

FRONT LINE



Robyn Collins, ALIA QLD Branch President

I am delighted to have been asked to write a guest Frontline column. This article offers the opportunity to outline those issues and events that are of particular importance to the Queensland membership. Three issues have gained prominence and look like dominating in 1990. They are award restructuring, the request of the North Queensland Regional Group to form a separate Branch and the Branch's desire for a review of librarianship education in Queensland.

Award restructuring has received considerable editorial space of late. However, it is an issue that will affect most members of the Association sooner or later. As a Queensland public librarian I am sure that award restructuring offers the best opportunity for a long time for library workers under the Municipal Officers Award to redress some of the inequities existing in the current award. There is very little recognition for library technicians or for the position of Deputy Chief Librarian. Career structure is poor and offers little for all staff, but particularly those in the larger public libraries. Wage parity has been lost with members working under the State award.

One hope that award restructuring offers, is the emphasis that it places on educational qualifications as a means of advancement. In many ways librarianship has this criterion sewn up! This, combined with the general philosophy of broadbanding should improve the lot of library workers in local government. Also, some commitment has been made to raising the profile of the 'female' callings within the award. Librarianship is seen to belong to this category. Certainly, the monetary reward and recognition for the attainment of the qualification of library technician is far less than that for many what may be described, 'male' dominated callings. If

these, and other inequities are addressed, then much will have been achieved.

However, award restructuring should not be seen as a panacea for all industrial ills. It will not be easy to make a special case for library workers. While I have rather parochially only mentioned award restructuring with regard to public libraries, the issue obviously has wider applications. However, at the moment in Queensland, there is considerable activity where public libraries are concerned.

The Industrial Relations Subcommittee has taken responsibility for coordinating the Association's efforts with regard to award restructuring. A seminar on the topic was held in February and an article by the Subcommittee's Convenor, Carolyn Chalmers, was published in Quill. Branch Council recognises that it has a role to play in informing members about the issue, to give them the best chance working through their own unions, to achieve a good result when their award is restructured.

While this issue is largely driven by forces outside the Association, a major project has been developed from within, and this is the decision to try to establish a major review of librarianship education in Queensland. This project has been prompted by two factors. One is a general disquiet among members concerning the current state of librarianship education in Queensland. And the other, is the non-implementation of most of the recommendations of the 1978 Committee on Desirable Developments in Library Education (CODDLE) Report which was the last review of librarianship education held in Queensland.

Of particular concern for most members when the project was first mooted, was that there was still neither a Bachelors degree nor a Masters degree course in librarianship offered in Queensland. This situation has since changed slightly with the introduction of a Masters course in information science at Queensland University of Technology for which librarianship graduates may apply. However, it would appear that the course will require a strong computing background and may not be appropriate for those wanting to study and research the more traditional areas of librarianship at an advanced level.

The situation in Queensland has become more complicated with the amalgamation of two of the institutions teaching librarianship, that is, Queensland University of Technology and the Brisbane College of Advanced Education. The library technicians course

taught in Brisbane has also had a change in management. It is now under the auspices of the Queensland College of Art. With these changes the time seems even more appropriate for a review.

The Branch has been working towards this goal for over a year. Late in 1988 a meeting was called of Chief Librarians in south east Queensland to discuss the issue. Subsequent meetings of this group resolved that the issue was of such importance that to enhance any submission made to funding authorities for a review, that a survey should be undertaken first, to pinpoint the real issues.

Requests were then made to all the major libraries in Queensland for donations to help finance the survey. With considerable support from both the Association's sections and the major libraries the survey was commissioned. The questionnaires have just been distributed and a report should be soon forthcoming. Once the results of the survey have been released it should be very apparent if the next move for the Association is to push for another formal review.

The North Queensland Regional Group's request to establish a separate Branch has focused attention on the difficulties faced by the Regional Groups. The problems of distance coupled with smaller memberships do create a disadvantage for members distant from the capital cities. The implications of the request are quite complex for the Association.

Finally, I am happy to report that a request made by Branch Council to the new government in Queensland has had a positive result. With the reconstitution of the Library Board of Queensland a request was made that consideration be given to the appointment of a librarian to the Board. The Library Board is a statutory authority which governs the State Library of Queensland and administers subsidy to public libraries throughout the State.

While not wishing to jump to any overly obvious conclusions, it was with considerable pleasure that the announcement was greeted, of the appointment of the Townsville City Librarian, Mrs Joycelyn Brent, to the Library Board of Queensland. Certainly, she has the congratulations and best wishes of ALIA's Queensland members.

CORRECTION

The *inCite* 11(5) 30 April 1990 Frontline was contributed by David Hugo, NT Branch President. The Editor apologises to both David Hugo and Lynn Allen, President, ALIA.