

NSW MPLA President's Report 2011

2011 has been a busy and productive year for NSW metropolitan public libraries. We have made significant progress to our governance model, our strategic plan, ILL delivery model, Website, Conference planning and lobbying activities. It has also been a year when collaboration between NSW public libraries has been under threat and the State Government has neglected to address sustainable funding.

At the March General Meeting Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan Association resolved to change our name to NSW Metropolitan Public Libraries Association. The name has been changed with the Department of Fair Trading and on the Australian Business Register.

In early 2011 the Executive began to discuss the financial sustainability of the association. We had been planning to become one association with the Country Association by 1 July 2011 but their December 2010 decision to walk away from discussions meant that we had to reassess our position. After discussion with the then Executive Director, Robert McEntyre, Robert decided to resign from this position effective 30 June 2011. At the August General Meeting it was resolved that in 2011/12 NSW MPLA operate with Casual Administrative support, Executive functions in-house and Consultants for projects.

The Executive has been very active in planning and administrative functions. This has resulted in some significant results. The Constitution has been revised including the removal of geographical barriers to membership for all NSW libraries. A Strategic Action Plan 2011 – 2013 has been developed – progress will be reported to each General Meeting. A new website and a logo went live in October 2011.

Letters have been sent to both the Premier and the Minister regarding Library funding. Members of the Executive are meeting with the Minister, the Hon. George Souris this month. Paul Scully has been

drafting a document to present to the Minister regarding partnership opportunities.

From 1 July 2011 the State Library has managed the Inter Library Loans Van Delivery Service. Many libraries have achieved cost savings by reducing their number of weekly deliveries. A letter was sent to the State Librarian, Alex Byrne in September 2011 thanking the State Library of NSW staff for their efficient management of the Inter Library Loan Delivery Service.

NSW MPLA is a Founding Partner of the National Year of Reading and has secured state ambassadors and contributed to monthly teleconferences. NSW MPLA is part of the NSW Steering Committee. Despite tensions between NSW MPLA and the Country Association we are working together on this project.

The SWITCH Conference and Exhibition will be held at the SMC this month. This exciting event has attracted more than 300 delegates. On behalf of the members I would like to thank the hard-working and creative Conference Organising Committee: Vicki Smith, Carol Yuen, Philip Edney, Lyn Barakat, Kathryn Baget-Juleff and Colin Stevenson.

We have continued to work with a number of key stakeholders to improve the position of public libraries. Michelle Mashman, Jennifer Bice and I sit on the Public Libraries Consultative Committee. NSW MPLA members participated on the PLCC Review Working Group and we expect to see more opportunities for consultation in the future. The Library Council of NSW visited Lane Cove Library in September 2011 and is planning to visit Liverpool Library in November.

As President of NSW MPLA I sit on the ALIA Public Libraries Advisory Committee. This committee has representatives from Library Associations from all Australian States and Territories.

Unfortunately, the year has been marred by continuing tension with Public Libraries NSW – Country. The two associations met with Rob Thomas, President of the Library Council in June and agreed to work together in the interests of public libraries. At the August General Meeting, members requested a template reply after receiving three letters from the PLC Chair - I wrote to Cr Smith expressing our disappointment. While one association talks have not recommenced we had met several times at PLCC meetings and NSW Steering Committee for the National Year of Reading. Unfortunately, the motion of one Country Council at the recent Local Government Association Conference has added to the tensions and undone much good will. As has been our stance since March 2011 we will continue to work together with all stakeholders to advance the interests of public libraries in NSW.

I would like to thank the many members who have assisted me in 2011. NSW MPLA's Vice-President, Anne Connon has been a great supporter and sounding board. I would like to acknowledge Jennifer Bice, Secretary for her unstinting support and the Treasurer, Susanna Waller – Susanna has served as Treasurer for the last four years and we are very grateful for her contribution. We have had a particularly active and enthusiastic Executive – thank you to Linda Horswell, Michelle Mashman, Paul Scully, Cathy Howie and Mark Norman.

The Association thanks the State Library of NSW staff particularly the Director, Public Library and Community Learning, Frances Sims; and Manager, Funding and Advisory Services, Cameron Morley. We are grateful for the Public Library Services staff's ongoing support for metropolitan libraries. We also welcome Alex Byrne to his new role as State Librarian and CEO.

Much has been achieved in 2011 but much remains to do. There are many challenges facing the association – but I know that NSW MPLA members are eager to improve public library services throughout NSW and will continue to pursue this goal.