

SALUTE TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

It was a night when public libraries were the centre of attention in the national capital. A gala dinner, presented by ALIA, the Australian Public Library Alliance (APLA) and National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), was held to celebrate public libraries at Parliament House on 7 November last year. As HEATHER WELLARD reports, it was an opportunity to share stories about our vibrant sector.

① It was an opportunity to commemorate the occasion before heading into the House. Capturing the moment outside in the windy but warm Canberra weather. Pictured are (back row, left to right) Geoff Strempe, Sharan Harvey, Patrick Gregory, Cameron Morley, Graham Smith, ALIA President Tricia Genat.

Front row: APLA Chair Jan Richards, Janice Nitschke, Alan Smith, Vanessa Little, Karen Ward-Smith, ALIA Director Marian Morgan-Bindon.



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② Pausing inside the foyer of Canberra's Parliament House on the marble stairs are (top of staircase) Debbie Best, Adele Casey, Chris Jones, Robert Knight, Roxanne Missingham, Karyn Siegmann, Michael Gordon-Smith, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Joel Becker, Gail Dunn, Judy Brooker and Christine Mackenzie.



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③ ALIA's President, Tricia Genat, welcomed all the guests to the Mural Hall: 'That wide and inclusive welcome showcases the vibrancy and reach of the library sector, the wonderful cross-party support and the broad-ranging programs that are delivered in partnership to readers in every corner of Australia. *Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries* were launched at the event. These reflect the many services that public libraries deliver and provide a road map for the future. This third edition includes major revisions and new outcome measures, reflecting the changing public library environment.



④ Craig Laundy, Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, (seen here chatting to author Jackie French) said that he has seen vast changes in libraries over time. 'As many [libraries] have thrown out the bookshelves, they've thrown out the shoosh, making them much more alive and dynamic places. Places like the new Woollahra Library in its purpose-built, state-of-the-art premises in the Double Bay Shopping centre. It's like a super high-tech tree house, with dedicated tech and video gaming spaces, iPads and Macs, private reading burrows in walls – an exciting, ultra-modern, fun space.' He paid tribute to libraries, which provide the link to digital technology, especially for those library users who don't have a connection at home. 'The explosion of digital technologies presents both challenges and opportunities for everyone in the business of helping Australians skill up, but you don't need me to tell you that... After all, libraries have been at the coalface of growing Australia's knowledge and skills base for a very long time.'



⑤ Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus is pictured holding the ALIA fact sheet titled *10 ways that libraries power Smart Cities* (bit.ly/2fVYHTj), which showcases public libraries' contribution to innovation and creativity.

⑥ Jan Richards, APLA Chair, spoke of the depth of experience in public libraries and how they are responding to their communities. She noted that the public library in Tullamore, NSW, is open 24/7.



⑦ Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Director-General of the National Library of Australia, said there are millions of fans of public libraries because 'Australian libraries are animated by helping their communities to find and make meaning. In supporting and responding to their communities, libraries and their services have evolved in the most inspiring, imaginative and ingenious ways.' She noted that libraries take great pride in satisfying their communities and in improving, are keen to know how their work stacks up and are anxious that their funders can assess the value they are creating.



⑧ ⑨ The gala dinner was an opportunity to catch up with colleagues, friends and meet new people. Everyone agreed it was a wonderful way to celebrate libraries. Even more importantly, it was an opportunity to advocate for the role of libraries in communities right across Australia and to engage with federal government politicians in the national capital. 🌟