

FRONT LINE



Robin Goodram, President, Tas. Branch

IN MARCH Ivan Catlin reported in *Tasmania Under Threat* (*inCite* Vol. 11 No 3) on the re-organisation of State government departments and the implications for the state library services. Subsequent developments have not made us feel that the heading should be revised — there have been some gains but we are currently confronting many of the issues troubling libraries and librarians in other parts of Australia and there is reason to feel some concern about the future of libraries in this state.

As described in Ivan Catlin's review,

the State Library is now part of the Department of Education and the Arts with the State Librarian reporting to the Deputy Secretary responsible for Arts and Culture. While no one would wish to disavow the important role libraries play in the preservation and promotion of our culture, this alignment fails to recognise their more crucial role of information provision. In comparison with the countries of the developed world, Tasmania is an information poor state of an information poor nation with a shaky economy. It is high time our government realised that libraries and the services they provide are an essential infrastructure for a viable economy.

Hard on the heels of the government departmental re-organisation came the commissioning of the external Review of the Department of Education and the Arts by Cresap Management Consultants. The purpose of the review was to provide a tool for government cost cutting, particularly in education, by identifying areas 'where greater efficiencies and cost effectiveness can be achieved while maintaining the quality of education'. Its terms of reference included the examination of library facilities and services and provided the mechanism for a cohesive review of Tasmania's state, local and school libraries and the potential for developing the nexus between these elements of information provision.

To date there have been some positive aspects of the Cresap Review process. Firstly, it has led to a much closer working relationship with the Tasmanian Teacher Librarian's Association. Commonality of interests and the need to present a united front have been clearly demonstrated and ALIA and TTLA worked together on the submission presented to the review team. Secondly, by dint of energetic lobbying by Christine Goodacre and Peter Cohen, ALIA secured strong representation on both advisory committees.

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The Interim Report has been released to widespread consternation with its recommendations for sweeping organisational change and an unprecedented 1100 staff redundancies.

The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation has stated that the report will put education in this State back 40 years.



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AUSTRALIAN LASER DISK INFORMATION SERVICES

Recommendations for the States library services include:

- 2 regions rather than the present 3
- a rationalisation of branch libraries with closure of 33 branches and 17.4 jobs to go
- libraries to close Mondays and remain open all day Saturday.

ALIA agrees in principle with the thrust of the report and with many of the recommendations relating to the re-organisation of the State and local libraries which, we gather, are in line with recommendations of the internal review.

Now, our concerns — and I must stress that my comments relate to the Interim Report of the Review; the final report is to be presented to the government at the time of this article going to press.

Far from providing a comprehensive overview of the provision of information services in the State, the report's treatment has been fragmentary with some serious omissions.

We applaud the recommendation that the vacant position of State Librarian be filled as an urgent priority but the level of the appointment is not a reflection of what is arguably the most significant library position in the state. The salary of the public service level recommended is significantly lower than that of State Librarians in other States and that of the University Librarian, making it unlikely that the position will attract applicants of

the calibre required.

It is not clear how the industrial issues arising from the branch library closures will be resolved.

The State Library of Tasmania is responsible for the network of 17 Government agency libraries making up the Government Library and Information Service. ALIA recommended that the GLIS model should be examined in some detail to determine its potential for serving as a model in the development of the State service. That the Interim Report has failed to consider this area of the State Library operation is a further indication of the misunderstanding of its role in information provision.

Devolution of responsibility

Another area to have fared poorly in the Interim Report is that of school libraries which, despite our submission, have received no explicit consideration. The main organising principle of the Report recommendations on education has been one of devolution of responsibility and resources to the local level. School library resources and levels of staffing are therefore to be determined at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the district director. Our insistence on the need for a departmental policy on minimum standards both to maintain standards and ensure equity of resource

provision was ignored.

The Report did recommend the retention of existing levels of specialist teachers (including, by implication, teacher-librarians) before the allocation of classroom teachers but already this is meeting with some opposition from principals who feel it infringes their discretionary authority.

We have stated that the primary role of school libraries is to support the school curriculum and to that degree the collection must be tailored to the curricula requirements of the individual school. However, a succession of Education Department policy documents reiterating the requirement that resource based teaching and learning form part of the core curriculum implies quality resource provision. Certainly a diminished curriculum will require a corresponding diminution of resource provision but the Report has specifically stated that the quality of education is to be maintained.

School libraries must be seen as part of the totality of information services for children, the other component being that provided by the children's and young adult services of the State and local libraries. The present level of provision has been arrived at over the last few decades as a result of the concerted efforts of professionals, State and Commonwealth initiatives and the insistence on recognised minimum standards. The next few years could well see these hard won gains considerably eroded.

We don't yet know how the government will implement the report but its recommendations appear to substantially fulfil its requirements. We have not seen the final report — it is possible that it may have been amended in line with our submission. We await its release with interest but no great optimism.

Robin Goodram
President
Tasmanian Branch



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libraries in education, libraries in the workplace, libraries supporting every need, libraries as a career. These displays will be complemented by product demonstrations and enlivened by the occasional busker.

The ALIA WA Branch, in conjunction with the Library Promotion Council of WA, has coordinated the relaunching of the Alfred McMicken Award for public library promotion, to be held during the ALIA 1990 conference — a preview of Australian Library Week events in *Western Australia*.

Leave your magnifying glasses at home — you don't have to look hard (or far) to find enthusiastic and enthralling 'life' in your library.

Australian Library Week. A tradition alive and flourishing.



National InterLibrary Loans meeting



Call for Proposals

The Australian Library and Information Association is convening a nationally representative meeting, on Thursday, 22 November 1990 to discuss the development of a more efficient system of payment for interlibrary loans in Australia. Expressions of interest in presenting proposals for new ILL payment options and strategies are invited. They should be directed to the Conference Manager, ALIA, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600.

Submissions are required by 24 October 1990