

NSW PUBLIC LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION LIBRARY FUNDING CAMPAIGN

Executive Update to NSW Councils – November 2014

A lot has happened since the last update in mid September as the NSW Library Funding Campaign moves into the critical pre-election phase.

The NSWPLA Campaign Committee has been concentrating on the following forums and events:

- A response was provided by the NSW Public Libraries Association (NSWPLA) to a “*Letter to the Editor*” from Minister for the Arts, Hon. Troy Grant on 30 September 2014, which challenged the case put by the NSWPLA and LGNSW in relation to the state government shifting costs for the provision of public library services and the need for a more sustainable funding model. The Minister implied that the \$1.85 per capita funding set in 1997 had increased to \$2.74 by including other elements of recurrent funding, whilst also attempting to discredit the discussion about the historical 50:50 funding split between State and Local Governments that was provided to some libraries in NSW during the formative years of the Library Act. The response circulated by NSWPLA included the following information, which provides the real funding picture:
 - *Section 10 of the NSW Library Act 1939 specifies a number of services that “local libraries” must provide in order to be eligible for State Government funding. Whilst the exact number of NSW libraries that historically received 50% funding from the State Government may be debatable, this percentage was probably around 5 times higher on average than it currently is. Regardless of this early funding history, the fact remains that the State Government is currently contributing less than 7% of the total operating cost of libraries across the state to fulfil the requirements of its own library legislation.*
 - *In 1980, the State Government contributed **\$1.67 per capita** (or 23.6% of total funding) to NSW libraries, whilst Local Government contributed **\$5.43 per capita** (or the remaining 76.4% of total funding).*
 - *In 2012-13 (the most recent period for which both State Government and Local Government figures are available), the State Government contributed **\$3.63 per capita** (or 7.15% of total funding) to NSW libraries, whilst Local Government contributed **\$47.23 per capita** (or the remaining 92.85% of total funding). This means that in the 33 years between 1980 and 2013, State Government contributions increased 2.2 times whilst **Local Government contributions increased 8.7 times.***
 - *The current State Government funding model consists of three parts:*
 - *\$1.85 per capita (legislated);*
 - *Disability & Geographic Adjustment Fund (DGA), which is calculated on a combination of per capita funding and the application of 5 disability index factors;*
 - *Fixed term funding programs, including the recently announced 4-year Public Library Infrastructure Grants program (which provides \$416,123 less in 2014-15 than the previous Library Development Grants program, which it replaced, did in 2005/06).*

- The amounts of **\$1.85 per person** and **\$2.74 per person** quoted in the Minister's Letter to the Editor refer to two different aspects of the funding model
 - The **\$1.85** is the **legislated amount** that the State Government is required to provide for every person in NSW, and forms part of the total annual recurrent library funding for NSW councils. This amount has not increased since it was introduced in 1997.
 - The **\$2.74** is the **average combined amount of recurrent funding per person** that is provided to NSW councils in 2014-15. It includes \$1.85 in per capita funding and \$0.89 in DGA funding. **The amount of recurrent funding per person provided by the State Government to Local Government is 2 cents less than it was when the current Public Library Funding Strategy was implemented in 2005/06.**
- A very successful NSWPLA trade stand at the Local Government NSW Conference in Coffs Harbour (19 – 21 October). This initiative provided an important opportunity to engage with Councillors and Council Officers about the library funding issue. Representatives on the stand, Cr Veronique Marchandea (Joint President of NSWPLA), Carolyn Elmes (Information & Outreach Team Leader at Coffs Harbour Library) and Veronica Lunn (Campaign Coordinator) provided a broad cross-section of experience and perspectives for the benefit of conference delegates, many of whom called in to discuss this critical issue for Local Government. LGNSW and several councils, including Goulburn Mulwaree, Blacktown, Pittwater, Fairfield, Liverpool and Wyong, put motions to the Conference highlighting the concern across the state about the funding issue.
- A Pre-Election Forum was held on Tuesday 28 October at Customs House, Sydney. Ms Sonia Horner MP presented the Labor Party position on NSW public libraries, and Ms Jan Barham MLC presented the perspective of the Greens. Both speakers spoke of a strong commitment to advocate for a much better deal for NSW libraries, and answered questions from the floor. The Minister for the Arts declined the invitation to attend, choosing instead to address the NSWPLA Conference at Mudgee on 13 November.
- The annual NSWPLA conference at Mudgee on 11-14 November will provide an opportunity to further promote the Campaign. As noted in the previous paragraph, Minister for the Arts the Hon. Troy Grant, will be in attendance to address conference delegates. In addition, the NSWPLA Executive will provide a Campaign update and Campaign Committee members will be on hand to distribute promotional material for the proposed Day of Action (see below).
- A Day of Action is proposed for Friday 5 December to draw attention to the urgent need for increased library funding at the local level. Council support to enable their libraries to be involved with the Day of Action will assist to aggregate capacity across the state. The Campaign Committee will develop a Day of Action Kit to provide a range of activities that could be undertaken in libraries. The primary objectives of this initiative are to aggregate the support of the community for their libraries, demonstrate statewide local government unity about the funding issue, and attract the attention of the State Government – especially local Members of Parliament. After all, they are the ones standing for election and who need to be convinced that library funding **is** an election issue.
- The NSW Library Funding Campaign petition, which has attracted over 70,000 signatures since its launch on 7 April 2014, concluded on 30 September. The petition has been a major factor in gaining the attention of the Government to both the value of public libraries and the need for increased state funding. Apart from the tabling of remaining petition signatures in Parliament, the conclusion of the Campaign petition strategy presents a perfect opportunity to encourage community supporters to make representations to local Members of Parliament about their support for their local library. It is this community groundswell that is needed to complement the extensive rollout of Campaign strategies to date.

The focus of the NSW Library Funding Campaign continues to be the need for a sustainable future for the NSW public library network. The current state funding model for NSW councils to provide public library services is outdated and needs to be urgently reviewed. Increased funding and a more targeted way to distribute funds is required.

Key stakeholders from NSWPLA and Local Government NSW unanimously agree on the key principles that recognise:

- that no council should receive less funding
- the need for a guaranteed base payment to small councils
- councils that have greater identified demographic and geographic challenges in library service provision
- the advantages of and opportunities for regional cooperation.

A new approach is necessary to ensure that NSW councils are able to continue to maintain and develop quality library collections, services and programs for the people of NSW.

The current pre-State Government election phase is the most critical period of the NSW Library Funding Campaign. It is the time for all NSW councils to redouble their Campaign lobbying efforts. This really is the “last-ditch effort” to ensure that NSW public libraries achieve the sustainable state government funding base that they so badly need to continue providing current levels of service to communities across the state. We are seeing examples of library service reductions in many NSW councils, ranging from decreased levels or qualifications of staff; diminished collections budgets; shortened opening hours, less public programs, and reduced mobile library service schedules. **Without increased state funding, the situation is likely to deteriorate further.**

The focus areas of the Campaign for November and December are:

- To ensure that councils across the state are updated on the status and progress of the Campaign. They are not only a major stakeholder in the library funding discussion, but also the major beneficiary of any funding increases resulting from the campaign. A draft report is attached for presentation to the next available Council meeting. The content may be amended to suit local requirements – the main thing is that all councils know about the great progress that they have contributed to so far.
- Supporting the Day of Action in libraries across the state on 5 December 2014 with the primary objective of engaging community members and attracting the attention of local media.
- Encouraging councils, community groups and individuals to make representations to their local Member of Parliament about supporting the urgent need for increased and sustainable funding for NSW libraries. Community agitation at the local level will ensure that the library funding issue becomes a relevant issue for MPs – after all, it is them who are seeking re-election in March 2015.

This Campaign is about the future of your library. With only 4 months remaining until the state election, please make a commitment to the continuation of your fantastic support!

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Graham Smith
Joint Chairperson – NSWPLA



Cr Veronique Marchand
Joint Chairperson - NSWPLA