

SALES TAX THE STATE OF PLAY

LAST YEAR WAS far from quiet on the lobbying front for the LAA. The issue that has taken considerable time and effort is the proposed sales tax on books, magazines and newspapers. Details of Association action has appeared in *Incite*.

This has been continually followed up by letters, telegrams and interviews with the media by our many divisions. We are constantly fighting for mention in our national media, however many of our Branches and Regional Groups have succeeded in the LAA's views receiving considerable media coverage.

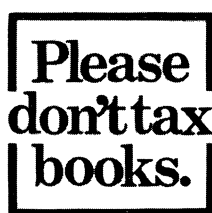
The LAA has been very fortunate to join forces with the Australian Book Publishers Association, Australian Booksellers Association and the National Book Council in a \$40,000 'Please don't tax books' campaign. The ABPA held meetings in Sydney and Melbourne which resulted in the campaign receiving impetus.

I was invited to be on the panel at the Sydney meeting and also to be a member of the 'Please don't tax books' Committee which has met regularly since. The meeting received considerable national media coverage on television and in the newspapers.

Included with this issue of *Incite* is a postcard prepared by the Committee.

I urge you to send the postcard as it is very important that a flood of opposition reaches the Government in January and February. The Australian Democrats have indicated that they may defeat the legislation once more, but that would be the last time.

Whilst writing this item a rather disturbing news release has appeared from the Treasurer, Mr Howard, dated 18 December 1981. In his covering letter he states 'The Government has decided to alter the law so



as to relieve retailers, including booksellers, of the responsibility for allowing exemptions from sales tax claimed by various exempt organisations including schools, universities, municipal authorities, government departments and other organisations covered by Division XI of the First Schedule to the Sales Tax Act. That responsibility will in future be undertaken by the Commissioner for Taxation on the basis of tax refund claims made by the exempt organisations'.

In the press release Mr Howard continues, 'The effect of the change will be that wholesalers and retailers will not be involved in any paperwork, with resulting costs, to handle claims from exempt organisation in respect of retail sales. The exempt organisations, rather than make an individ-

ual claim for each purchase from a supplier, will simply aggregate all sales tax payments into a monthly claim which will be forwarded to the Australian Taxation Office for an appropriate refund.

It is intended that the extension of the refund provisions in the Sales Tax Regulations will be in operation by 29 March 1982.

'This decision in no way alters the Government's intention to impose the Sales Tax on newspapers, magazines and books.'

This latest news makes the situation worse for libraries by involving them in considerable administrative costs and paperwork to claim 2.5 percent. My personal feeling is that smaller institutions may not bother to claim, hence absorb the 2.5 percent increase in price.

From the book publishers point of view this has simply wiped out one of their arguments against the tax - that the administrative costs would increase the price of books. It does nothing to dispel the basic principle that such a tax is a 'tax on knowledge' which the Treasurer continues to reject as an argument.

This latest development means we have to continue lobbying with renewed vigour and impetus. Municipal librarians are urged to ask their Councillors to put pressure on MPs before party room meetings in February. All other librarians should contact their administrators. The next issue of *Incite* will contain a report on the implications of the changes.

Susan Acutt
Executive Director

WA Walkabout

MEMBERS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD of Western Australia, along with State Librarian Bob Sharman and Assistant State Librarian David Pike, went on a three-day tour of country libraries in the south-west and south of the State, covering Bunbury's City Library and Albany Public Library, and smaller places. Twelve libraries in all were visited.

Professor F. Alexander CBE, the Chairman of the Board, led the party, and received a welcome from Mayors, Shire Presidents, Town and Shire Clerks in all towns visited. The itinerary included a library in the tiny settlement of Rocky Gully which boasts 79 families. Practically all of Rocky Gully's families are enrolled in their local library, which is housed in the CWA Hall.

The Chairman explained at numerous gatherings that the objective of the visit was to enable Board members to discover at first hand some of the problems of delivering library service in small communities. There was a danger that library planners, sitting round a table in Perth, would become alienated from the public officers and readers both of whom are essential elements in the library service.

Some councils had (as might be expected) special requests to put to the Library Board. Narrogin, the centre of the wheat and sheep growing area about mid-way between Albany and Perth, wants its library to be recognised as a regional one. Harvey would like to open a branch library at the coastal area of Australind, about 14 km north of Bunbury. Manjimup, whose fine new library opened only two years ago, now wants a branch library at the coastal resort of Walpole. All of these requests were reasonable enough, especially the last mentioned, as Walpole is 119 km from its parent shire town which, despite having four main population centres, has only one free public library. On the establishment of a library at Walpole, and the recognition of a regional centre at Narrogin, the Board has already taken action - both requests approved. Australind will have to wait a little longer for its branch.

The visit was voted a great success, and has certainly helped Board members to get to know their constituency. The next Board visit to libraries, however, might take a bit more organising, as the State Librarian believes Board members should visit the Kimberley, Pilbara, Murchison and Eastern Goldfields regions and, perhaps best of all, Rottnest Island.

Robert Sharman
State Librarian

COUNCILLORS-AT-LARGE

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These people were elected by **you** to represent **your** views on General Council. They are happy to receive correspondence on any issue of concern that should be brought to the attention of General Council. As well as having your Branch Councillors you also have the Councillors-at-large to speak for you.

Please contact them!

In this issue of *Incite* all members should receive a 1982 Board of Education Election booklet, plus a 'Please Don't Tax Books' postcard.

If you live in NSW, Qld or Vic you will also receive a Continuing Education 1982 Program.

If your *Incite* doesn't contain any of these inserts, please contact the LAA office and we will supply you with them.