

Media Release



Dame Marie Bashir honoured with renaming of state's leading reference library

20/10/2014

The State Library of NSW has paid tribute to Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO following her recent retirement by renaming its major reference library in her honour **TODAY [Monday 20 October]**.

The State Reference Library will now be known as the Governor Marie Bashir Reading Room.

"Dame Marie Bashir is one of the Library's greatest advocates and we wanted to publicly recognise her much valued and continuing support and affection for this great Library and her passion for reading and libraries," said NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive, Alex Byrne.

Dame Marie will unveil a plaque bearing her name at the very Library she first visited as a student, and went on to support in her official capacity as Governor of NSW for 13 years.

"The re-naming of our major reference library is a wonderful opportunity to recognise Dame Marie's great passion for Australian history, including her deep respect for Indigenous people and culture," said Dr Byrne.

Deputy Premier of NSW Troy Grant said: "This public tribute offers appropriate recognition not only of Dame Marie Bashir's high regard and active support for the State Library but also of her substantial and widely applauded commitment and extraordinary contributions to the State of New South Wales.

"Dame Marie's strong interest in the welfare of Indigenous people, our multicultural population, children and students resonate closely with that of the Library's areas of focus."

The State Library has expanded its thriving Indigenous Services Branch which has a long standing record of delivering quality services, including family history workshops, to Indigenous communities across NSW. Also, the Library is currently working towards creating new gallery spaces in its Mitchell building and will include a specialist learning centre for children.

The Governor Marie Bashir Reading Room provides access to an extensive collection of Australian and international research material, including materials in 42 languages and an increasing number of electronic reference resources. Every year more than 600,000 people - local and family historians, researchers, students and the general public - visit the recently refurbished Reading Room and use its resources.

The Deputy Premier commented: "Libraries play a vital role in the cultural life of our State and nation and it's fitting that the historic renaming of the Reading Room takes place just prior to the statewide celebration of the 75th anniversary of the ground breaking NSW Library Act in November."

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Dame Marie said she felt greatly honoured to have her name applied to the Reading Room in the Macquarie Street wing of one of the world's great libraries.

"The State Library of New South Wales has been for me a source of inspiration, as well as a treasury of enlightenment since my years of adolescence," said Dame Marie.

"The physical grandeur and location of the Library, facing Sydney's historic Royal Botanical Gardens and the Harbour beyond, is surely equalled by its priceless collection of documents, memorabilia and books which record so much of Australia's journey to nationhood, of the men and women who contributed to that inspirational journey, including Australia's indigenous people.

"Indeed, my own life's journey has been significantly enriched by that Library through the countless hours and days spent in that intellectually nurturing environment – an experience difficult to define – but undoubtedly ever present.

It is indeed a profound honour for which I shall always be grateful, to have one's name associated with this great Australian library."

The celebrations will continue at the State Library tonight where Dame Marie will present the inaugural honours of the Library Council of New South Wales. The five honours being awarded recognise distinguished individuals for high levels of achievement consistent with the values, vision and strategic priorities of the Library.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact:

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A BRIEF HISTORY

TIMELINE

1826: The Australian Subscription Library, precursor of the State Library of NSW, opens in Pitt Street. It moves three times until finding a permanent home on Bent Street in 1845.

1853: The Australian Subscription Library becomes a proprietary corporation and is renamed The Australian Library and Literary Institution.

1865: Mr Justice Edward Wise bequeaths his collection of 6000 Australian books, pamphlets and newspapers to the New South Wales government pending the establishment of a free public library.

1869: The NSW Government assumes responsibility for the Library, which becomes the Sydney Free Public Library. Focus changes to a reference collection, with a strong emphasis on Australian material.

1895: The name changes to the Public Library of New South Wales, articulating its role and the importance of its collection.

1898: David Scott Mitchell offers his entire Australian collection and a substantial endowment to the NSW Government on the condition a new building is constructed to house it.

1906: NSW Government lays the foundation stone on 11 September.

1907: David Scott Mitchell dies in July.

1910: The new Mitchell Library (the northwest corner which now houses the Friends Room) opens to the public on 9 March with a reading room for the study of items from the Mitchell Collection.

1919: Sir William Dixon offers to present a collection of paintings to the Public Library, provided a wing is constructed to house it. Dixon also indicates that he is willing to leave his extensive print and manuscript collection to the state after his death.

1929: The Dixon Wing (the southwest corner facing the statue of Matthew Flinders) is opened.

1942: The Public Library extensions to the Mitchell Library Building are opened, including the magnificent vestibule, glassed ceiling reading room and the Shakespeare Room. The collections, staff and services of the Public Library are relocated from Bent Street to the expanded building, now called the Public Library of New South Wales. The Mitchell and Dixon collections continue to be used in the original Mitchell Reading Room and the public library collections are read in the Reference Library Reading Room (known as the Mitchell Library Reading Room since 1988).

1952: Sir William Dixon dies and leaves his collection and a generous endowment to the Library.

1964: Mitchell Library Building completed with the construction of the Domain Wing on the southeast corner.

1975: The name changes to the State Library of New South Wales.

1988: The Macquarie Street wing opens with a new reading room (now the State Reference Library). The Reference Library Reading Room becomes the Mitchell Library Reading Room in which the now very large Mitchell Library Collection, including special collections, are studied by those holding a reader's ticket.

2001: The first major restoration to the Mitchell Library Reading Room completed, repairing the ceiling, installing network cabling and establishing the adjoining Sir William Dixon Research Library.

2007: Minor refurbishment of the Mitchell Library Reading Room completed in July.

2010: Centenary of the Mitchell Library.

2011: Refurbishment of the State Reference Library completed.

2012: Refurbishment of the entry level of the Macquarie Building completed.

2013: AMAZE: The Michael Crouch Gallery opened in the Mitchell Building.

2014: Work commenced to restore the magnificent heritage features in the Mitchell Library Reading Room: cleaning and repairing the stained glass windows, removing the glass barrier around the stairs, replacing the floor covering, and more.

20 OCTOBER 2014: The State Reference Library is renamed the Governor Marie Bashir Reading Room.