

ALIA/Thorpe book launched

New Australian Reference Series off to a flying start, says **Richard Baker**

THE FOUNTAIN courtyard, Parliament House, Sydney, was the venue for the launch, on Friday 26 June, of the first title in ALIA/Thorpe's new Australian Reference Series, *Australian Sourcebooks: Social Sciences*. The book is by Barbara Brady, who is a reference librarian in the New South Wales Parliamentary Library, and is an annotated bibliography of some 630 Australian reference works in the

social sciences, including monographs, periodicals, books which are re-issued or updated periodically, as well as computerised information services online or on disk.

The launch was performed by The Honourable Jim Samios, MBE, MLC, representing the New South

Wales Attorney General and Minister for the Arts, The Honourable Peter Collins, MP, and was attended by over 60 librarians, Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, representatives of ALIA and ALIA/Thorpe, and family and friends of the author. ■



The Hon. Jim Samios and Barbara Brady at the launch



James Henri, Chair of the ALIA Press Board

Our changing telephone directory

A STUDY, conducted nationwide in 1990 by Elliott and Shanahan Research, showed that almost half the adult population finds it difficult to look up government numbers in the Telecom White Pages. One in every three people failed with Commonwealth numbers, one in every five for State and one in every four for Local. In some instances, people in the study needed to search more than six times before finding a usable telephone number.

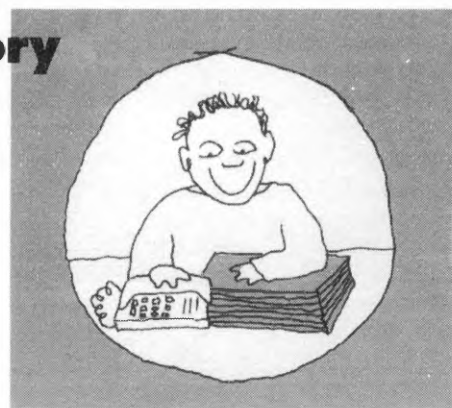
The current system forces people to search in a wide variety of places, because there is no commonly accepted system for listing government numbers. Also, people are not always sure of the department name or level of government that provides the service they need.

Telecom consulted with representatives from community groups such as the aged, ethnic, citizens advice and disabled persons to find a better way to present government information. Following this consultation, Telecom tried

integrating government listings into the alphabetical section of the directory, in the 1991 edition of the Hobart White Pages so that people only had to search in one place. As a result of feedback, more cross-references were added to the 1992 edition of the Hobart White Pages.

Follow-up research confirmed that the new alphabetical listing method is easier to use. The number of search steps to find a usable number dropped dramatically. For example, the percentage of people finding a number in one step rose from 39% to 58%. On average, 28% failed to find any usable number with the old system, but only 17% had the same difficulty with the government listings when they were located in the alphabetical section.

The simpler system depends on comprehensive functional entries and cross-references. The functional entries mean that the key services provided by a department or agency are listed by name. People no longer need to know the exact title of a government department—which is



subject to change—or whether a function is a Commonwealth, State or Local government responsibility. Now, birth certificates are listed under 'B' and passports under 'P'. Dog licences have a heading under 'D' and are cross-referenced to Local Council. An effective matrix of cross-references requires continuing liaison with all government departments and agencies, but the result should be White Pages directories that enable people to find government numbers more accurately and more quickly.

The changes will be introduced into Canberra next year, and progressively throughout Australia. ■