

Media Release

NSW Government announces \$12.3M funding for State Library

19/11/2020

With funding support of \$12.3M from the NSW Government, the State Library of NSW is on track to make the Library fully accessible to the public for the first time, including parts of the historic Mitchell building rooftop.

Minister for the Arts Don Harwin said, “The State Library is one of our best loved and most used cultural institutions. In this year’s budget we’ve invested in work to make this magnificent building fully accessible to all visitors and make time spent there even more enjoyable.”

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “Following on from the significant boost in support for NSW public libraries which began in 2018, we are delighted to see this new investment from the NSW Government in the State Library itself, to support our plans to give readers and visitors the opportunity for access, learning and enjoyment like never before.”

“We’ll be making the Library’s Mitchell and Macquarie St buildings accessible to all,” said Dr Vallance. “The Mitchell Library’s beautiful reading room will be refurbished, a new gallery built, along with improved arrangements for circulation and wayfinding inside the Library. Finally, a small function venue will be built on the roof of the Mitchell building, accessible from the Domain and designed carefully to involve no alteration to the building’s current profile.”

At present, access into and around the State Library is difficult, especially for those with restricted mobility, as well as school and tourist groups. The Library has been working with expert heritage consultants and architects to find solutions that meet the needs of all of its visitors.

Key stages of the Library’s plan include:

1. Accessible entry, Mitchell building

A solution has been found to the challenge of providing access into the Mitchell building for people with reduced mobility which involves very minor alterations to one small part of the building’s façade.

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2. New accessible link between the Mitchell and Macquarie St buildings

A new internal gallery will be created through a currently unused area and will provide level access connecting the Library's two buildings. This spacious circulation gallery will offer additional space for exhibitions.

As part of this work, the late 1980s staircase in the floor of the Mitchell Library Reading Room will be removed and the Reading Room restored to its original 1940s glory, at the same time providing much-needed additional space for readers.

3. Improved access to the Macquarie St building

The entrance ramp leading from Macquarie Street into the Library's Macquarie St building is steep and does not comply with current standards for disability access. The Library will create a new ramped access route to rectify this issue. A separate development application will be lodged for this work shortly.

The State Library's new plan builds on the 2017–18 transformation of the Mitchell building which saw the opening of new galleries, a learning centre and increased public areas for readers and visitors.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Golda Mitchell, Media & Communications Branch State Library of NSW
0434 683 435, golda.mitchell@sl.nsw.gov.au