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REPORT FROM GENERAL COUNCILLOR AT LARGE

On 1-2 August I visited the NSW Far North Coast Region at the invitation of its President, Richard Hughes. This very beautiful region stretches inland and up the coast from Casino to Tweed Heads and includes public, school, TAFE, CAE and one special library. The libraries I visited were public libraries at Lismore, Casino, Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads and the special library attached to the Agricultural Research Centre at Wollongbar. I also had an opportunity to speak to school and CAE librarians at the general meeting held in Lismore on the evening of 1 August. The general meeting was well attended considering that members from Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads often find it difficult to make the two hours drive each way to Lismore after work.

My impression is that there is a general feeling in the Region that country librarians in remote areas, although committed to the Association, feel disadvantaged through their isolation from the mainstream of the library profession. In terms of practical help they consider that the Continuing Education programs are the most important and that the Association should commit itself more to the remote regions when planning CE programs.

Another issue raised was professional development and the lack of opportunity. There is no external course for technicians in New South Wales nor any provision for those with professional library qualifications who wish to proceed to a higher degree.

Each library I visited was very worried by the attitude of the Shire councils towards library funding and is anticipating pressure to charge for library services. Part of the problem is that this region particularly has a rapidly expanding population, not all of whom are ratepayers, which leads to pressure on the library's services without any increase in resources.

On the positive side, all agree that *InCite* was vital to them as it allowed them to keep in touch with what was happening in the library world throughout Australia. Members were also appreciative of the fact that an officer of the Association was interested in their problems and felt it helped to break down some of their isolation.

I would like to thank the NSW Branch Council for financial assistance with travel expenses and the committee of the FNC Region for the hospitality shown to me during my visit. My special thanks also go to the Secretary, Vivienne Sigley, for her generous assistance and transport.

Eve Ahearn
General Councillor at Large

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