

6.4 SUPPORTING OUR LIBRARIES

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Acknowledges that Monash libraries offer an excellent standard of service to the community and congratulates Monash Public Library Service staff on their professionalism, creativity and dedication;*
- 2. Notes that Victorian public libraries produce \$4.30 in value to the community for every \$1 spent¹;*
- 3. Notes that even Victorians who do not use public libraries have indicated a willingness to fund libraries at more than one and a half times current expenditure;²*
- 4. Notes that per capita expenditure on public libraries in 2019-20 was \$39.34 in Victoria, lower than any other state or territory and 21.5% lower than the national average of \$50.11³;*
- 5. Notes that Monash has a higher proportion of active library borrowers than average across Victoria⁴;*
- 6. Notes that our spend per head of population in 2019-20 was \$26.97, significantly less than the average across similar Councils (\$35.51) and less than the average across all Victorian Councils (\$32.10)⁵;*
- 7. Requests that Officers prepare a report on the benefits to service delivery that could be realised by increasing funding of the Monash Public Library Service to at least the average level of funding provided across Victorian councils, and that this report be presented to Council no later than November 2021.*

BACKGROUND

Our library service has played a vital role in providing community connection and community outreach during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its value has never been more clear.

Libraries have always been very important to our community, consistently rating very highly when compared to many other Council services and facilities in our Annual Community Satisfaction Survey. Libraries hold a perennial 'top 10' place out of all Councils services and facilities in the Survey each year.

¹ https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/519d29_b2c87818b8ef4491be8dde83b1f1c227.pdf

² <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Dollars-sense-public-libraries-report.pdf>

³ <https://www.nsla.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/nsla-publibstats-2019-20.pdf>

⁴ <https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/>

⁵ <https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/>

However, satisfaction with Council's library service has declined by 2% in the 2021 Survey, resulting in Council recording a satisfaction rating that is now less than the 2021 metropolitan average. This is also our lowest satisfaction rating for our library service in more than 5 years.

CONCLUSION

Our community values our library service highly. Our staff are skilled, creative, innovative and passionate. They achieve a lot with relatively little, but we should not be complacent. In order to best support our staff in serving the community it is important for Council to consider the appropriateness of current long-term funding arrangements for our library services.