

Item 3.1

Public Library Funding Cuts

File No: S117928

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

In the 2018/19 State Budget, the NSW Government cut current funding to public libraries by five per cent and cut access to all infrastructure funding for metropolitan areas.

This is despite the fact that NSW public libraries receive the lowest per-capita funding from our State Government than any other state in Australia.

NSW councils are currently paying 92.5 per cent of the costs to operate public libraries, up from 77 per cent in 1980. In 2015-16, NSW State Government funding for public libraries was only \$26.5M compared to a contribution of \$341.1M from Local Government.

Per capita funding for libraries has not kept pace with the increased cost of operating libraries, given the increased range of services they are expected to provide.

Adding to the issue is the fact that the total funding available through the NSW Public Library Funding Strategy is not indexed to population growth or to CPI. This has contributed to the ongoing attrition of State Government funding.

All State Governments since 1980 must share the blame for this current funding situation. Successive commitments to comprehensively review state government library funding, made since 2011, have not been met.

The NSW Public Libraries Association has joined forces with Local Government NSW to raise awareness of library funding in the lead up to the 2019 NSW State election.

The *Renew Our Libraries* campaign will be rolled out over the next 8 months to persuade the Government that its network of 368 public libraries has reached a funding flashpoint and is at risk of imminent service reduction.

The City of Sydney runs nine library branches and two library link services. In the last five years we invested more than \$111M to add new collections, technology and building infrastructure. Our library members have access to more than 400,000 books, CDs and DVDs, free Wi-Fi and free public computing, and can attend a range of intergenerational programs and events.

More than 1.2 million people visit our libraries each year, borrowing over 1.3 million items. Our libraries also provide services to visitors from outside our area - more than 30 per cent of members live outside the City of Sydney.

We are constantly looking to improve our services and respond to the needs of our library users. In recent years we've upgraded technology, improved facilities, introduced self-service kiosks, expanded our collections and improved customer service.

Later this year, we will open our new state of the art library in Green Square. It will feature a dedicated children's area, community and meeting rooms, a technology suite, a music rehearsal room, a collection of up to 40,000 items and a café.

Another new library at Darling Square is expected to open in early 2019 and will feature a collection of approximately 30,000 items, a children's area and an IQ-Hub programming space which includes event rooms and makerspace.

The success of the *Renew Our Libraries* campaign will rely heavily on the support of NSW councils, their libraries and their communities. I recommend we join other councils and support this campaign to urge the Government to reverse the ongoing deterioration of state funding for public libraries.

We must ensure that local councils will not be forced to continue meeting the funding shortfall.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council endorse the NSW Public Libraries Association and Local Government NSW campaign, *Renew Our Libraries*;
- (B) the Lord Mayor write to the Hon. Don Harwin, Minister for the Arts and the Hon. Walt Secord, Shadow Minister for the Arts, calling for bi-partisan support for the provision of a significant increase in state funding for NSW public libraries, supported by a sustainable future funding model;
- (C) Council take a leading role in activating the campaign locally;
- (D) Council endorse the distribution of *Renew Our Libraries* information in our libraries and support other actions arising from the initiative; and
- (E) Council formally advise the NSW Public Libraries Association and Local Government NSW that the City has endorsed this campaign.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor