

ITEM 2 STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR NSW PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The NSW Public Libraries Association's 2018-19 *Renew Our Libraries* campaign was successful, delivering an increase of \$60M in State funding for NSW public libraries over the quadrennial period 2019-20 to 2022-23.

Wollongong City Council and Wollongong City Libraries contributed to the success of this campaign through participation in a range of advocacy activities. The campaign is now entering a second phase and this report seeks Council endorsement for continued participation.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Formal endorsement of Wollongong City Council's support for the Public Libraries NSW *Renew Our Libraries Campaign Phase II* campaign to secure a sustainable funding model for NSW public libraries in perpetuity.
- 2 Council make representation to local State Members in relation to the need for a sustainable State funding model for the ongoing provision of public library services.
- 3 Council write to the Hon Don Harwin MLC, Minister for the Arts, and the Hon Walt Secord MLC, Shadow Minister for the Arts, calling for bi-partisan support for Consumer Price Index (CPI) indexation of State funding for NSW public libraries, as well as legislation of all elements of the 2019-20 to 2022-23 NSW State funding model.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Lucia Scioscia, Manager Library + Community Services (Acting)

Authorised by: Jenny Thompson, Director Community Services - Creative + Innovative City (Acting)

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.

BACKGROUND

The NSW Public Libraries Association's *Renew Our Libraries Campaign Phase I* rolled out during 2018-19 and was successful in delivering an increase of \$60M in State funding to NSW public libraries over the quadrennial period 2019-20 to 2022-23. This was the largest single increase in NSW Government funding of libraries since the NSW Library Act was introduced in 1939.

This outcome was achieved because of the strong support of councils, libraries and communities across the State. Over 80% of NSW councils formally endorsed *Renew Our Libraries* through council resolutions.

PROPOSAL

The NSW Public Libraries Association has requested the support of NSW councils in its advocacy to the NSW Government to develop a sustainable funding model for NSW libraries.

To this end, the *Renew Our Libraries Phase II* campaign was launched in late 2019. Information concerning the campaign is available on the campaign website: <https://renewourlibraries.com.au>.

The NSW Public Libraries Association has engaged media and advocacy company, Essential Media, to administer the campaign, the objectives of which are to gain agreement from the NSW Government to:

- index NSW Government grants to public libraries in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in perpetuity. Without indexation the actual value of State funding for NSW libraries will decline over time, leaving NSW councils to either meet the shortfall or reduce services;

- protect the funding commitment by enshrining all elements of the new state funding model in legislation, through the Library Act and/or the Library Regulation. Currently, only the per-capita component of the funding model is legislated, leaving 46% of the total funding for NSW libraries at risk.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2028 Goal 4 “We are a connected and engaged community” and Goal 5 “We have a healthy community in a liveable city”.

It specifically delivers on core business activities as detailed in the 2018-2021 Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

- 4.2.3.1.2 “Develop and implement programs and projects that support intergenerational interaction and integration”
- 5.1.3.1.3 “Offer a program of activities in libraries to celebrate and engage with our diverse community”
- 5.1.3.1.4 “Deliver tailored library programs to facilitate access and participation of people with a disability”
- 5.1.5.1.1 “Investigate opportunities to enhance library multimedia and digital services”

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The NSW Government provided \$497,128 in grant funding to Wollongong City Council for library services for the 2018-19 financial year. This subsidises Wollongong City Libraries’ total annual budget of approximately \$11.474M.

Grant funding for 2019-20 will be \$587,043 – an increase of \$89,915. This increase in funding is based on \$529,374 per capita funding (\$2.45 per capita – an increase from \$1.85 in past years) plus \$7,669 (disadvantage factor) plus \$50,000 (flat rate).

CONCLUSION

The success of *Renew Our Libraries Phase II* will mean that the NSW Public Libraries Association, its member councils and libraries across the State can direct their funds and efforts to the ongoing support and development of high-quality library services for NSW communities.

This is an opportunity to lock in the historic 2019 State funding increase for NSW libraries, thereby ensuring the future prosperity of the NSW public library network.

It is recommended that Council supports the NSW Public Libraries Association by formally endorsing *Renew Our Libraries Campaign Phase II* to secure a sustainable funding model for NSW public libraries in perpetuity.