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developing the  
campaign strategy.



# A FAIR DEAL FOR NSW PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**T**here is currently a high degree of uncertainty as to the level of ongoing state government funding for public libraries in NSW. The NSW Public Library Associations (NSWPLA), representing country and metropolitan libraries, is coordinating a unified and targeted campaign to bring the situation to the urgent attention of politicians.

The intent of the NSW Library Act in 1939 was for equal funding from state and local governments to provide library services. Since that time local government has increasingly carried the funding burden and the situation has deteriorated significantly over the past few decades, impacting on the ability of public libraries to meet the needs of their communities and to maintain service levels.

## NSWPLA IS CALLING ON ALL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS TO ACTIVELY PLAY A PART IN THE CAMPAIGN.

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) and ALIA are supporting NSWPLA in this campaign and local supporters of public libraries and Friends groups have been engaged in the campaign.

Libraries throughout the state are collecting signatures on a petition which will be tabled in the Lower House if 10,000 signatures are collected. Many library managers are also making representation to members of Parliament and harnessing support at the local level from library users.

The NSW public library funding situation is an historic issue that has been ignored by successive NSW governments.

During the 2011 election campaign, the current NSW State Government made a pre-election commitment to undertake a comprehensive review of the quantum and allocation of funding for NSW public libraries. To date there has been no significant action by the government to meet this commitment.

In the absence of any government action the Library Council of NSW used the government's pre-election commitment as a trigger to convene a committee of representatives from the NSW Public Libraries Association (representing regional and rural councils and libraries), the NSW Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (representing metropolitan councils and libraries), and the State Library of NSW, to develop an evidence-based submission about public library funding in NSW.

In October 2012 the Library Council of NSW then provided a submission to the State Government called Reforming Public Library Funding. The evidence-based submission recommended a fairer, simplified and more transparent method for the distribution of funds.

Many NSW councils also wrote to Hon. George Souris, Minister for the Arts during 2012, urging the State Government to adopt the *Reforming Public Library Funding* strategy. Despite a high level of expectation that the NSW State Government would fulfil its pre-election undertaking to review and increase its funding allocation to NSW public libraries, this did not eventuate in the 2013-2014 state budget.

Now is the time for a strong and united voice to seek to influence both the 2014–15 and 2015–16 NSW state government budgets. A critical success factor for the campaign will be action at the grass roots level in both rural and metropolitan areas.

NSWPLA is calling on all library and information professionals to actively play a part in the campaign.

A campaign web page has been added to the NSWPLA website at [www.nswpla.org.au](http://www.nswpla.org.au). All library lovers are encouraged to complete the online survey on the website and sign the hard copy petition that can be found in NSW public libraries.

Campaign tools for NSW library managers are also available via a restricted portal. Visit the NSWPLA website or contact the following NSWPLA representatives for further information.

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## THE KEY ISSUES

- NSW receives the lowest per-capita funding for public libraries from the State Government of all states in Australia.
- State Government expenditure on public libraries has decreased as a proportion of total public library expenditure from 23% in 1980 to 7% in 2013. NSW Local Government councils are currently paying 93% of the costs to operate public libraries in NSW (which are governed by state legislation).
- The NSW Public Library Funding Strategy is not indexed to population growth or the consumer price index (CPI). This means that:

1. Funds have been taken from the Library Development Grant pool over a number of years to meet the increased per capita subsidy costs (and the per-capita component of the Disability and Geographic Adjustment fund) as the NSW population increases each year. If the government had not provided an "additional" \$2m to maintain the Country Public Libraries fund contribution in 2013–14, there would be no funding left for Library Development Grants.

2. If the current funding situation is not addressed urgently, NSW councils will suffer a reduction in their Disability and Geographic Adjustment payments to meet the increase in legislated per-capita subsidy costs for additional NSW population.

## LIBRARY L♥VERS V<sup>①</sup>TE TOO!

### Fair Deal for NSW Public Libraries INCREASE STATE FUNDING

The State Government contribution to funding public libraries in NSW has now reached a crisis point. Without immediate action to provide adequate and more equitable state funding, public libraries in NSW will be at significant risk of service cuts.



If you are a Library Lover you can help!

**NSW Public Library  
Associations**

Visit us at [www.nswpla.org.au](http://www.nswpla.org.au) or talk to your local library staff about how you can become a local library champion.

## We can solve your information problems



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