

PUBLIC LIBRARIES — METROPOLITAN VAN DELIVERY SERVICE

537. Hon ALANNA CLOHESY to the minister representing the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I refer to the cuts to public library services' funding and the minister's public statements that this is because "a lot more information is provided through electronic means these days".

- (1) Will the minister acknowledge that fewer than three per cent of items borrowed from public libraries last year were electronic, and therefore the minister's rationale for these cuts is based on faulty information?
- (2) In light of this information, will the minister reinstate the funding; and, if not, why not?
- (3) If no to (2), will the minister reinstate the smaller amount of funding so that the van service for interlibrary loans can be maintained at current levels; and, if not, why not?

Hon COL HOLT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the Minister for Planning representing the Minister for Culture and the Arts.

- (1) I am advised that in 2014–15, loans of e-books and e-audiobooks constituted fewer than three percent of loans from public libraries; however, this figure does not include the 132 700 e-magazines and almost 200 000 documents downloaded from electronic databases by public library members. Usage of electronic resources are growing exponentially, with loans of electronic resources up 57 percent in 2015–16, and downloads of e-magazines up 73 percent so far this financial year. These electronic resources are available to everyone throughout the state.
- (2) The State Library of Western Australia, as part of the Department of Culture and the Arts, was subject to an agency expenditure review process aimed at ensuring programs or activities are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible. The review found that managing the metropolitan courier service arrangement, including coordinating the movement of books between local government libraries and supplying the staff and delivery vans, was not sustainable or an effective use of taxpayers' money. The amount of material required to be moved between metropolitan public libraries has decreased over the last few years, with new stock now delivered directly to public libraries by suppliers and fewer metropolitan libraries choosing to use the exchange system for bulk movements of items. This has significantly reduced the number of items transported between metropolitan libraries.
- (3) Discussions are currently being held between the State Library of WA, the Western Australian Local Government Association and Public Libraries Western Australia to determine an alternative arrangement to the current metropolitan van delivery service. In the interim, the use of postal or courier services to transfer items has been recommended to local governments and will be used by the State Library.