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CITY OF RYDE REFUTES CRITICISMS OF HUNTERS HILL LIBRARY AGREEMENT

The City of Ryde has refuted misleading claims that it is charging an unfair rate to provide library services to Hunters Hill residents.

The claims were made after it was revealed that Lane Cove Council and Hunter's Hill Council were set to enter into a shared service arrangement. Under the arrangement, both councils would share key functions including library services, information technology, a works depot and senior staff.

The shared service arrangement is progressing despite a Joint Library Agreement being in place between Hunter's Hill Council and the City of Ryde since 1957.

As part of the Joint Library Agreement, the City of Ryde and Hunter's Hill Council operate the Gladesville Library for Gladesville and Hunters Hill residents.

Speaking to the Northern District Times about the new shared service arrangement with Lane Cove Council, Hunter's Hill Council Deputy Mayor Cllr Ben Collins said his council was "overpaying by several-hundred thousand dollars" due to the Joint Library Agreement. He added that Hunters Hill residents only use six per cent of the Gladesville library service.

In the same article, Lane Cove Deputy Mayor Scott Bennison claimed the City of Ryde was "gouging Hunters Hill".

The quotes attributed to both councillors are inaccurate and misleading.

The City of Ryde can confirm that Hunter's Hill Council's expenditure on library services is lower per capita than surrounding councils.

The most recent public library funding statistics released by the State Library of NSW for 2017/18 revealed that total expenditure for library services by Hunter's Hill Council was \$48.01 per capita. This is far lower than the expenditure for the City of Ryde (\$56.83) and Lane Cove (\$90.83).

Per capita expenditure for library services 2016/17			
Ryde	56.83	Willoughby	82.42
Lane Cove	90.30	Hunters Hill	48.01
Mosman	94.37	North Sydney	65.78

Not only does the City of Ryde have a higher per capita expenditure, it is arguably subsidising the cost of the library service it offers to Hunter's Hill Council.

In addition, the claim by Cllr Collins that only six per cent of Hunters Hill residents use the library service is based on the total book loans. This is not a reasonable basis for calculating the Hunters Hill contribution as there is no correlation to the total cost of providing the service.

The claim also fails to consider the full range of library services provided to Hunters Hill residents, including online library, school holiday activities, free Wi-Fi, home library service and community events.

Despite the Joint Library Agreement being in place for more than 60 years, the City of Ryde had not been consulted about the details of the shared service arrangement between Hunter's Hill Council and Lane Cove Council and has not yet been given an opportunity to negotiate a new agreement for library services.

While the City of Ryde is extremely disappointed about the lack of consultation, Council will need to consider its options for the site if the Joint Library Agreement is terminated by Hunter's Hill Council.

If the Agreement is terminated, the City of Ryde will need to consider the value of maintaining a service which is used by Hunters Hill residents particularly if their council was not contributing the operational costs.

In the event that Gladesville Library ceases operation and the shared service arrangement between Hunters Hill and Lane Cove councils was formalised, Hunters Hill residents would be forced to utilise Lane Cove Library and could lose access to the City of Ryde's extensive online library of eBooks, audiobooks and magazines.

It is the City of Ryde's aim to continue its successful relationship with Hunter's Hill Council to deliver the best outcome for both Hunters Hill and City of Ryde residents.

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