

# FRONTLINE



Lynn Allen President, ALIA

I am writing this Frontline only a few days after our June General Council meeting in Canberra. Of course, the Executive Director will share details of this meeting at another time in her usual way and some of you will already have had some feedback from your General Councillor by the time this goes to press. Nevertheless, I wish to share with you my impressions of what I consider to have been a significant General Council meeting. Before doing so, let me

say that I think you are very well served by your General Councillors. These people are not only diligent and conscientious in their consultancy but are intelligent and supportive in meetings and, I believe, demonstrate a deep seated caring for our Association.

#### Oakes Committee — user pays

You will be aware of the discussion in the Association on the issue of charges for library services. General Council, after consultation, decided to endorse the principle of free library service, to emphasize our commitment to the right of every citizen to have access to the information needed to play an informed, educated role in our society. You may not all be aware of the Oakes Committee report in New South Wales which argues that a new mechanism for charging for local government services be found. In spite of the fact that the figures quoted in the report demonstrate that in the period 1968-1987 the percentage of expenditure on libraries rose from a lowly 2 per cent to a lofty 3 per cent while recreation and culture moved from 7 per cent to 12 per cent in the same period, libraries are singled out for special attention — not that we would think there is anything special about how the report is treating this vital community asset.

It is proposed that greater cost recovery is possible if various areas are subject to a user pays application. These areas are garbage costs, town planning fees, building fees, dog fees and — libraries. Library fees would be set at \$5 per quarter with annual increases of \$1 per quarter or 10 per cent whichever is greater. The irony of this unacceptable categorisation of what arguably is the most valued service provided by local government to the community is that elsewhere the report suggests fees should be based on 'equity or fairness, simplicity [and] accountability or visibility'.

There is nothing equitable, fair or simple about collecting \$5 per quarter per member. The overheads alone would be enormous — and, it's hardly equitable if some people cannot afford it. To argue that an educated, informed and productively involved community is discretionary is an argument fraught with distortions. And how does a \$5 fee make the library service more accountable? To whom? For what?

General Council considered this matter after it was eloquently drawn to its attention by the New South Wales General Councillor. General Council shared this concern and agreed to allocate \$2000 to the

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# OUT LINE

A first for the Northern Territory! At its June meeting General Council approved the formation of a Regional Group within the Northern Territory. Based in Alice Springs, it will be known as the Central Australian Regional Group. Tom McKeon, ALIA's Industrial Information Officer visited the area recently and other activities are already in the pipeline. The contact person is Carmel Leonard on (089) 51 8230.

At the same meeting General Council also approved the formation of a Literacy Section, South Australia Group. The Group began as the Literacy and Libraries Committee which was set up as part of International Literacy Year. It aims to ensure that full advantage is taken of ILY and that the commitment of libraries to literacy services does not diminish in future years. If you would like to be part of the Group, contact Sophy Athan on (08) 348 2301.

Sold out! Stocks of *Towards a quality service: Goals, objectives and standards for public libraries in Australia* have disappeared. Due to the cost of reprinting, the new prices will be \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members, plus \$2 postage. Please make a note of the new price if you are intending to purchase a copy.

Helen Mandl, Division Support Officer

## Know anyone working hard for literacy?

There are many Australians who have been working in special ways to improve literacy levels in the community, before and during International Literacy Year.

### You may know someone who has:

- worked quietly for years as a volunteer tutor
- been vocal in the right places to publicise the need for literacy programs
- developed innovative materials in literacy teaching
- done a lot of work to involve the local community

The National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year will recognise these contributions with special medals from the Royal Australian Mint.

Awards to individuals, groups or organisations will be made in the following categories: teaching and education, materials development, advocacy and publicity, research and policy, literacy in the workplace, community links, media involvement.

Nomination forms are available from the ILY Secretariat, telephone (06) 257 6933, fax (06) 276 7734.

Entries close 31 October 1990.

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New South Wales Branch to enlist the services of a consultant for the purposes of developing a response. This response will go beyond a simple cost/benefit analysis and will be able to be used to defend free public library service not only against the Oakes Committee report but against the user pays generic principle in the future.

Having reaffirmed our policy statement, it behoves the Association to defend it. I'm sure our New South Wales colleagues will look for support from all States in the development of the response. A press release will have been distributed by the time you read this.

### Strategic issues

General Council also developed further the list of strategic issues identified at our March meeting. We added two further items to make thirteen issues. Each member of General Council has agreed to write a short paper on each issue in conjunction with their Branches and/or colleagues.

It should be made clear that this is not an attempt to redo the Corporate Plan which seems to be referred to as a review by many. Rather, we are attempting to agree on what

the significant issues are so that resources can be applied to those by our full time paid officers. Having agreed on the priorities and some general strategies to come with these issues, the Executive Director will be charged with producing a 3 to 5 year plan.

### Other decisions

General Council made several other important decisions covering *inter alia*:

- the need to explore the possibility of establishing an information services industry concept for training and multi-skilling purposes;
- the interlibrary loan voucher conference;
- conference guidelines;
- communication of General Council agendas, papers and minutes;
- support for the National Book Council.

### Congratulations and thanks

May I pass on my congratulations to Alan Bundy for the award of Fellowship and to Joan Martin for a Letter of Recognition. I would also like to thank the Queensland Branch's President Robyn Collins, Jenny Cram and Queensland colleagues for a most pleasant and informative visit to Brisbane.

## Australian Library & Information Association

### Board of Education

Election of two members by the membership of the Association

### Call for Nominations

Membership of the Board of Education is as follows:

- three professional members elected by the Professional Committee of General Council;
- seven members, of whom at least four must be professional members, elected by the membership-at-large of the Association;
- the President of the Association *ex officio*;
- the Executive Director as a non-voting executive member. (By-law 24)

The terms of office of four members of the Board end on 31 December 1990. Three members are now to be elected by the membership of the Association to hold office until 31 December 1993. The Professional Committee of General Council will elect the fourth member.

Nominations are hereby called for the three positions. Nominees must be personal financial members of the Association, however they need not be professional members.

Nominations shall be:

- in writing;
- signed by two personal financial members of the Association;
- countersigned by the nominee;
- accompanied by a curriculum vitae (giving full details of academic and professional qualifications) and a statement of concerns, each to be not more than 100 words.

Nominations close with the Executive Director, Australian Library and Information Association, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT, 2600. at 5 pm on 3 September 1990.

Board members retiring on 31 December 1990 are Anne Hazell, Christine Henderson, David Jones and Fay Nicholson.

Continuing members of the Board are Twila Herr, Eric Wainwright, Angela Bridgland, Vicki Williamson, Jean Bailey and Joyce Kirk.