

MM-1 MAYORAL MINUTE - PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING

Department Executive Services

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

I am calling on Councillors to support the Library Council of NSW, NSW Public Library Association and the State Library of NSW in their lobbying of State Government for additional funds to Public Libraries. The City of Canada Bay has invested significantly in library services over the past decade, spending over \$12.7 million in capital expenditure and \$2.4 million annually to provide valuable library services to our community. Our libraries attract 330,000 visits and around half a million loans annually as well as providing electronic resources and a range of programs.

Whilst Council receives funds from State Government, these have gradually declined. In 2012/13 Council received \$220,851 from the State Government representing less than 10% of our Library's total expenditure. The City of Canada Bay is not alone. The level of State Government funding for NSW public libraries has reached crisis point. This is an historic issue that has been ignored by successive NSW governments. The key issues are that:

- NSW public libraries receive the lowest per-capita funding from their State Government compared to all other states in Australia;
- NSW Councils are currently paying 93% of the costs to operate public libraries up from 77% in 1980;
- the current NSW State Government funding for public libraries is only \$26.5M, this includes the per capita subsidy which is legislated at \$1.85 per head of population;
- the total funding available through the NSW Public Library Funding Strategy is not indexed to population growth or consumer price index(CPI);
- as population increases the per capita subsidy amount also increases reducing all other components of the funding. (Library Development Grants and Local Priority Grants)

In 2011, the current NSW State Government made a pre-election commitment to comprehensively review the level and allocation of funding for NSW public libraries. The Library Council of NSW worked with the NSW Public Library Associations and the State Library of NSW to develop an evidence-based submission.

I support the resulting submission *Reforming Public Library Funding* which was presented to the State Government in October 2012, as it recommends a fairer, simpler and more transparent method for the distribution of funds.

The Library Council's recommended recurrent public library funding to councils be increased to \$30M in 2014/15 and indexed annually. Council's own policy for the library budget considers indexation and population growth to enable adequately funded libraries and would expect similar consideration in state funding.

The proposed additional *Building Library Infrastructure Program* of \$30M per annum for building and maintaining infrastructure was recommended to replace the now defunct provision of grants from operating funds.

We wrote to both the Hon. George Souris, Minister for the Arts and the Member for Drummoyne on 11 February 2013 urging the State Government to adopt the *Reforming Public Library Funding* strategies. Despite a high level of expectation that the pre-election commitment to review and increase funding to NSW public libraries would be undertaken, this did not eventuate in the 2013 budget.

I support the NSW Public Library Associations co-ordinating a targeted campaign to bring this situation to the attention of politicians and funding decision makers. As 35,000 of the City of Canada Bay's population are members of our libraries and we are well aware of our community's high regard for library services I anticipate there will be strong support for us to contribute to this campaign.

I understand that the intention of the NSW Library Act in 1939 was equal funding from state and local government for library services. Since then local government has increasingly carried the funding burden with the situation deteriorating significantly since the nineteen-eighties. We cannot continue with the high degree of uncertainty about the level of ongoing State Government funding for public libraries. I am recommending that we support urgent action from local government and NSW Public Library Associations or the situation will continue and local councils will once again be forced to pick up the funding shortfall.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Council make representation to the State Member, John Sidoti, in relation to the need for additional funding from the NSW State Government for the provision of public library services.
2. THAT Council write to the Hon. George Souris, Minister for the Arts, calling upon the Government to implement the *Reforming Public Library Funding* submission of the Library Council of NSW for the reform of the funding system for NSW public libraries.
3. THAT Council approve the distribution of NSW Public Library Associations campaign information in Council libraries.
4. THAT Council take a leading role in activating the campaign locally.