



MEDIA RELEASE – 20 JUNE 2018

PUBLIC LIBRARIES APPALLED BY NSW GOVERNMENT FUNDING CUTS

Public libraries across NSW were shocked and appalled by the NSW Government's decision to slash library funding by 18% in its recent State Budget and have already flagged that vital and much-loved services would be cut as a result.

Cr Dallas Tout, President of NSW Public Libraries Association (NSW PLA), representing a network of 368 public libraries across the State said that these new cuts constituted a major blow to library services that were highly valued by local communities.

"NSW public libraries receive over 35 million visits every year and these appalling funding cuts will result in shorter opening hours and cuts to programs that the community love, like the popular children's story times."

"We'll see reductions in staffing, smaller collections and cuts to important outreach services like mobile libraries."

"Unfortunately, many of our libraries will be forced to wind back services used by community members who are already marginalised, including young families, older people, refugees and migrant communities, and people without access to technology."

"For a government that claims to be committed to supporting education and improving children's literacy, this is a shameful act."

Mr Tout said that before this new funding cut, the NSW Government contribution to public library funding was already at historic lows.

"At just 7.8% of total funding, the NSW Government contribution to libraries was already the lowest of every state in Australia, and far behind Victoria (18%) and Queensland (12%)."

"This most recent budget cut further widens the gap, unfairly placing an additional funding burden onto local councils whose budgets are already stretched providing local infrastructure."

Mr Tout said that the \$23.5 million provided for public libraries in the 2018-19 Budget is the lowest state government contribution since 1999-2000 when the state contribution was \$17.9 million, effectively winding back the library funding clock by almost 20 years.

"I invite the NSW Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Don Harwin, to inform NSW Councils how he anticipates they will provide 2018 library service levels in an environment of increasing demand on a 20-year old budget allocation."

"This drastic budget cut also flies in the face of the recommendation of the NSW Government's very own expert panel, the Library Council of NSW which, in consultation with the State Library of NSW and the NSW Public Libraries Consultative Committee, recommended an increase in public library funding for 2018-19."

"It also stands in stark contrast to the NSW Labor policy released on 26 March 2018, which pledges to increase the overall funding for NSW public libraries by \$50 million in its first term of government."

"We call on the NSW Government not just to urgently reverse this decision, but to significantly increase funding to public libraries."

13.1 **Notice of Motion - Library Funding Cuts.DOC**

"Our network of 368 public libraries across metropolitan and regional NSW are vital infrastructure in supporting education, literacy and community engagement."

"We need an urgent increase in funding and a commitment to a sustainable funding model to make sure our libraries can continue to provide the services the community needs and to build the libraries of the future."

Cr Dallas Tout, President of NSW Public Libraries Association is available for comment and interview

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