

Message from Robert Knight, ALIA President 2019-2020

ALIA National Conference 2020 cancellation due to COVID-19

As ALIA President and on behalf of my fellow Directors and the ALIA Executive, I regret to announce the decision to cancel the ALIA National 2020 Conference, 'Courageous and Audacious', which was due to take place 4 to 8 May 2020 at the International Convention Centre, Sydney, as a result of COVID-19.

The timing, just eight weeks away, and Sydney location put us in the epicentre of the outbreak, with an anticipated 700 national and international attendees. Our choices were to go forward with energy, with the risk that we would not have speakers to fill the program, significantly fewer delegates and a much-reduced exhibition, or to cancel now, enabling people to minimise their own financial commitment and with full refunds of registration fees and exhibition spaces.

The Board agreed that the situation was unlikely to improve during March/April and it was more likely that it would deteriorate. We wanted to be 'Courageous' and provide complete clarity about our position, rather than delaying another few weeks and allowing people to incur more costs. We did not want to tarnish the reputation of ALIA conferences by delivering an experience that was below par. And so, despite the significant financial impact on the Association, we felt the best decision for the health and wellbeing of our Members, industry partners and staff, was to cancel now.

We know that this decision is disappointing, and we thank you for your support and understanding. We would like to pay tribute to all the hard work of the program committee, chaired by Vicki McDonald, over the last 18 months, and to acknowledge the significant commitment by speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and volunteers. If it had been a normal year and we had gone ahead, we know it would have been a truly fantastic event.

Our focus now is on the ALIA Information Online conference, at the ICC Sydney from 8-10 February 2021, and our aim is to make this more rewarding than ever for delegates, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors. We hope to see you there.

About the Australian Library and Information Association

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector.

With 5,000 members across Australia, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. www.alia.org.au

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