



Cr Win Gaffney, Mayor of Lane Cove
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The Hon. Barry O'Farrell, MP
Premier
Minister for Western Sydney
Level 40 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

24 July 2011

Dear Premier

I am writing to you in my capacity as the President of the NSW Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (NSW MPLA). The NSW MPLA is the peak body representing the interests of public libraries in the greater Sydney region. This region comprises 43 local government areas serving 67% of the State's population.

NSW MPLA members welcome the review of library funding proposed before the election by Anthony Roberts, then Shadow Minister for Volunteering and the Arts. Funding of public libraries decreased under the last government despite the increasing demands being placed on public libraries for a whole range of services, including those services and initiatives provided by the State Government. My members believe that the State funding of public libraries needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. Furthermore, it is critical that if public libraries are to continue to provide high quality services to their communities that the growing imbalance between State and local government funding is addressed. The funding of public libraries represents great value for the State Government. The 2008 *Enriching communities: The value of public libraries in New South Wales* report found that NSW public libraries generate at least \$4.24 of economic value for each dollar expended, and \$2.82 of economic activity for each dollar expended.

The decision to provide \$2 million in additional funding for regional libraries and \$2 million to fast-track the roll-out of wireless hotspots in rural libraries was encouraging but additional funding is needed for all NSW public libraries – including metropolitan libraries.

Many metropolitan libraries are required to provide additional services due to the needs of their multicultural communities (e.g. multiple Language collections, Literacy resources, Homework help programs, English Conversation Classes, etc), growing numbers of Seniors (e.g. Large Print &

Audiobook collections, Home Library Services, Internet & social media workshops, etc) and children with working parents (Storytimes, Lapsit programs, school holiday programs, homework help, etc.).

With many residents living in high and medium density housing metropolitan libraries are becoming the lounge room of their communities. Library patrons expect to relax, work, be entertained, study and access high speed wireless Internet in their public library. Unfortunately not all metropolitan libraries can provide wireless access and many more provide inadequate bandwidth to meet their communities' needs.

Metropolitan public libraries are concerned about resource sharing and achieving best value for their councils. Since the 1970s an Inter Library Loans Van Service has operated between Sydney metropolitan public libraries, the State Library of NSW and some universities. From July 2011 the State Library of NSW will manage this service. It would greatly assist metropolitan libraries if the NSW State Government could provide further financial assistance for this important service.

NSW MPLA would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how public libraries can in partnership with the State Government serve as a service point for State Government services.

I look forward to your reply and the opportunity to work with you to devise a new funding framework that delivers benefits to both the State Government and to local councils.

Yours sincerely



Clr Win Gaffney, Mayor of Lane Cove

President, NSW Metropolitan Public Libraries Association