

PICKET LINE



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ALIA and industrial relations

Members are sometimes confused as to the relationship of ALIA to the industrial relations system in this country. It must be initially said that ALIA is not a union and cannot become one as it has both individual and institutional members.

Only registered unions and employer associations may formally be involved in the making of industrial awards within the various Federal and State industrial tribunals. These awards generally specify wages, employment conditions, the qualifications required for appointment and often the type of work to be done.

ALIA's members are also members of over 60 unions across the country. Consequently, library staff are employed under a large number of different awards. Industrial awards that cover library staff have been won by unions in the sectors of the public services, higher education, local government, health industry and schools.

The private school system is currently the only example of library staff in private enterprise being covered by industrial awards. A large number of 'special libraries' are thus employing staff under different arrangements.

Enterprise bargaining

I receive a lot of enquiries about rates of pay from both employers and employees in the private sector. This award-free situation is a form of enterprise bargaining. There is no legal requirement to pay any particular salary. Usually, ALIA will recommend to

employers that a public service pay scale be used as a guide. Sometimes library staff will be paid according to an inappropriate award like a clerical award, that does not match pay to qualifications.

Under enterprise bargaining, library staff are free to negotiate whatever pay they can. Employers, however, may employ staff with whatever qualifications or lack thereof as they see fit, if not constrained by awards. I recently received a complaint from a member who was asked to prepare an unqualified person for running a library, with one hour's tuition. ALIA may lobby the employers in such cases, though the employer is entitled to take such decisions.

Industry unionism

In private enterprise, there are some changes that should give ALIA members hope. As unions move from a craft structure to an industry structure, library staff who work in isolated pockets across industry will more frequently come under award coverage. The Australian Journalists Association has been granted coverage of librarians who work in the newspaper industry. Some teacher unions in independent schools have gained coverage of non-teaching staff. Thus awards and career structures can be developed for library technicians in schools.

Proposals for future wages packages

The 1990 Federal election will obviously alter wages outcomes. Both political parties are offering wage packages with differing interpretations of enterprise bargaining.

The ALP is offering a wage/income increase for all employees covered by awards with scope for above award increases. These would be negotiated at the individual enterprise level, by collective bargaining between unions and employers. The wage package includes some pay rises, a tax cut and increases to employer sponsored superannuation. Pay rises would be conditional on award restructuring proceeding.

The Coalition is offering three wage options or streams:

1. The centralised wage system will be retained i.e. national wage increases would be awarded by the Industrial Relations Commission.
2. Larger unionised enterprises would use certified agreements to provide above award pay rises in exchange

for a reorganisation of work.

3. The small business sector will be able to avoid national wage increases by the use of voluntary agreements. These agreements are between employers and individuals. The minimum floor of wages and conditions is removed as the requirements of awards need not be followed.

All workers would be employed under one of the above three streams.

Teacher-librarians in Victoria

The position of teacher-librarians in Victorian government schools is under review. Current Ministry of Education proposals indicate that teacher-librarians will now be retained but supported by other staff. The conditions of employment may change. That is, a break may be made with the teachers' award to something more like public service hours.

The proposal to employ 'other staff' has not been spelt out. There is no indication as to what type of staff are being considered, e.g. librarian, library technician or library clerk. Also, the ratio of other staff to teacher-librarians has not been specified.

The Ministry may wish to substitute other staff for teacher-librarians. Future research is required to support the teaching role of teacher-librarians. Without this sort of evidence, other staff will replace them. If you have done any research into the hours that go into the provision and design of teaching, by teacher-librarians, please forward this material to myself at the ALIA office as soon as possible.

**A
gentle
nudge ...**

for those of you who have yet to unearth your 1990 ALIA membership renewal form. In order to ensure continued receipt of *inCite* etc. you'll have to do it now - it was due on 28 February.