

## **Paul Laris, Deputation to Council 13.6.17 RE: HENLEY BEACH LIBRARY**

Mayor Evans and Councillors, thank you for the opportunity to make this deputation. I have been a resident and ratepayer here for 31 years and I am going to focus on just 3 issues:

1. The current consultation process has been problematic because what is being proposed is not clear. Literally, We don't know what we are talking about.
2. The numbers-the dollars, do not appear to stack up
3. Hopefully we all want an even better library - can we start again and can the consultation question be 'how do we get there??"

### **We don't know what we are talking about** *except that :*

The consultation is calling for a response to moving the library closer to Henley Sq and changing the service model such that only Woodville and Westlakes would provide a full range of services. Other branches would specialise in particular areas.

Now making HB a boutique library - that *does* mean something. BLs are small, conveniently located, specialise in certain subjects, have a high degree of autonomy are pro active and focussed on the needs of a particular client group. So smaller and focussed on a particular (as yet undefined) demographic- but attractiveness to one group may well be an access barrier for others. We do understand that children's library services would shift to the Civic Centre in Woodville. Not an attractive option for local families. Nor are the greater limitations on parking and disability access to HS, particularly during summer months or the unclear future of access to meeting rooms or computer training facilities.

In summary very limited information, but what we do have does not sound as though it would enhance the role of the library in building knowledge, awareness, and community solidarity.

### **The numbers.**

At present the Council operates the library on a council property. Yes, it is in need of some maintenance - fixing the leaking roof would be a good start. It could also do with a more visible presence on Seaview Road and an entrance there. We are told a remarkable \$1.5M to get it up to scratch.

The proposal to move to the HS precinct includes the option of renting either in the Pavillion centre or in rented ground floor premises in a private development on the

site of the Overflow and Paul Caica's office. Commercial ground floor rents in HS are around \$1000 per sq metre. The current library covers 585 SM. If the size was reduced to a boutique level – say around 300SM that is \$300,000 every year. Council will have spent what it would cost to get a larger top class facility on the current site in 5 years and would be spending another \$300K every year after that. The key point is that, even over a wide range of possible costings and options, it doesn't make sense to go from being an owner operator of viable premises to being a renter of costly, smaller, and less accessible premises.

The only proposal on the table for an alternate use of the current site is to refurbish it (at an undisclosed cost) so as to move the RSL from their present site so that council can then sell off the adjacent land. There are many other options not raised. Could the RSL go elsewhere, the land still be sold and the library be redeveloped on the current council owned site? For example, what of the options for use of the old depot site or the existing community centre?

### **We all want the best library service possible - can we start again please**

As was apparent at the open day at Henley Sq, our community feels very strongly about its library. The overwhelming majority of responses to date have been opposed to any change of location or service model. Community and Council share the goal of ensuring sustainable library services. I congratulate Council on the decision to extend the time available for the consultation. While we are at it could we also extend the scope? It would be great to be able to look at a full range of possibilities, including relocation and a change in service model, perhaps integration with a community arts centre – so many possibilities. Since the consultation letter to residents is yet to go out the scope could be broadened. A consultation that was not constrained just to a boutique library at Henley Square as the only option and was clear about the resources available would lay the foundation for productive engagement and the development of a comprehensive master plan. Then we could really look at some exciting possibilities.

So in summary:

Let's be clear about the aims of any change, the range of options available and the pros and cons of each.

Let's include in that a consideration of the short and long term financial sustainability implications

Let's revive the consultation process to be transparent, inclusive and a genuine invitation with adequate time, scope and information for meaningful community engagement.

Thank you very much. I welcome any questions.