

Northbridge Progress Association Inc
PO Box 357 Northbridge 2063

October 2, 2006

Mr John Owen
General Manager
Willoughby City Council
PO Box 57 CHATSWOOD 2057

Dear Mr Owen

Re: Northbridge Branch Library public meeting, September 28, 2006

The Association would like to thank the three Council officers, led by Nick Tobin, who conducted the above public meeting. We appreciated the time and effort they gave outside their normal working hours.

There was a good deal of interest in the presentation from about 30 people who attended the meeting. Many questions were asked and opinions expressed. We believe that a far greater understanding of Council's proposals was achieved through the meeting.

The Association would like to record that a good majority at the meeting opposed the proposed move of the branch library to the Castle Gardens site. In addition, the Association received three letters from residents who opposed the move but could not attend the meeting. The main reasons given by those opposing the move were:

- There is traffic congestion and a lack of parking at the Castle Gardens site – only five spaces compared with 40 at Northbridge Oval. Many of the existing users – the elderly and schoolchildren - may not visit a branch library at Castle Gardens.
- If the branch library were to move to Castle Gardens it would lose the present valuable synergies between the library, schools, local shops, oval, Scouts, Guides, after-school care, new Men's Shed, etc. The current site is also close to the demographic centre of the suburb, where more young families are moving.
- Although it is small, the current library provides a good service. There have been (according to Council officers) no complaints about the library's facilities. The current library is part of Northbridge's heritage; it is a part of Northbridge's "village" atmosphere which residents strongly wish to retain.
- The proposed site is only temporary but the cost of the proposed move would be \$200,000. If Council's ultimate aim is to move the library to Northbridge Plaza, why incur this cost?

There was broad consensus at the meeting that Council should examine seriously the viability of an expansion or redevelopment of the branch library at the current site. It was noted that, if Council were to sell the Castle Gardens space, about \$900,000 would be raised that could be used for a simple expansion of the present library. If 13 Eastern Valley Way were also sold, up to \$2 million would be available. It was suggested that both the Scouts and Guides would be interested in a larger, better-equipped hall. Council officers floated the idea of a two-storey building on the current site and agreed the concept could be considered.

In addition, Council officers agreed to consider opening the library for extended hours or days, and to open it at night (for working people) for a test period to determine whether usage of the branch library increased.

Yours sincerely,

John Becroft
President

Copy: Councillors
Nick Tobin