



Patrick outside his 'Ballarat's Bloody Bonza Blue Box of Books Street Library'. Picture by Adam Trafford

Your next read just a short stroll away

THE sense of anticipation that comes with finding a new book is something all literary lovers can appreciate, and increasingly in Ballarat, uncovering your next read is just a stroll away.

Ballarat Central's Patrick, who wanted his last name withheld, is the custodian of 'Ballarat's Bloody Bonza Blue Box of Books Street Library' - one of a number of street libraries that popped up in the pandemic years.

Unlike a traditional library, there is no formal check-out system and books are accessible from the street.

For Patrick, part of the joy of his library is listening to people walk past, depositing or delighting in finding a book to take with them on their way.

"The idea is to take one, leave one kind of vibe, so it's

always looking after itself like a library. You can borrow it, you can bring it back or you can just swap it for another book. We do find that there are times when it will be full of, you know, kids' books or romance novels or adventure - really depending on who's happened to be going past."

In 2019, six street libraries were registered in Ballarat.

That figure has more than doubled in 2022, now being found in Golden Point, Ballarat, Newington, Redan, Lake Wendouree, Alfredton, Wendouree, Sebastopol, Buninyong and Glen Park.

Street Libraries Australia general manager Mel Lake said she attributed the rise to people seeking a sense of community.

"People missing that human connection and wanting to foster a sense of com-

munity even though during [lockdowns] we were unable to physically connect, that's something that we attribute that growth to," she said.

And the trend isn't expected to slow down.

"[The rise] speaks to the grassroots nature of the movement and its self-perpetuating nature ... people will be walking around and seeing the libraries and they know it means community and sharing. There's so many positive associations that will perpetuate the movement going forward," Ms Lake said.

Those interested in starting a street library can build their own and register, or buy one from Street Library Australia ready-made.

A map of Ballarat's street libraries can be found at streetlibrary.org.au

- ELLIE MITCHELL