

Australians and their heritage

On 23 March new Minister Wendy Fatin opens the national conference *Towards Federation 2001*. John Thompson explains the significance of improved access to Australian documentary heritage materials

PLANNING is now in its final stages for the major consultative conference *Towards Federation 2001: Linking Australians and their Heritage*, which will take place in Canberra from 23-26 March. A previous report on the preparations for this conference was published in *inCite* 20, 9 December 1991.

Towards Federation 2001 will be officially opened by the new federal Minister for the Arts and Territories, the Hon. Wendy Fatin MP at a reception hosted by Warren Horton, Director-General, National Library of Australia on the evening of Monday 23 March. An official dinner of welcome to conference delegates will follow this reception. The conference will conduct its working sessions at the Lakeside Hotel on 24 and 25 March. A final plenary day will be held at the National Library on 26 March.

The National Library sent out invitations to participants in January and February. The response has been excellent: the conference will bring together about 150 professional colleagues, most of them representing the major Australian libraries and archives. They will consider a wide range of issues relating to the collecting, controlling, preserving and the provision of physical access to Australian documentary heritage materials—the Australian imprint and a wide range of materials in special formats such as manuscripts, pictures, oral history, maps, music and ephemera.

Towards Federation 2001 has been developed as a broadened response to the Australian Libraries Summit resolution AA7 which recommended that the NLA should convene a meeting of Australian copyright deposit libraries to determine the best means of ensuring access to Australian published materials.

The conference planning committee chaired by Eric Wainwright, Deputy Director-General, NLA, has by now met many times. It comprises senior members of the National Library staff, greatly assisted by Janine Schmidt (Director, Collection Services, State Library of New South Wales) representing the State Libraries Council, Gordon Bower representing ACLIS and Margaret Trask who will serve as the conference chairperson, a role she performed so capably at the Australian Libraries Summit.

Colleagues in many Australian libraries, archives and

kindred institution have provided substantial assistance to the committee. They have prepared working papers dealing with the collecting, access, control and preservation issues which affect a range of formats of Australian material. The conference will consider in detail the issues raised by the working groups which have carried out these investigations when it meets at the end of this month.

The conference agenda and associated working papers have recently been distributed. They have gone out not only to delegates but also to State and Territory Committees of ACLIS, which have agreed to carry out consultations on the various issues to be considered.

Besides the specialised working sessions of the conference, a number of plenary sessions and panel discussions have been arranged. John Arnold of the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University will look critically at the gaps in the bibliographic control of Australian documentary and research materials. Warren Horton, Alison Crook, Ross Gibbs and Meg Cameron will debate the political issues which they consider critical to the achievement of improved access by Australians to their documentary heritage. Derek Fielding will review copyright issues. A specialist panel will consider the opportunities offered by computer technology and attention will be given to the special problems posed for collecting institutions by multicultural materials, materials of interest to Aboriginal Australians and to the information needs of people with disabilities.

The conference will look for agreement on outcomes which will contribute to improvements in the overall collecting, control, use and preservation of the range of materials which constitute Australia's documentary heritage.

The conference and its outcomes will be reported in a later edition of *inCite* and in National Library of Australia News; they will also be considered

at ALIA's biennial conference at Albury-Wodonga, in papers presented by Janine Schmidt and John Thompson.

Enquiries about *Towards Federation 2001* should be directed to John Thompson, Director, Australian Collections and Services, National Library of Australia, telephone (06) 262 1303, fax (06) 273 3648.



The Hon. Wendy Fatin MP, Minister for Arts and Territories, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women. In her letter accepting the invitation to open the conference the Minister said, 'I see this as a potentially important conference for libraries in Australia and also an excellent opportunity to meet key players in the library and information industry.'