

The Story of Sydney Leather Men Incorporated (SLM)

Sydney Leather Men Incorporated (SLM) is the second iteration of a proud legacy dedicated to fostering a vibrant gay leather community in Sydney. The original Sydney Leather Men group existed many years ago, playing a key role in the city's once-thriving leather scene. However, over time, that first iteration became inactive as the scene itself experienced decline.

In the 2010s, Sydney's leather and fetish scene faced a steep decline. Longstanding institutions like the Sydney Leather Pride Association (SLPA) faded away, and many traditional venues closed their doors. Sydney's reputation as Australia's leather capital dimmed, and the community felt the loss deeply.

Yet, even in that quiet, a spark remained.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, the founding SLM committee, Mick Watson, Igor Rudar, Peter Rayner, and Raymond VZ, seized the opportunity to listen and learn. They spent nearly two years consulting the community, identifying what was missing and what needed to be reborn. From this collective vision, SLM was reborn in 2022 as lockdowns lifted.

SLM was never intended to be just another club, it was created as a sanctuary, a vibrant hub where leather men could connect, socialise, and rebuild the sense of leather brotherhood. Inspired by similar global leather communities, SLM committed to revitalizing Sydney's leather culture with energy and respect.

Our space is intentionally for self-identifying leather men and masculine expression, not to exclude, but to preserve and nurture a unique culture. We firmly believe that identity-specific spaces and inclusive spaces can—and must—coexist in harmony to build a healthy, resilient community.

Recognising Sydney's fall from its leadership in the Australian leather scene, SLM set out to restore visibility and pride. Regular social events, often held in public venues, showcased the leather and fetish community boldly and proudly. Our founders admired the distinct cultures of leather, denim, and cigars flourishing overseas and sought to cultivate the same vibrant identity here at home.

In early 2022, SLM proudly stepped up to help resurrect the Sydney Leather Title after a seven-year pause, becoming the "Clubhouse" for the 'Mr' titleholder. This milestone perfectly aligned with our mission to strengthen community ties.

By August 2023, SLM took an active role in supporting and funding Sydney Leather Weekend, a landmark event reaffirming Sydney as a premier destination for leather enthusiasts worldwide. Building on that momentum, we supported the expansion into Sydney Leather Week in 2024 and the Sydney Leather Festival in 2025, together reigniting the spirit of leather culture with inclusivity, pride, and connection. While Sydney Leather Festival became its own unique entity in 2025 and SLM became a partner in presenting a program of events.

November 2023 brought a significant breakthrough. After months of effort, SLM secured a grant from Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras to help us evolve, registering as a community association, setting up membership programs, and strengthening our foundation. Despite challenges with SGLMG and the grant management, we persevered and eventually relinquished the remainder of the grant from SGLMG.

On 9 November 2023, SLM proudly became Sydney Leather Men Incorporated, with our inaugural committee of founders and dedicated members leading the way:

- Mick Watson (President)
- Pete Rayner (VP/Secretary)
- Ian Wall (Treasurer)
- Raymond VZ (Public Officer)
- Stephen Green (Committee)
- Igor Rudar (Community Liaison)

January 2024 saw the launch of our membership program. The community's response was overwhelming, with 35 members joining on day one, well on the way to our first-year goal of 50. By year-end, that number grew to 117 and continues rising, a testament to the strength and spirit of our brotherhood.

On 3 May 2025, SLM held its first Annual General Meeting with a strong turnout, reflecting our community's growing engagement and support.

Our logo, designed in late 2021 with Marken Hosting, captures the essence of SLM: simple, clear, and rooted in the leather pride flag's colours. While modest, it boldly declares who we are and our journey forward. Its variations support our social media presence and marketing, building recognition and unity.

SLM's committee has evolved as the organisation has grown. Our history is a living story; one we continue to write together.

This document will be updated as SLM evolves, celebrating our journey and the community we proudly serve.

Milestones

- 2020 – Founding Committee members leave their founding roles with 'The Hide' and commence developing SLM
- June 16th, 2022 – SLM's First Leather Men's Meet Up in the Chapel Bar at Kinsela's Hotel with a turnout of 20 Leather Men.
- March 2023 – SLM becomes the 'Club House' for newly elected Sydney Mr Leather 2023. Our Social during world pride becomes our biggest ever event with 105 attendees'.
- November 2023 – SLM is approved for a grant by SGLMG, sparking an evolution. SLM promptly becomes Sydney Leather Men Incorporated as a community run association. Novembers Social becomes 2nd Biggest attended event with 85 men supporting.
- January 2024 – SLM Launches its Membership program, along with the first lot of member benefits. By the completion of Day 1 we had 35 members.