

New position classification standards for APS librarians

New position classification standards (PCSSs) were issued on 10 October 1989 for librarians employed under the Australian Public Service Act. PCSSs describe the level of work to be performed at each of the current five levels of librarian classifications in the APS. They apply directly to more than thirty-five departmental and agency libraries, and more than fifteen other agencies and organisations use them as the basis for classifying librarian positions. All librarians involved are urged to obtain reviews of the classification of their positions as soon as possible.

Features

Some of the features of the new PCSSs are:

- Class 1 librarians may only be in charge of a library where the scope of the library and the functions undertaken are limited, i.e., positions in charge of libraries with a normal range of functions should be classified at the Class 2 level or above;

- recognition of the role of technical specialists in the Class 2, 3 and occasionally Class 4 levels;
- recognition of network librarians at Classes 4 and 5;
- the establishment of a high level management or portfolio level with the new Class 5.

History

The first position classification standards were issued in 1965. The Librarians' Group of the Professional Officers Association began agitating for a revision of the Standards in 1984. In April 1986 this resulted in a joint POA/Department of Industrial Relation (DIR) review of the work of librarians. A cross-sectional sample of positions was reviewed in terms of complexity of the role, and the knowledge and experience required. The data were compared to those from the 1981 work-value exercise.

Negotiations then took place between the POA and DIR between July 1986 and July 1989 (yes, 3 years of meetings!) on the final wording of the new PCSSs. During this time the new Class 5 was established (January 1987).

Existing positions should be reclassified on the basis of the new PCSSs before further changes occur owing to award restructuring.

Payment for responsibility

The airline pilots appear to be well and truly outgunned in their battle to negotiate outside the centralised wage fixing system. The Prime Minister's description of them as glorified bus drivers led the Federation to defend their members' status on the basis of their responsibility for very expensive equipment.

Imagine if librarians were paid according to the responsibility of safeguarding the capital investment in libraries! Librarians are unable to gain insurance, given the cost involved in replacing collections. (If this is possible.)

The Auchmuty Library at the University of Newcastle has valued its law material at \$5.5 million (*The Australian*, 15 November 1989). This university has neither a law school nor a law library! An ALIA member who works with a privately owned rare book collection recently told me that one item she was responsible for was more expensive than her annual salary.

This argument has not worked for the pilots, who face an unhappy Christmas. I hope the Association's members can achieve the initial 3 per cent pay rise before the end of the year, as the ACTU considers it possible. Contributions for next years' Industrial updates are welcome.

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