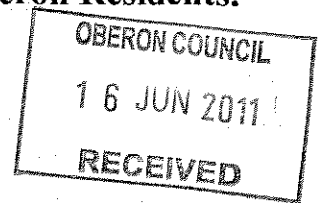


## OBERON COUNCIL 2011/2012 DRAFT BUDGET SUBMISSION PRESENTED BY FRIENDS OF OBERON LIBRARY

**Oberon Library has a membership of 3355, that's over 60% of Oberon Residents.**

**This submission addresses two main points of focus**

- Social Impact from withdrawal/erosion of services
- Alternative options for finance to maintain services.



The local library is the only "Cradle to Grave" **community** facility in Oberon and it is incumbent upon Council to offer this facility its **full** support. Oberon is a socially and environmentally isolated town with limited public transport options and as a result of business closures, dwindling employment opportunities. In economic down times libraries with highly accessible public facilities and knowledgeable staff are essential in maintaining community pride and cultural capital.

### WHAT DOES THE LIBRARY MEAN TO THE COMMUNITY OF OBERON

- A place to obtain reading or audio visual material at no cost, invaluable for fixed/low income earners whose entertainment and educational options are limited
- Somewhere to socialise and network, keep up with what's going on in and around town and become involved in the community, negates the problem of social isolation
- A quiet place to use the computers for homework and research with help at hand should it be required. For many these facilities are not always available at home
- Somewhere our young people can access the latest magazines and even spend computer game time. A place of learning, research, knowledge and fun.
- Over 50's access to computers at no cost
- Our library is the only safe, friendly and warm place that welcomes children waiting to be picked up from school, where they can use this time productively at no cost
- A port of call for visitors to town, with internet access at a reasonable cost and local information freely available. A source of community and service and local history information and you can talk to a real person with local knowledge
- A place where your community group can get together
- A haven when it's cold (great whilst waiting for partners to finish with appointments or shopping) nowhere else in town welcomes you without an obligation to spend money
- Story time for the younger members of our community
- Children's holiday workshops and events
- Provision of Interlibrary loans and support, vital for researchers, tertiary students and those who need to read books in languages other than English. Interlibrary loans are also invaluable for members of local book clubs that in turn expand horizons and provide opportunities for networking.
- A strong library has social benefits which translate into financial benefits in the long run e.g. higher literacy, IT skills, strong social networks which ultimately lead to lower crime rates, increased employment, better health and attract new residents and further development to the town
- Perhaps the most important part of our library is the efficient, helpful and friendly Library Manager and staff that we as a community value and are justly proud

**The downgrading of library resources, staff and capital will have a devastating social impact on the Oberon community!**

## AIM OF THIS SUBMISSION

### TO REQUEST THAT COUNCIL REVIEW THE PROPOSED CUTS TO THE LIBRARY BUDGET FOR 2011/12 WITH MINIMAL PROPOSED INCREASES ANNUALLY UNTIL 2015/2016

Whilst we recognise that budgetary restraint is necessary and can appreciate the effort Council staff has made in tabling a balanced draft document, we feel the cuts to the library budget as a whole are too drastic. Coupled with the fact that forecast increase up until 2015/16 is so minimal, this can only result in a gradual downgrading of the facility and an erosion of services offered to the residents of Oberon. A completely unsatisfactory outcome for both the library and the community.

**It cannot always be about money!! People Count**

#### THE REASONING:

**Budget for the purchasing of new library materials\*\*** whereas the figures in the proposed budget have been revised due to an incorrect 2010/2011 allocation (\$20000 stated, but correct figure is \$16000) there is still a proposed cut of \$6000 or just over 35%. The latest State Library Guidelines for public libraries published in 2009 recommend a baseline expenditure of \$3.95 per capita rising to \$5.39. This includes purchases of print materials such as books and magazines as well as audiovisual items like DVDs and talking books. Electronic databases are not included. Recommendations are based on the LGA population (5030). The current 2010/2011 budgetary allowance equates to \$3.46 per capita, already below baseline and the proposed budget for 2011/2012 \$2.33 per capita, falls far below the recommended baseline. To meet recommendations for even baseline resource funding, Council would need to budget at least \$19,868.50 for the above items. Considering that this report is already two years old, it must be assumed that the figures will continue to rise with the CPI

Source, ABS (Oberon Population) Learning Living Libraries - State Library (current guidelines)

**Staff Training** - Modern libraries operate in a rapidly changing environment. Advances in technology, growing user expectations of library service and changing social trends mean that training, networking and ideas sharing are imperative, especially in small isolated libraries such as Oberon. In the Draft Budget, staff training has been reduced by over two thirds from \$4825 to \$1500 a total cut of \$3325. This cut based on 2010/2011 figures obtained well before the end of this financial year. It is usually the case that library staff wherever possible access free accommodation with family or library associates and car pool to reduce transport costs. Unusually this last financial year, only one Central West Zone Training Meeting was held with no cost to council and Public Library conferences are now held every second year negating that expense this year. This will not be the case in the 2011/2012 budget period. Public libraries staff are fortunate in being able to access no cost training subsidised by the State Library but transport and sometimes accommodation is required and commercial training providers e.g. for the library management system are necessary and also come at a cost. The proposed budget will not allow for training adequate to keep the library services up to date and relevant to our residents. Oberon library has won both state and national awards for innovative programs and has provided cost effective solutions in the library, these have been made possible through the networking support and training obtained. The question Council need to decide upon is **“ Does the community of Oberon deserve a below average or an above average library facility?”**

**Cleaning** has been cut 20% from \$5100 to \$4000. Toilets that are used by the public are at present only cleaned twice per week and cleaning contractors do not have adequate time to maintain floors etc. Library staff frequently have to add cleaning to their duties to provide the public with a clean & orderly environment. This situation can only deteriorate as a result of the reduced funding allocation.

## Friends of Oberon Library Request That:

- Extra funds be found within the Draft Budget to reinstate the Book/Audiovisual purchasing component of the proposed library budget to at least 90% of its \$16000 former allocation, that is \$14500 - an increase of \$4500
- The cleaning component of the proposed library budget be adequate to at least ensure the library toilets be cleaned on a daily basis, which one would assume would be a basic OH&S requirement
- Staff training increase from \$1500 to at least \$2500 thus enabling more flexibility for Library Manager to attend the annual conference, the most important event in the NSW Libraries calendar. An increase of \$1000

We appreciate that this extra money has to come from somewhere. Though we do not profess to be proficient in organising a budget of the complexity presented in the Draft Budget Paper, by its very nature there is flexibility and deviation in a budget of this size. Budgets are estimates and we believe there is scope within such a document for the figures affecting the library to be reconsidered. Surely the library budget cut is such a small amount of money relative to the total budget, that the saving is insignificant and not proportional to the loss of cultural and social capital in the town.

**We draw your attention to the following statistics obtained from The Division of Local Government – Dept of Premier and Cabinet 2010, Local Council comparatives document.**

**Sources of income from continuing operations - 2008-2009 Rates and annual charges - Oberon 19.34% Group average 27.68% Less than group average (page 72)**

**User charges and fees - Oberon 29.02% Group average 17.58% Higher than group average (page 72)**

**Net recreation and leisure expenses per capita for Oberon \$97.90, Group average \$119.78 Less than group average (page 163)**

**Community Services expenses per capita for Oberon \$29.67 Group average was \$216.12 Less than group average (page 170)**

**OBERON COUNCIL IS BELOW AVERAGE IN SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY ...**

**AND YET IT WANTS TO CUT THESE SERVICES FURTHER!!!**

**We, the Friends of Oberon Library, believe that it is within the capacity of Council to review their budget and find the funds from other areas which are required to maintain the high standard of service provided to the residents by Oberon Library. Alternatively, we suggest that in a budget of this size there will be enough variation to accommodate our requests. We appreciate your consideration of this submission and look forward to your positive written response to our application.**



16/6/2011

**Kathy Sajowitz – President Friends of Oberon Library Inc.**

**For and behalf of the 34 financial members of Friends of Oberon Library Inc.**

