MS19-000734

The Hon Dr Brett Mason AO
Chair
Council of the National Library of Australia
Parkes Pl Way
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Mason,

I am writing to outline my expectations for the National Library of Australia (the Library) for 2019-20. The portfolio allocation for the Library in 2019-20 is $65.528 million. This includes $5.2 million from the Public Service Modernisation Fund to support infrastructure for Trove, $2.5 million for the Library’s new philanthropic fund, *Treasured Voices*, and $1 million to address safety and compliance risks identified by the recent National Collecting Institutions Capital Review.

Let me first acknowledge the achievements of the Library in 2018-19, in particular the success of the exhibition *Cook and the Pacific*, which attracted tens of thousands of visitors. I recognise the success of the Library in continuing to engage with all Australians through its physical and online presence. With regard to the latter, I commend the success of Trove in attracting more than 28.3 million visits in the 2018-19 period.

I would also like to congratulate the Library on its integral role in establishing the world-leading and innovative National eDeposit service, which I recently had the pleasure of launching.

I acknowledge your leadership and work building on the Library’s existing activities and introducing new ways of working with, and increasing, donors. It is my expectation that the Library will use the Government’s $10 million overall contribution for *Treasured Voices* to leverage significant private contributions to support further digitisation work, and to make available through Trove, more of the Library’s extensive collection.

The Morrison Government’s key policy priorities are to grow the economy and employment, to keep Australians safe and to keep Australians together.

The Government recognises the significant value that cultural activity delivers for the enrichment of our society and the role it plays in shaping our collective values. The arts also make a direct and important contribution to these broader priority areas of Government.
During my first few months as portfolio Minister, I have developed a number of priorities across all my areas of responsibility. For the arts, my goal is to foster an authentic and vital Australian arts sector. The actions I intend to progress are to:

- Grow the Indigenous art market.
- Promote Australian stories and identity.
- Deliver arts funding that is sustainable and contestable.

The arts are a key part of Australian identity, contributing to how we are perceived internationally in both trade and diplomacy, as well as our potential to attract international visitation. The important economic contribution of the arts is also widely acknowledged.

I encourage the Library to consider opportunities where it can support these broader strategic priorities and I take this opportunity to outline some strategic priorities which I ask the Library to focus on in 2019-20. These are:

- Ensuring the Library contributes to economic activity, particularly in regional centres, through touring or other outreach activities.
- Providing leadership to the arts sector as an employer of choice.
- Accepting opportunities to shape and promote Australian identity through the Library’s public-facing activities both national and internationally.
- Considering opportunities to create and meet demand for inbound tourism.
- Providing leadership in the delivery of collection management, arts education and public programs.
- Continuing to explore opportunities to grow private sector support and increase own-source revenue.

I note that many of these areas are already being actively progressed by the Library. I encourage the Library to continue to work cooperatively with my Department and other portfolio agencies in contributing to the Government’s policy priorities. I also appreciate you alerting me to any significant events related to the Library’s activities or functions.

I thank you and the Library Director-General, Dr Marie-Louise Ayres for making time recently to meet with me and provide me with an overview of the work of the Library and an indication of future priorities.

The fiscal climate, including the Government’s expectation in meeting the announced 2019-20 budget surplus and maintaining budget surpluses over the forward estimates, means the Government is unlikely to be able to respond to requests for additional financial support in the short term.
This includes proposals for any major expansion plans or capital works that do not address critical health and safety or compliance issues.

Given this situation, I am suggesting to all National Collecting Institutions that they focus their resources on the operations and maintenance needs of their existing facilities and consider whether some of their reserves could be used to address outstanding capital works.

This Statement of Expectations and your corresponding Statement of Intent form an important component of the Library’s governance framework. As such, I would anticipate both being public documents and I ask that you write to me with the Library’s Statement of Intent before the end of 2019. I have written in similar terms to all arts portfolio agencies, and have copied this letter to the Library Director-General, Dr Ayres.

I wish you, the Library Council, and executive team success in meeting outcomes and objectives for 2019-20.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Paul Fletcher

21/10/2019