

PICKET

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Award restructuring: Two extremes

Through my columns earlier in the year I attempted to explain the principles of award restructuring, so that members of the profession could take an active role in shaping union and employer proposals. From May, agreements have been struck which allow library and information workers a 3 per cent pay rise and substantially redraw classification structures within industrial awards. However, the pace or nature of change has not been consistent. I would like to compare two extremes — the New South Wales Public Service and Higher Education. The extreme are those of inactivity and massive change.

In March 1989 the NSW Government received the Niland Report, Transforming Industrial Relations in NSW. It took some of the recommendations and has prepared legislation which is currently under review due to the Greiner Government's lack of a majority in the Upper House. I will provide details of the proposed legislation in the next issue of *incite*. It is sufficient to say that the need for such legislation has not been felt in other states. Being an ex-Queenslander it is almost a relief to see another State take on the role of 'being different'. However, the push for labour market deregulation is a serious matter.

What I would like to discuss in this issue is how the NSW Government has been acting, not in the role of legislator, but as employer. The structural efficiency principle allows for agreements to be struck at either industry or enterprise level. The NSW Government is actively promoting enterprise agreements. As an employer it is seeking a separate award for each of its public service departments. That means library staff will be employed under different classification structures and receive different rates of pay in every department.

The Public Service Association of NSW was opposed to this proposal and refused to negotiate for several months. Eventually it relented and has entered into negotiations. In one department I am aware of, the union was proposing to rightly include librarians in a professional stream. The department was looking towards a scientific officer stream which excluded non-scientific pro-

fessionals such as librarians from the pay structure! It was hoped they would be paid according to another department's scales. The librarians involved took action to be included in the department's proposal.

This suggests that even industrial relations and human resource personnel may not understand what enterprise agreements are all about. They are designed to apply to workers within an enterprise without reference to other employing bodies. This example shows it is important that your occupation is placed somewhere within a classification structure. When in doubt it is essential to contact your union to make sure you are appropriately placed in these negotiations.

NSW Public Servants have still not received their second 3 per cent. The other extreme is the saga of the restructuring agreement of Higher Education — General Staff. Agreement was reached in late May and I believe the 3 per cent pay rise has followed. In comparison to the process of devolution occurring in the previous example, a centralised process has occurred. Here a large number of awards dealing with universities and colleges of advanced education in various states are set to be replaced by one new Federal award. Thus these will be a common pay and classification structure across Australian higher education institutions for general (non-academic) staff.

A single stream classification structure has been adopted. This approach should be familiar to those people working in the Western Australian Public Service. All occupations are to be placed on a scale of Higher Education Worker Level 1 up to Higher Education Worker Level 9. No salary structure has been agreed to yet, but this is expected by October 1990. For each level a generic statement of duties has been included. Also there are statements regarding expected levels of education, training and work experience. These are very broad and very general and reflect the vastly differing requirements that currently exist for jobs of similar pay levels.

The classification descriptions are to be tested in a joint pilot survey. The classification descriptions will be the primary reference point for determining an appropriate classification for a particular position.

The salary structure will be negotiated after a benchmark survey is completed. Twelve occupations are to be included in this survey, including library technicians and librarians. This survey will look at what salaries are currently being paid to these occupations. At present library technicians are being considered as a level 3 benchmark position. That is, a qualified but inexperienced technician would start at level 3 before being eligible for promotions to higher levels. Newly graduated librarians are being evaluated as level 4. Again, promotion would then be possible to higher levels.

A good number of matters are still to be resolved. Entry arrangements for 3 year and 4 year trained librarians are one of them. However, the recent strike action did ensure that annual increments within each classification have been retained.

TAKING ACTION ON INAPPROPRIATE JOB ADVERTISEMENTS IS WORTHWHILE!

Quick action on the part of the Victorian Government Libraries Association (VIGLA), ALIA, the Library Services Unit, Victorian Ministry for the Arts, and the Victorian Public Service Association (VPSA), has resulted in the withdrawal of an inappropriately advertised position in the Victorian Public Service.

The following provisional promotion without advertisement appeared in the June issue of the Victorian Public Service Notices, published fortnightly by the Public Service Board:

Position No. 85/30/1634/6, Clerical Officer, Grade 3, Librarian, Management & Budget, State Insurance Office, Salary Range \$22 455-\$23 422.

Duties: To develop and maintain the Information Services Business Unit reference library; develop and maintain appropriate library systems for all technical and general publications; advise Divisional and client staff on the availability of reference materials and use of library systems; undertake periodic stock takes of reference materials; oversee the ordering of books and manuals and administer subscriptions; prepare newsletters and up-date on library services; other duties as directed.

Qualifications — Desirable: Appropriate experience in and knowledge of library, registry or information cataloguing procedures; experience in the development and maintenance of library, registry or record-keeping systems; experience in the ordering and acquisition of books and/or journals; sound interpersonal and communication skills; ability to prepare newsletters and reports.

The advertisement was noticed by a vigilant government librarian and brought to the attention of VIGLA on Thursday 14 June. VIGLA alerted ALIA, the VPSA Government Libraries Sub-Group and the Library Services Unit, Ministry for the Arts. Letters, pointing out that the duties outlined in the advertisement require the skills of a professionally qualified librarian and requesting that the position as advertised be immediately withdrawn, were sent to the State Insurance Office (SIO) by VIGLA, ALIA and the Library Services Unit. The ALIA Industrial Information Officer also wrote to the Victorian Public Service Board drawing attention to the advertisement and requesting clarification of the processes the Board has for monitoring position classifications. The swift and concerted action taken by VIGLA, ALIA, the Library Services Unit, and VPSA resulted in the SIO taking immediate action to withdraw the position. The following reply was received from the SIO on Friday, 22 June: 'Thank you for drawing our attention to those issues you have rightly pointed out in relation to Clerical Officer, Grade 3, "Librarian" position recently advertised in the Victorian Public Service Notices. The position has been withdrawn and immediate action is being taken to ensure that the job is appropriately designed and classified in accordance with relevant Classification Standards'.

This exercise proves that quick and concerted action can be effective in influencing employers about professional standards in the design and advertisement of librarian and library technician positions.

Jan Wright

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