



**Metropolitan Association**  
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**Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan Association  
President’s Report to the Annual General Meeting 6 November 2009**

It is with great pleasure that I present my inaugural Annual Report as President of the Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan Association (PLM).

Since mid 2008 the global financial crisis has impacted many sectors and people. It became apparent from early 2009 that in Australia and overseas, public libraries were being increasingly utilised by communities. The survey that PLM conducted of its members in June this year reflected an increased utilisation, in some cases substantial, of the services and programs offered by public libraries. Public libraries continue to fulfil important social, recreational, educational and support roles for at least half of Australia’s population.

PLM now encompasses 43 local government area public libraries in the greater Sydney region - an area that extends north to Newcastle, west to the Blue Mountains and south to Wollongong. This geographical area represents 65% of the NSW population and 20% of Australia’s population. It is diverse in its population composition.

Sustainable resourcing of public libraries is a major theme across Australia. Local government remains the principal resource provider to Australia’s public libraries. In NSW, at least 93% of libraries’ annual operating expenditure is provided by local government.

Sustainability of funding for local government in NSW remains a challenge, with Councils continuing to consider and investigate alternative business models which include shared services, resource sharing, standardisation, centralisation and outsourcing. During 2009, the SSROC group of libraries has been involved in such considerations. I congratulate Mark Norman, Kogarah, for hosting a seminar in February this year on these important topics.

Given the above, the Association continues to take both a state and national perspective on public library matters. During 2009, PLM has been represented at various public library forums and has provided relevant input by way of submissions. PLM participates with all other Australian based public library associations through a *Memorandum of Collaboration*.

In July, the PLM Executive Director attended the inaugural Australian Public Libraries Summit. The significance of this meeting was to draw the Australian Government’s attention to the public library sector. Follow-on activity is now occurring, including the development of a National Strategic Framework and Action Plan for the Australian public library sector, and consideration to a new lobbying strategy aimed at the Australian Government. The Association will provide input into the development of Framework and Action Plan.

The Association submitted to the State Library of New South Wales for its information, review and consideration, a report titled "*SLNSW Services to NSW Public Libraries - a PLM Perspective*". As part of this report, the Association has recommended the update of a state-wide Public Library Sector Strategic Plan, given the changing circumstances under which NSW public libraries and local government are operating. This recommendation will be discussed for actioning at the forthcoming November 2009 NSW Public Libraries Consultative Committee (PLCC) meeting.

Mid year, a meeting was held with the Adviser to Minister Judge, the Minister assisting the Minister for the Arts, to discuss the NSW public library sector and funding. Given current NSW State Government funding levels to public libraries, it will be important for the Association to consider new lobbying and advocacy strategies.

Discussions are being held with the Public Libraries NSW – Country Association (PLC) regarding collaboration and possible amalgamation of the two associations. In January, members of the PLM Executive met with the PLC Executive to discuss collaboration. *Principles of Collaboration* were subsequently prepared by the two Associations.

A major event for 2009 is the forthcoming *NSW Public Libraries Conference & Exhibition*, the inaugural joint event of PLM and PLC. The PLM Central and North Regions provided representatives to the Organising Committee, assisted by the PLM Executive Director and the event management company, Great Southern Events.

The Conference & Exhibition is being held at the SMC Conference & Function Centre in Sydney. I thank very much all those involved in organising this significant event.

We have been very encouraged by the response to the event to date. At the time of preparing this report, we are expecting an attendance of over 270 delegates each day on both Monday & Tuesday 23 & 24 November 2009. Additionally, there will be 60 representatives from 40 local, national and international library sector vendors.

The delegates to the Conference & Exhibition comprise primarily Public Library Managers and Library Professionals, and elected Councillors including Mayors, Council Senior Management such as Chief Executives.

Registered delegates are from 75 Councils across NSW, two Queensland Councils, two Melbourne Councils, three Perth Councils, the National Library of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales, the State Library of Victoria and the ACT Library Service. I thank very much two major sponsors of the Conference & Exhibition: the State Library of New South Wales and Blacktown City Council.

The revamped PLM website ([www.plmnsw.org.au](http://www.plmnsw.org.au)) went live early in 2009 and is a source of information pertaining to meeting agendas and minutes, reports, submissions and presentations. The hosting and maintenance of the website has proved to be very cost effective for the Association.

I thank Anne Hall, Fairfield, for leading a review of Working Groups and Committees on which PLM Members participate. Key drivers for this review included NSW public library strategic needs from both a state and local level, and public library staff availability to participate on Working Groups and Committees.

The Association proudly sponsored Anne to the 75th IFLA General Conference and Assembly held in August in Milan, Italy, and to the IFLA Satellite Meeting "*Libraries and Society: A Pan-Mediterranean Perspective*" in Palermo, Sicily. At this event, Anne presented a paper titled "*Public Library Resources and Programs to Pan Mediterranean Language Groups in Australia*".

I sincerely thank Anne Connon for taking on the role of Vice President, Susanna Waller, Treasurer, Jenny Bice who has had dual roles as the Association's Secretary and Library Manager assisting the President, the entire Executive, and Petra Fowler who works behind the scenes on the Association's Finance & Administrative matters.

Robert McEntyre continued into a second year as the part-time PLM Executive Director. Robert and I have met regularly during the year to discuss the Association and key local, state and national public library matters. During 2008 and in the first half of 2009, Robert utilised space at LGSA House in Margaret Street, Sydney. With consideration to the PLM budget this practice ceased on 30 June 2009. My thanks and appreciation to Robert for his massive contribution to the Association.

In a review of the PLM Governance Model early in 2009, three Regions will operate following this AGM: North, Central/South East, and West South West.

I wish to acknowledge the ongoing support and assistance of the State Library of New South Wales in the provision of valued services to the NSW public library sector.

Finally, to the outgoing PLM Executive - thank you very much for your contributions to the Association during 2009. To the incoming Executive, my congratulations on your election and I wish you every success in taking the Association into 2010.

It has been both a privilege and pleasure in working with PLM and to support public libraries in NSW.

Win Gaffney  
**PRESIDENT**