

## LETTERS

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## Why buy Australian

Brian Farrow's letter, published in *InCite*, September 19, is the strangest distortion and mis-statement of facts I have encountered.

The statement that ten years ago you had to pay 30 percent more if you purchased locally is just not true. You certainly could pay inflated prices (compared with overseas price converted) if you needed a book urgently, or it was convenient or you didn't know any better. It wasn't however, compulsory. Nor is it today, even though there are price variations, as there should be, in a free-market situation.

Organisations like Bennetts and D.A. did not survive and grow because they charged 30 percent above overseas suppliers. They did not and they were here 10 years ago. There are others. If, as Farrow states we in Australia have no chance of doing our own thing in comparison with the literary giants of England and America then why are we in business?

The statement that an Australian book of some merit to a library *will* be purchased, is simply not true. The Canadians learned this years ago when a marketing effort, called (from memory) 'Books Canada' covered itself in maple leaves to bring Canadian books to the world. Patriotism does not sell books.

The ownership of publishers and suppliers does not have much relevance. You can buy shares in publicly listed overseas corporations. You can buy shares in Australian investment companies and banks who have shares in overseas corporations who have investments in Australian companies.

Investment in Australia by overseas publishers/suppliers is important. When we consider that their investment helps provide employment and contributes to taxation in Australia, then Buy Australian makes sense. Their profits, whether repatriated overseas or re-invested here, are small in comparison with their expenses paid in this country, possibly as much as \$1 profit to \$5 of expenses, in a good year.

The question of where libraries buy cannot be judged on patriotic sentiments. The local suppliers who have competed successfully for library business have done so on their own merits. They took on the establishment of the time and succeeded against the run of play. What they have developed are skilled services which more than compete internationally. As money supply becomes tighter, so does competition. I would not ask a librarian to buy from D.A. only because it is Australian owned and managed. But I would expect support for a supplier who can match overseas based competitors in all respects and do better than them in quite a few areas such as convenience, language and communications, 008 lines, public-access databases, on-line ordering facilities plus a modern information service.

Pre-Farrow, there were numerous book-seller, supplier crashes (the biggest in USA) and we saw the comings and goings of so-called discounters. Some crashes were costly to libraries, not only in dollars lost but in duplicated work. Maybe this has caused librarians to look for stability in addition to price and service. Additional services provided by suppliers, such as standing orders and approval plans, often provide a low-cost solution to a library's needs. It is usually the cheapest way. These services are provided to meet a market demand. They are not compulsory. They are often marginally profitable.

It is curious to read such misinformed comment coupled with a bit of Ben-

nett/Menzies bashing. Jim Bennett set up in business to provide a better, cheaper service than was then available locally. This same service is now the subject of criticism from an obviously unhappy competitor.

My compliments to Brian Farrow for his choice of words. I would regard references such as 'joke on librarians', 'golden handshake', 'gratitude for the golden egg' etc as totally objectionable but very brave. Personally, I am against insulting potential customers.

Forgetting ownership and profits, if a supplier has some local organisation in Australia, uses local people, goods and services, then some part of book funds will remain in Australia and make a contribution to our economy. If you're in a library which hasn't given the better local services proper support, give it some thought. The dollar you circulate in Australia might well be the one that comes back in your book vote.

Bill Kelly  
Australian

## CAPL LAUNCH REPORT

The festivities of the first Riverland West End Multicultural festival at the Berri oval, set the scene for the country launch for Commonwealth Assistance to Multicultural Public Libraries (CAPL) in South Australia. Amidst the numerous craft and food stalls, the Riverland Libraries displayed examples of materials available in Public Libraries for non-English literate persons. The themes for the display were 'Libraries are for Everyone' and 'Library Pie needs Federal Dough'.

The festival started at 10am on Saturday September 27, 1986 and went through until midnight with various ethnic groups providing entertainment in the form of national folkdances and one act plays.

The official launching of the submission in the Riverland was held at 4.45pm with addresses from Derek Whitehead (a member of the National Co-ordinating Committee of CAPL) who outlined the campaign; Margaret Bell (the SA State Co-ordinator for CAPL) who outlined the state of multicultural public library services in South Australia; Heather Bennett (Chief Librarian at Renmark & Paralinga Public Library) who outlined the reasons for the support of the local librarians; and the Hon Al Grassby, who officially launched the submission.

Some 100 invitations were issued to all eth-

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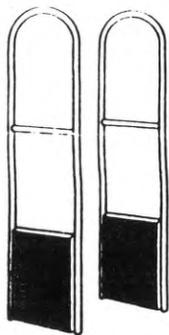
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nic groups represented in the Riverland, local Mayors and Chief Executive Officers, local Members of Parliament, CAPL's State Committee, Local service clubs, Libraries Board of SA Members, Hon Chris Hurford, Hon Barbara Wiese, Hon Chris Sumner, Hon Al Grassby and the Manager of Public Libraries Branch in SA, school principals and ESL teachers and all public librarians in the area. Approximately 60 people attended the launch, with many others hearing the speeches over the PA system on the oval at the festival. Amongst those in attendance was Mr Constantin Karabetsis, the Consul General of Greece. The community were requested to write down their views on the library services to the non-Australian born person and submit them to their librarians, their local Members of Parliament, and also to Members of Parliament in Canberra.

Heather Bennett  
Riverland Launch Co-ordinator.

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