

HANSARD

21 APRIL 2010

PUBLIC LIBRARIES — FUNDING

137. Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I would first like to recognise people in the gallery from Ashdale Secondary College in the electorate of Wanneroo and from Halls Head Primary School.

I was pleased to host the minister in my electorate this morning, where we heard some very good news for libraries both in my electorate and Western Australia.

Can the minister please inform the house on this morning's announcement and outline any additional information he may have discovered relating to library funding arrangements?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

I have a long way to go before I beat the member for Rockingham in the boredom stakes. On behalf of the member for Bunbury I acknowledge students from the Grace Christian school in his electorate.

I was pleased to visit Riverton Public Library in the member for Riverton's electorate this morning to allay some of the concerns that have become apparent in relation to funding for library materials in Western Australia. From the outset can I say that I recognise, and this government recognises, the very important roles that public libraries play in our community right across Western Australia. I know that well from when I joined my own local public library—as it was then, the Greenmount library in the Shire of Mundaring—when I was 10 years old. I have been visiting it ever since. They are very important community facilities.

I am very pleased to say that at the special cabinet meeting in relation to the budget there was —

Mr D.A. Templeman: A special cabinet meeting to decide this! I can't believe it. It is unbelievable!

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mandurah, your enthusiasm is often welcome in this place but on this occasion I am formally going to call you for the second time.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If members of the opposition were listening to the Treasurer yesterday, they would have heard him refer to the fact that there was going to be a cabinet meeting today on the budget as a whole. I am very pleased to say that following the cabinet —

Mr J.N. Hyde: It is scribbled on bits of paper. You didn't even have time to type it up! This is how rushed it is. You buckled.

The SPEAKER: If members want question time to go much further, I might suggest that they remain a little more quiet and orderly. Member for Perth, I formally call you for the second time.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: A decision has been made by the government to provide both a substantial and also a sustained increase in funding for library materials in public libraries in Western Australia, such that there will be an increase to \$10.94 million, or just slightly under \$11 million, in 2010–11; and then for the first time in this state the increases in the following financial years will be indexed according to CPI. There will be certainty and predictability amongst the libraries in the state about how much funding they will receive, rather than the completely ad hoc arrangements that existed for the seven and a half years the Labor Party was in office. That is a substantial increase and a sustained increase, which will for the first time be indexed according to CPI in the forward estimates.

We have seen a lot of grandstanding from the Labor Party on this issue in recent times, as evidenced by the motion that it wants to bring on for debate later this afternoon. We will be very happy to debate the issue in private members' time later today. But there is a very dirty

little secret on the Labor side about libraries funding. Two years ago—its members have been big-noting themselves about this, particularly in the past couple of months—the then Labor government did provide a one-off, but not sustained, funding increase of \$4.4 million in 2008–09. But that was never funded by an additional allocation into the culture and arts budget. It was never new money at all. What the Labor government did—the Leader of the Opposition, the then Treasurer, might like to explain what he knew about this—was take it out of the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra relocation fund of \$8 million.

Mr E.S. Ripper: And we spent it on books! What an outrage!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: They took it off the WA Symphony Orchestra. They never told WASO and they have left it to this government to clean up the problem. In addition to providing a substantial and sustained increase for public libraries funding, the government has also made the decision to replace those funds—the \$4.4 million that was taken by the Labor government out of the WA Symphony Orchestra relocation fund—so that WASO will get the \$8 million that was taken.

Mr J.N. Hyde: It was never going to be taken, and you know it. You're misleading the house.

Mr M. McGowan: Five minutes!

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Members opposite do not like it. I know that the member for Rockingham does not like this, the Leader of the Opposition will not like it and Labor will not like it because the former Treasurer has been revealed. They took it from WASO. They never replaced it. They never told WASO about it. This government has had to fix the mess in both cases.