



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into ACT Libraries

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From: Rose Costelloe
To: [LA Committee - ETCS](#)
Subject: Library inquiry
Date: Friday, 21 September 2018 1:02:37 PM

Dear Brianna

I am writing in response to invitations for submissions to the ACT Parliamentary Inquiry into our libraries.

First I would like to state what I believe is the most salient point about libraries: they are free and that means books - and now DVDs, magazines, music and so on - are free, to borrow and read, look at and listen to. And although this may seem obvious and uninteresting, for people who have few financial resources, it is crucial. Without literacy, people are at extreme disadvantage in our society and culture in many, many ways. In addition to the necessity of literacy for our day to day practical needs, literacy also opens up a dimension of imaginative and playful enjoyment and pleasure as well as learning.

Of course if a patron damages or loses a book, costs of repair or replacement must be sought. But otherwise, the worlds of literature, non-fiction, self-help, biographies and so on are freely available through libraries, to people of all ages, backgrounds and financial circumstances, to read, navigate a way around the areas of our lives that require reading and writing, and enjoy, learn and imagine. The latter, I believe, is a pivotal part and necessary aspect of being human, being able to imagine.

I would like to congratulate our librarians, who arrange bookshelves of works relevant to, for example, NAIDOC week and gardening, politics, fashion and a whole range of different themes. I have found gems in these special selections, extraordinary books I did not know existed. And I am a member of Gleebooks since our own Electric Shadows bookshop closed down and get their monthly review of new books. The expert knowledge of our librarians is essential and enables us to draw on their knowledge and expertise on many diverse and important as well as trivial issues and areas of life.

The activities our libraries run each quarter are wonderful. I know a number of young mothers who are committed patrons of Storytime with their small children and have myself attended a number of computing classes at Belconnen library. I think the responsiveness of our Library Service to our requests is also exemplary.

I took up a suggestion of one of my fellow members of the ACT Storyteller's Guild: to talk with libraries about holding a joint celebration of International Storytelling Day. I was met with enthusiasm by the staff I spoke to, and some sessions ensued. Unfortunately, I was unable to take part once the program got underway, as one of my family fell gravely ill and this took me away from Canberra. My colleagues who did attend and tell stories told me they thought it would have helped numbers of audience members, if more publicity had been available for the sessions. I think at one stage, one person suggested morning tea but am not sure if this eventuated or not. I imagine that financial resources underpin the availability of these things and that lack of resources may have been behind the lack of publicity and finally calling the program off.

Our family has been involved with libraries for a long time. My father was instrumental, as a Councillor with Northcote City Council in the early 1950s, in establishing a municipal library in Northcote, which is still there. Following that, he was also pivotal in advocating and lobbying St Kilda Council for a library when we moved to our grandmother's house in Elwood in the mid-50s, and this was successful. And again, libraries in St Kilda still remain.

I visited the extraordinary and gorgeous newly designed library in Double Bay by chance a couple of years ago. When I came back I enthusiastically suggested to the staff of the library I go to most frequently, that they also visit and undertake professional development with that and the new library I also heard about in Bankstown. Sadly I was told this was not a possibility but the librarian I spoke to said she would endeavour to visit them at some stage in her own time. That is a shame as I was told at the Double Bay library that they catered for large numbers of High School students, responding flexibly to their needs by staying open till 10pm during the lead up to the HSC exams and by providing special group study areas for them when they initially planned the design of the library. My granddaughter would study there at times, travelling by bus from Paddington where they lived at the time and she also studies now she is at uni, at the Mitchell Library.

The light, the wall of plants and stepped levels for different purposes at that Woollahra library made me think our libraries were not as fabulous as I previously thought. Nevertheless, I think ours are wonderful and believe that a marvellous library is made up of books and great librarians. They are the most vital elements of a library. The rest, while great if it is new and shiny and up to date with IT needs and spaces, can wait for a government who realises the value of libraries to their constituency and is willing to fund them appropriately, enabling them to respond to changing times and needs and demographics whilst retaining the key core function of providing books for people to read.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to your inquiry. I will look forward to the outcomes.

Could you please acknowledge receipt of my submission and that I have done it in the way your require – or not? Thanks

Kind regards

Rose Costelloe

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