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The Secretary
 House of Representatives Economics, Finance and Public Administration Committee
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2601

House of representatives Standing Committee on
 Economics, Finance and Public Administration
 Submission No: 62
 Date Received: 26/7/02 22nd July 2002
 Secretary: *Burdell*

Dear Madam/Sir

The Richmond-Tweed Regional Library represents four Local Government Councils in Northern New South Wales: the Shires of Ballina, Byron, and Tweed, together with the City of Lismore. The Regional Library wishes to highlight a number of areas where significant cost shifting is occurring in relation to public library services.

In New South Wales in 1980 approximately \$36 million was spent on public library services. Of this total, Local Government contributed \$27.5 million (76%) and the NSW State Government around \$8.5 million (24%). In 1998-99, \$208.4 million was spent on public library services. Local Government contributed \$191.8 million (92%), and NSW State Government \$16.7 million (8%), This is a major cost shift to Local Government which is unsustainable.

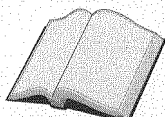
During the same period, 1980 – 1989, membership of New South Wales Public Libraries increased from 35% of total population to 49%. (State Library of New South Wales Statistics)

Thus while New South Wales residents increased their use of public libraries by 40%, the State Government has dramatically reduced its support for public libraries. **Local Government can not keep making up the State Government's shortfall**

This major cost-shifting by State Government in respect of public library services is clearly illustrated in the following table:

Year	Total State Government Expenditure	Total Local Government Expenditure
1980	\$ 8.5M (23.6%)	\$ 27.5M (73.4%)
1990	\$13.1M (12.6%)	\$ 90.9M (87.4%)
1998/99	\$16.7M (8.1%)	\$191.8M (91.9%)
2000/01	\$19.7M (8.9%) (Actual)	\$200.0M (91.1%) (Estimate based on 1998/1999)

Providing Free Public Library Service to the Communities of:



Ballina Shire
 (02) 6686 1277



Byron Shire
 (02) 6685 8540



Lismore City
 (02) 6621 2464



Tweed Shire
 (02) 6670 2427

It is widely acknowledged that Australia must educate all residents to become active participants in the new knowledge economy. For residents of all ages the free public library network provides the one recognised, respected and trusted agency, with free access, where individuals can inform and educate themselves at their own pace. The local library is the true centre for life-long learning.

Unfortunately, in New South Wales, where State Government subsidy of public libraries is less than half the National average, libraries, especially in country areas, are struggling to survive. Many communities are without any public library at all, and many have small and inadequate branch libraries open only a few hours a week. This is a disgraceful position for the premier State, and is due entirely to the steady decline in real terms of the State Government subsidy.

The New South Wales 'Country Public Libraries Association' has undertaken research into the funding provided by the state governments in Victoria and Queensland, the two States most similar to NSW. Care has been taken to compare the total actual expenditure by the three state governments on their public libraries. The table below clearly demonstrates two major points which public libraries in NSW have been grappling with for many years:

1. The NSW State Government spends considerable less per capita on NSW public libraries in comparison with Victoria and Queensland, *and*
2. The NSW State Government spends **less in actual dollar terms** on its public libraries, compared with Victoria and Queensland, even though NSW has a significantly larger population and a large number of rural and remote communities.

State	Population June 2000*	Total State Government Expenditure 2000-01**	Per Capita Expenditure 2000-01#
Victoria	4,765,856	\$ 24,161,000	\$5.07
Queensland	3,566,356	\$ 20,304,000	\$5.69
NSW	6,463,455	\$ 19,670,000##	\$3.04

* From **Population by Age and Sex**, June 2000, ABS publication 3201.0

** Excludes the costs for the Public Libraries Branches/Divisions in the respective state libraries

The per capita figures have been calculated by dividing the total state government spending on public libraries in each state by the total population of that state

The NSW state government expenditure for 2000-01 includes :

1. \$2.5M provided from the Department of Information Technology & Management for the NSW.net project,
2. \$0.5M provided to improve library collections across the State,
3. \$ 0.5M provided in additional recurrent funding for public libraries

This demonstrates a very clear case of how the NSW State Government has been shifting the costs of providing public library services to local government authorities. NSW has a larger population and a greater need for additional state

government funds to address the needs of its communities, particularly in rural and regional NSW.

Public Libraries play a major role in the economies of their community. In particular they strengthen and empower communities by their major contribution to Social Capital, by :

- informing residents of local community past history and current activities
- providing premises which are recognised as universally accessible, safe, trustworthy, and reliable to all
- promoting connection between community members of all age groups and from all walks of life
- encouraging tolerance of diversity
- ensuring participation and engagement within the local community
- providing an 'entry point' to newcomers to the community
- providing and promoting opportunities for fee-free life-long learning.
- providing access to information on State and Federal Government programmes, services, and initiatives.

I could provide further, more detailed information, but unfortunately the very limited time allowed for Responses to this Enquiry makes this impossible.

I would like to protest at the totally inadequate time allowed for Responses: many Local Government Councils would not even have had time to place this item on their Agenda for adequate Council deliberation. The cynical might suggest that the time has been deliberately been made inadequate so as to limit responses.

Yours faithfully



Martin Field
Regional Library Manager