator.

With thanks to our Community

From the inception of the idea, the Library attracted strong support from pivotal local stakeholders who contributed to the growth and success of our operation in a variety of ways. Many of these organisations have become important partners in the current and future plans for the Library's expansion.

2017

- Byron Spirit Festival seeds the Library with \$1000 worth of reusable bamboo cups, plates, bowls and cutlery.

2018

Prior to Mullum Cares incorporating in May 2018, Mullum Cares was a project of Mullum SEED.

- Mullum SEED continues to auspice Mullum Cares by extending their DGR and Charity Status.
- Mullumbimby Printworks begins providing heavily discounted printing services for the Library
- Foundation For Rural and Regional Renewal gives us a grant of 15K
- Chincogan Real Estate - donates a shed
- Splendour in the Grass donates over \$10.000

2019

- A founding member donates 5K (and repeated this donation in 2020) and now is a significant benefactor ensuring that Mullum Cares projects manager position is funded.
- SCCU - Nominates Mullum Cares as its annual community partner
- Byron Region Community College (BRCC) - provides rent free space for the Library to open in April 2019
- The Mullum Music Festival donates over 500 festival cups
- The Mullumbimby Repair Cafe makes room for us at the BRCC and supports us with electrical testing and tagging
- Mullumbimby Scouts provides a much needed larger space than we had at the BRCC so we moved in Oct 2019

2020

- Covid hit and we closed our doors for 6 weeks. We also ran out of storage space which restricted our inventory growth and stopped us advertising memberships.

2021

- A local philanthropist who prefers to remain anonymous donates funds to pay for an Impact Amplifier position for the Library of Stuff - this report and the foundations set for future reporting is a direct outcome of that donation.

Where to from here? Visions for 2022...

✓ **22** 

Average loans per member

✓ **1000** 

Items

✓ **250** 

Members

✓ **4** 

**Care and repair community
working bees**

✓ **10+**

NFP or Profit for Purpose Members

✓ **More space** 

✓ **Comprehensive Care
& repair strategy** 

✓ **Paid Co ordinator**