

## 2.2 LIBRARIES CHANGE LIVES STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-2021 (JS)

Responsible Director: Natalie Reiter

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council provides a letter of support to join the Public Libraries Victoria and State Library of Victoria's advocacy campaign Libraries Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021, calling for the State Government to allocate additional funding in the following three priority areas:*

- 1. An additional \$10 million investment over four years in new resources to support libraries to drive education and wellbeing outcomes.*
- 2. A \$20 million increase over four years in the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program.*
- 3. A further \$15 million investment over four years in operational funding to account for CPI and population growth.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Libraries Change Lives is a State-wide advocacy campaign led by Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) and the State Library Victoria (SLV) that highlights the benefits public libraries bring to their communities by providing education, combatting feelings of isolation, and supporting the wellbeing of Victorians at every stage of their lives.

This report seeks Council's endorsement to join the Libraries Change Lives advocacy campaign for additional funding for public libraries in three key areas (operational, infrastructure and education & wellbeing outcomes), by providing a letter of support for inclusion in the PLV and SLV *Libraries Change Lives 2019-2020 Budget Submission* proposal to the State Government.

### **BACKGROUND**

The public library is a trusted, inclusive and safe public place for the community providing opportunities for community engagement and lifelong learning. While State funding to libraries has increased in absolute terms each year, per capita funding (adjusted for inflation) has continued to decrease each year, from \$6.74 in 2013-14 to \$6.04 in 2018-19). Additional funding to support and grow service offerings is crucial.

PLV, the peak library representing the State's 276 public libraries and SLV, is conducting a state-wide campaign about the value and impact of Victoria's public libraries, and the role they play in healthy communities. This campaign is called Libraries Change Lives.

The campaign is asking the State Government for additional funding in the 2020-2021 Budget in three priority areas:

1. Provide \$10M for new resources to support libraries to drive education and well-being outcomes, including more children and youth librarians; a two year social worker pilot program in public libraries, and updated STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) resources.

2. Boost operational funding through an additional \$15 million dollar investment in operational funding over four years to account for CPI and state population growth to ensure library services keep pace with demand.
3. Further invest in library infrastructure through a \$20 million increase in the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program to better deliver library infrastructure, including digital enhancements.

“These investments will help to ensure that Victoria’s public libraries can continue to improve education rates, deliver innovative responses to increasingly complex social challenges, contribute to community wellbeing and deliver cost savings to the Victorian economy” – Libraries Change Lives – An initiative of Victoria’s public libraries – Victorian State Budget 2020-2021.

### ***DISCUSSION***

Victorian Public libraries are busy community hubs that welcome more than 30.5 million visitors a year, lend more than 45 million books and other items, and log more than 15.5 million hours of Wi-Fi use across the state. For every dollar invested in libraries, \$4.30 of benefit is delivered (SGS Economics, Libraries Work! 2018).

Public libraries are primarily funded by local government with the Victorian government making an average 15 percent (2016-2017 contribution.) While a year on year funding increase for library operations and collections is evident, libraries are experiencing a decrease in funding on a per capita basis.

Increased operational funding from State Government over the next four-year to account for CPI, will help ensure that library services, including Monash Public Library Service, keeps pace with community demand and expectations of a contemporary library service, in particular around lifelong learning and digital literacies.

The Living Libraries Infrastructure Program assists Councils to meet the needs of their communities through the funding of public library infrastructure project. Support for additional \$20 million to fund improved library infrastructure, including digital enhancements, will bring significant benefits to communities. Libraries that have received Living Libraries Grants reported greater visitation rates and user satisfaction.

A \$10 million investment over four years will support libraries to drive education and wellbeing outcomes, including more children’s and youth librarians, a two-year social worker pilot program in public libraries, and updated STEM resources. This funding would benefit Monash families, helping to ensure children start school ready to learn and remain engaged with books, reading and STEM throughout their school years.

### ***SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

Victorian public libraries remain an integral part of the social fabric of their communities and continue to act as a builder of community capacity and contributor to social harmony. Monash Public Library Service offers safe, inclusive and valued public spaces with opportunities for lifelong learning and social connection for all ages aligned with Monash’s diverse demographic, and contributing to the building of a healthy and resilient community. Supporting the Libraries

Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021 will help secure ongoing social benefits for residents of Monash.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

The letter of support for the Libraries Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021 is in keeping with The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006 and its four themes of –

- (i) freedom;
- (ii) respect;
- (iii) equality; and
- (iv) dignity.

### **CONSULTATION**

Community engagement in the Libraries Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021 will be two-pronged:

- a A template letter will be available for local library supporters and users to ask their local MP to support the State Government budget Bid.
- b Monash Public Library Service will collect stories from library users on how libraries have changed their lives.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Libraries Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021 does not have financial implications to Council.

### **CONCLUSION**

Public Libraries benefit the whole community as they are the community living room. Public Libraries build capacity, social inclusion and provide meaningful activities that support creativity and lifelong learning. The Monash Public Library Service curates not only collections and spaces, but provides a range of programs and services that builds a more resilient City.

The Libraries Change Lives State Budget Submission 2020-2021 is designed to support the critical work of public libraries, especially over the next four years.

It is recommended that Council support this Budget Submission to the State Government for additional funding in three priority areas, with a letter of support to the Minister for Local Government the Honourable Adem Somyureck MLC.