

Sydney Leather Men Incorporated

Presidents (Operational) Report - 2025

For presentation at the Annual General Meeting on 2nd May 2026

Introduction

2025 has been a year of consolidation, resilience, and continued growth for Sydney Leather Men Inc.

As we reflect on the past 12 months, our community continues to strengthen, not just in numbers, but in connection, visibility, and purpose. This year also marked the introduction of our guiding vision, “**Building community, one connection at a time,**” a statement that reflects the heart of what we do and the impact we aim to have.

Supporting this is our tagline, “**Gear Up. Show Up. Connect. Engage. Belong.**” a simple but powerful expression of the journey we invite people into within our spaces and our community.

Our focus has remained consistent: to create welcoming spaces for male-identifying people within the leather and fetish community, while supporting the broader community that surrounds us.

This year has not been without its challenges. However, through adaptability, strong leadership and governance, and the ongoing support of our members, volunteers, and partners, we have continued to evolve in a way that reflects both the needs of our community and the realities of the environment we operate in.

To everyone who has contributed to SLM this year, whether by attending events, volunteering time, supporting financially, or simply showing up, thank you. **This organisation exists because of you.**

Key Achievements

- Continued growth in membership and event attendance, **reinforcing SLM as a leading community organisation within Australia.**
- **Strengthened our position as a social anchor** for the leather and fetish community in Sydney.
- Established and introduced SLM’s guiding vision, “**Building community, one connection at a time,**” alongside the community-facing tagline, “**Gear Up. Show Up. Connect. Engage. Belong.**”, providing a clear articulation of who we are, what we stand for, and the experience we aim to create within spaces.
- Successful **delivery of a consistent monthly social program**, maintaining strong engagement and community connection.
- Transitioned to the **Join It** membership platform, a strategic investment in improving the member experience and operational capability of the organisation. Despite higher associated costs, the platform has significantly enhanced accessibility and engagement through simplified sign-up processes, digital membership cards, centralised access to member benefits, and the introduction of a direct channel for member-only communication. **This transition has helped modernise our membership offering** and better support the continued growth and engagement of our community.
- **Expansion of member benefits** and partnerships, increasing tangible value for financial members.
- **Enhanced focus on community storytelling and visibility**, including art, photography, newsletters, and website content. Ongoing social media challenges prompted a review of our communications approach, leading us to prioritise the website as our primary channel; this included a rebuild to incorporate news and newsletter content and improve overall usability for members.
- In 2025, we partnered with other community businesses to bring Liberated in Leather Mardi Gras float to life, mentored by Studio Kink; while at times challenging, it provided valuable visibility for the Sydney leather community and helped to lay the framework for the Sydney Leather Community float in 2026.

- Ongoing support of titleholders and community initiatives, reinforcing SLM's role as a community wide support and advocate.
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Membership & Community

Membership remains one of the strongest indicators of the health of our organisation.

- Our **membership base has continued to grow**, with active membership reaching approximately 204 (~70% increase on 2024) and ~30% increase on our modest target for 2025.
- The transition to a rolling membership model via **Join It has provided greater flexibility and improved member experience**.
- Digital membership cards have streamlined event access and strengthened member engagement with benefits.
- **Member feedback continues to be positive**, with strong sentiment around community connection and the welcoming nature of our events.
- We saw the local Sydney Mr. Leather title awarded to Luis, while we thank Timo for being a wonderful representative of the community.

Importantly, membership is not just a number, it reflects **a community that people want to belong to**, return to, and contribute to.

Events

Our events remain the cornerstone of what we do.

- We delivered a **consistent calendar of monthly Leather, BLUF & Cigar socials**, supported by strong attendance throughout the year, **attendance grew over the year by 50%**.
- Average **attendance continues to trend upward**, even quieter nights outperforming previous years.
- Events continue to provide a **safe, social-first environment**, with a balance of familiarity and growth through new faces.
- Member engagement initiatives such as member raffles, member cash draws, and sponsor giveaways have enhanced the experience.
- We have continued to explore new event formats and collaborations, including community partnerships on events like UNITY and Cigar Society while supporting events like Inquisition and HCB Underbear in February 2025.
- A highlight of 2025 was the visibility and awareness raised from the Parramatta Pride Picnic, our first "fair day" style event. Partnering with WAQK, we delivered a shared community stall that proved highly successful and has since become the template for how we plan to collaborate with other LGBTQIA+ community organisations in 2026.

These events are more than gatherings, they are where community is built, friendships are formed, and people find belonging.

Financial Summary & Sponsors

The financial position of the organisation remains positive.

- The organisation has maintained a positive financial position, supported by membership growth and consistent event participation.
- Cost management has remained a priority, particularly in response to changing external conditions.
- Revenue streams continue to be primarily driven by **membership, volunteering, and partnerships**.

We would not be able to deliver what we do without the support of our sponsors and partners. In 2025, our community partners played an important role in enhancing the member experience, contributing over \$5,000 in prizes that were shared throughout the year. These contributions not only added value for members but helped strengthen connections between our community and the businesses and events that support it. As we moved into planning for 2026, a combination of broader cost pressures and a natural evolution of partnerships saw many sponsors reassess their level of support. This has provided an opportunity for SLM to refine how we engage with and support our partners, including better recognition at events, creating more opportunities for face-to-face interaction at socials, and increasing visibility through our website and member channels. The introduction of our membership platform has also improved how members access partner offers, expanding exposure for a wider range of supporters.

We are incredibly grateful to all our partners for their ongoing support and the value they bring to our community. In particular, we recognise Sax Fetish for their continued support since our beginnings, Naughty Boy for their full year of partnership, and Studio Kink for their continued support and prize contributions throughout 2025. We also thank our home base the Oxford Hotel for their ongoing support through bar tab and drink vouchers, along with event partners such as Haus of Savvy, Trash Daddy, Studio Kink, and Rogue by Brute, whose contributions with event tickets helped make greater member value possible.

Merchandise

Merchandise continues to be an evolving space for SLM.

- Existing merchandise offerings have continued to provide modest revenue while supporting brand visibility across the community.
- During the year, we introduced a hybrid approach to merchandise, balancing print-on-demand with selective stock holding. While holding stock carries greater financial risk, it has allowed us to deliver higher-impact items where appropriate.
- This approach was successfully applied to our limited edition 2025 shirts, which once again proved popular within the community.
- We also saw strong engagement with the release of our SLM branded hankies, designed by committee member Jaime and hand-printed by Jaime and Timo, reflecting a more personal, community-driven approach to merchandise.
- Learnings from previous product runs have continued to inform a more considered approach to sizing, allocation, and production volumes.
- As part of this evolution, some merchandise plans have been paused while we assess the balance between sustainability, financial risk, and community visibility.

Merchandise remains an opportunity not just for revenue, but for identity, visibility, and community pride.

Committee & Governance

2025 has seen continued evolution within the committee.

- Changes throughout the year have been managed with a focus on continuity and stability.
 - We saw Phil Reilly and Peter Rayner leave the committee in 2025; we thank Phil and Peter for the effort and commitment to SLM.
- New committee members have stepped in, bringing fresh perspectives and energy.
 - We welcomed Brendon Ludlow, Brendan Barry and Ryan Arscott and Timo Rissanen to our committee in 2025.
- Governance frameworks, policies, and processes have continued to mature, supporting transparency and accountability.
- We have maintained a focus on ensuring the committee operates in a way that supports both operational delivery and long-term sustainability.

To all committee members, past and present this year, thank you for your time, effort, and commitment.

Challenges

Like any community organisation, we have faced challenges.

- **Volunteer engagement remains an ongoing challenge**, with a need to encourage more members to get involved beyond attendance.
- **Social media limitations and platform restrictions** have impacted our ability to promote and communicate effectively.
- Broader community dynamics and external **perceptions require careful navigation** to maintain a respectful environment.
- **Balancing growth with sustainability** continues to be an important consideration.

These challenges are not unique to SLM, but they are important to acknowledge as we continue to evolve.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the next year, our focus remains clear.

- Continue to **grow and strengthen our membership** base and engagement.
- **Expand and refine our event offering**, including exploring new formats, ideas and collaborations.
- Increase the value of membership benefits while we **provide opportunities for benefit partners to engage with our membership base** face to face.
- Strengthen our operational and governance foundations.
- Encourage greater **community participation, attendance and volunteer involvement**.

We remain **committed to building an SLM community that is welcoming, respectful, and connected**.

Subject to approval, the Association will transition from a calendar year to a financial year cycle to better align our reporting and planning with standard practice. As part of this change, the 2027 AGM will be scheduled later than usual to reflect the new timing. This transition will include a short interim period from January to June 2026, before moving into the first full financial year. The Committee will continue to ensure transparency, with any key updates or matters communicated to members as needed while we move into the new reporting cycle.

Closing Remarks

SLM is more than an organisation, it is a family.

The strength of this community is not defined by any single event, committee, or initiative. It lives in the people who show up, support one another, and contribute to something bigger than themselves.

As with any community, there will be differing views and perspectives. What matters is how we move forward together, with respect, understanding, and a shared commitment to what we are building.

Thank you to every member, volunteer, sponsor, and supporter who has been part of this journey. Let's continue to grow, together.

As we close out this report, it is also a moment of transition.

Today marks the end of our time on the committee, with both me and Mick Watson stepping down from our roles. This has not been a decision taken lightly, but one that has been made with intention. To create space for new voices, new ideas, and a fresh perspective to guide the continued evolution of Sydney Leather Men Inc.

Over the years, we had a vision of what SLM could be but not everyone shared that vision. As time passed and our membership grew, so did the demands of what SLM needed to be, so we evolved. From providing a space for leather men to connect not only at social level, but through the many varied events that it created over the years. Our purpose was to bring people together and add value to our members, and we hope we have done some good in this community and created a legacy worth holding onto.

Providing these kinds of opportunities to our members has been a rewarding experience for us and we have enjoyed being of service, especially through the tough times when drama and politics can get in the way. All our decisions we have made have been for the benefit of our members, especially during times when we are losing our spaces, like Stonewall shutting down, online trolls boycotting gay venues like the Oxford Hotel and what must seem like constant disarray and division in the wider community. We have fought for you, our members and kept fighting for you to provide these spaces and opportunities for you to connect.

For SLM, and the community that it is part of; to remain strong and successful for future years to come, it should not need to rely on the same people to carry it forward. If we are to stand the test of time, without needing to rebuild ourselves over and over again, we need people willing to step up, to be mentored by those who paved the way before them so that they can forge their own relationships and make their mark on what they are building, just as we did.

We are incredibly proud of the past few years. More importantly, we are proud that what we built resonated, that people connected with our vision, they showed up and made it their own. What started as an idea has grown into a space that people believe in, support, and are proud to be part of. That, above all else, is what matters most.

While we step away from committee roles, we remain committed, present, and supportive, and you will still see us around.

To the incoming committee, we wish you every success. You have the fortitude to take on this role with the opportunity to build on strong foundations and continue shaping SLM into something even greater. We have full confidence in your ability to lead the next chapter; one that continues to grow connection, strengthen bonds, and carry forward the spirit of what SLM stands for.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey. I will leave you with this.....

SLM Inc in 2030

In the next five years, many of us will still be here, still showing up, still contributing, and still shaping what this community becomes. The decisions we make today, how we invest our time, how we lead, and how we support one another, will define what SLM looks and feels like in 2030.

Our role now is to continue building with intention. To strengthen the foundations we have created, while remaining open to new ideas, new voices, and new ways of connecting. We must continue listening, to our members, our partners, and our broader community, and be willing to evolve in response.

By 2030, SLM will continue to be a recognised and respected presence within the broader leather and fetish landscape. That future will be shaped by our ability to stay connected and continue creating spaces where people feel they belong one event at a time.

SLM Inc is still a young organisation, but the direction we set now will define its legacy.

Igor Rudar

President

Sydney Leather Men Inc.

12/04/2026