



Australian Libraries and Information Council

A PAPER TIGER?

THE THINGS that really add something to progress are those which can add to the quality of life, to the quality of existence; and this is not ever something that can be measured in the terms of washing machines or the number of cars or the production of factories. . . . A good book, more, a good library has a material value it is true, but it has a greater value in its contribution to the quality of human life'.

These were the words spoken by Malcolm Fraser when he opened the LAA's 15th Biennial Conference in 1969.

All very commendable, you'll agree; but if libraries are to 'contribute to the quality of human life', they must first of all have funds to enable them to do so. Surely, Mr Fraser doesn't believe that age-old cliché that the best things in life are free?

The birth of ALIC

After the Horton Report into Public Libraries was handed to Federal Parliament on 1 April 1976, librarians waited for the action to begin . . . and they waited. (The Report recommended that there be an immediate injection of \$20m into public libraries in Australia.)

Until recently, silence, not action has been the only thing to emanate from Canberra. But the silence was broken on 13 February this year when Commonwealth and State Ministers concerned with Culture and the Arts approved the establishment of an Australian Libraries and Information Council. The

Federal Government sees ALIC as a logical outcome from the Horton Report.

We'll have to wait and see just how powerful this Council will be. ALIC will act only in an advisory capacity and will make recommendations to the relevant Federal or State Ministers. It is then up to the Minister(s) or their government to decide whether or not these recommendations will be implemented.

Photographed together for the first time are the eight men responsible for the running of Australia's National, State and Territory libraries. They met in Canberra for a State Librarians' Council meeting on 12 February. The following day, most of them attended, as advisers, the Conference of State and Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for Cultural Affairs and the Arts.

They are (left to right), front row: the Director-General of the National Library of Australia, H. Bryan; the State Librarian of Tasmania and Chairman of the State Librarians' Council, W.L. Brown; the State Librarian of Victoria, K.A.R. Horn; the State Librarian of New South Wales, R.F. Doust; back row: the State Librarian of Western Australia, R.C. Sharman; the Director of the Northern Territory Library Service, R. Davis; the State Librarian of Queensland, S.L. Ryan, and the State Librarian of South Australia, R.K. Olding.

Who's who in ALIC

It has been recommended that ALIC's membership will comprise: the Director-General of the National Library of Australia; State Librarians and the Director of the Northern Territory Library Service; three nominees of the Commonwealth Minister for Education from panels submitted by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the Conference of Principals of Colleges of Advanced Education, the Conference of Directors-General of Education; a nominee of the Commonwealth Minister for Science and Technology.

You'll notice that the membership of ALIC does not include representatives from large libraries such as universities, colleges of advanced education, institutes of technology – even AACOBS isn't represented (though consultation with AACOBS is promised).

We asked the Department of Home Affairs and Environment how ALIC will relate to these large libraries. A spokesman from the Department said that 'it's too early yet to assess.'

Real support?

It is understood that the Department of Home Affairs and Environment will supply secretarial help for ALIC. When we asked whether this support would come in the form of a 'Class 2 typist' or whether it would be someone who could act as a co-ordinator and who would have support staff to gather statistics, assess needs, etc, we were given the same answer – 'too early to say'.

So, will ALIC be the powerful voice that libraries so desperately need, or will it be as ineffective as the Horton Report? Let's hope that ALIC will, in fact, add to the quality of everybody's life.

'Meet an author' grants available

THE LITERATURE BOARD of the Australia Council is again offering grants to public libraries to set up meetings between Australian authors, library users and members of the community.

The grants are to assist in meeting authors' travelling expenses, any speakers' fees or promotion costs. Individual grants of up to \$400 are available to any public library in Australia, and must be used in 1981. The Australian Library Promotion Council is administering the grants on behalf of the Literature Board.

For more information contact the Executive Director, ALPC, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne 3000. Telephone (03) 63 5994. Submissions close on 29 May 1981.

