

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

### FOI INCREASED CHARGES DISALLOWED

Following the Government's disappointing decision in July to increase FOI charges, it was pleasing that the Senate moved on 13 November to disallow the new charges. Previously the Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, had stated that the reason for the higher charges was to discourage FOI requests. This was clearly at variance with the Attorney-General's assurance that the Government's commitment to effective Freedom of Information remained unchanged.

The Library Association of Australia's opposition to the increased charges has been clearly and effectively expressed. Executive Director Jenny Adams wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 October expressing the LAA's opposition to the increased charges and urging the use of public libraries as a cheap and convenient means of access to government information.

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACCESS NETWORK

Senators Alan Missen and Chris Puplick, who have long been advocates of Freedom of Information, are establishing a Freedom of Information Access Network. For further information contact Senator Missen's office in Melbourne, Senator Puplick's office in Sydney, or in Canberra John McMillan, Rupert Public Interest Movement, PO Box 346, Dickson, ACT, 2602.

### JACK WATERFORD HONOURED

Canberra journalist Jack Waterford has been awarded the Graham Perkin Award for the Australian Journalist of the Year.

The chairman of the judging panel, Sir Theodor Bray, said Jack Waterford, a journalist with the *Canberra Times*, had pioneered a new path in Australian journalism with his work on the Commonwealth Government's Freedom of Information Act. 'For ten years, he chronicled the development of the Act and the Commonwealth's administrative law package,' Sir Theodor said.

Mr Waterford warned that FOI legislation was under threat. 'At the moment, there are probably no more than two members of the Federal Cabinet who support the existing legislation and there are stirrings to cut back the Act to little more than a privacy Act, giving a right of access to one's personal files but no right to scrutinise the central processes of government,' he said. 'That battle may be lost unless members of the Press defend the rights which have been created and, by making greater use of the Act, entrench the rights which have been achieved.'

### NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW seems no closer to the passage of FOI legislation, despite the promises of the Wran Government. An FOI Bill introduced in 1983 has lapsed, and the Government has given no indication of when a new bill may be introduced into State Parliament.

### VICTORIA

The Cain Government has moved to strengthen exemptions from release under the State FOI Act. The Premier is particularly concerned that Cabinet documents will be released. Amendments introduced into Parliament will give the Premier the power to decide which documents are Cabinet documents and therefore exempt from release. There will be no external or judicial review of such decisions.

John Cool  
Canberra

29 November 1986



SENATE STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

### OPERATION OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LEGISLATION

In 1979 this Committee examined proposed freedom of information legislation. In its Report, Freedom of Information, one of the recommendations made was that:

The operation of the Freedom of Information legislation should be subject to review by the Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs three years after the first proclamation of the legislation.

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 has now been in operation for three years.

The Senate has referred to the Committee for inquiry and report the matter of:

The operation and administration of the Freedom of Information legislation

The Committee invites any interested persons or organisations wishing to express views on matters relating to this reference to lodge a written submission with:

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on  
Constitutional and Legal Affairs  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Telephone: 72 6727

by 21 February 1986

### INFORMATION CONSULTING IN AUSTRALIA

#### A PRACTICAL APPROACH

A one-day seminar to be conducted by the Information Management and Consulting Association.

**Date:** Friday 28th February 1986  
**Time:** 8.45 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.  
**Place:** Melbourne Zoo  
**Cost:** \$75 (\$70 LAA members)  
\$10 proceedings

The proposed programme includes sessions on:

- Identifying a market and promoting an information consultancy.
- Practical problems in identifying the target market and adapting your services to suit it.
- Financial and legal aspects of running an information consultancy.
- Practical tendering, costing and personnel considerations.
- Profiles of information consultancies.
- Prospects for information consulting in Australia.

A brief tour of the Zoo will be available after lunch.

For registration, contact IMCA, GPO Box 2128T, Melbourne, Vic. 3001.  
or phone Jennifer Goddard (054) 39 6273 (a.h.), or Helen Campbell (03) 211 1671.

Closing date: Friday 14th February 1986.

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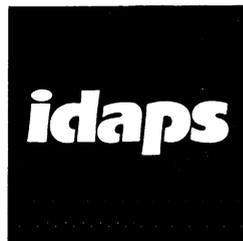
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