

Letters

'Even if we tell you it can be done...'

In her comments about award restructuring in *inCite* 8, Frances Clancy speaks in the plural, so she is presumably writing for a constituency, but doesn't say which it is; given the content and tone of the report of the meeting on award restructuring which appeared in *inCite* 6 to which she refers in her criticism of ALIA's Industrial Officer, a casual reader could be excused for wondering if both accounts were of the same meeting. Susan Ainsworth's response is apposite; ALIA National Office could have gone to every meeting on award restructuring in the country, and it could perhaps have taken a legal-industrial adviser with it, but my guess is that this would have taken its entire budget. I certainly don't remember hearing anyone suggesting, given the 400 or so unions to which ALIA members belong, that this was a sensible option.

'ILLs are either too slow or expensive... for most users'. Perhaps they are for some readers, but by and large, Australia's ILL networks and processes, given the size of this country and its population, are the admiration of many other countries. Let's hear some constructive comments for improving the present system.

'We are continually deceiving both ourselves and our readers if we continually offer services and then do not deliver them'. In a sense, we are caught here between the speed with which we can search for and print out citations, compared with the normal process for delivering

the documents to which they refer. But it is possible to get a document manually across Australia for next day delivery; is that too slow? Or, by our reluctance to properly price such services to the enquirer are we contributing further to misunderstanding?

'Where was ALIA when award restructuring hit librarians?' Where it has always been; at its National Headquarters, a fax or a 008 call away. Or in the local presence offices, providing the kind of access which a majority of ALIA members would envy their Melbourne colleagues. And where was Frances Clancy in her follow-up to the Victorian experience? Where is the constructive advice which she must be able to offer to colleagues across Australia? I look forward to reading it.

'ALIA may need to reconsider its attitude...' Frances, ALIA is not a thing apart; it is Frances Clancy, it is John Levett, it is all those 7 000 members who believe in its objects, it is those 400 hardy souls who accept honorary office and work hard for what they believe in, it is the 18 committed staff in the National Office, it is its policies, its Statements, it is all of us. If ALIA isn't performing, we should perhaps be looking more closely at our own attitudes, our own contributions and our own commitment. It isn't constructive to think of ALIA as 'them'. Not while you're a member, too. If you don't like the way things are, then work to improve them.

I look forward to your contribution.

John Levett
Immediate Past President

DAS's two penn'orth of flesh

The Commonwealth Government Librarians are opposing the 2% charge by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for the supply of goods and services on the DAS contracts.

Most librarians working in Commonwealth statutory authorities and departments are required to use the DAS contracts when purchasing books, serials or contract cataloguing and indexing

services. The contracts are negotiated by DAS by calling for tenders for the supply of goods and services on a two yearly period. Each set of applications for a contract is considered by a panel of librarians who make recommendations to DAS for the successful contracts for each contract. There are currently five major DAS contracts relating to libraries:

- supply of books
- supply of legal publications
- supply of a full range of library cataloguing, indexing and related services
- serial consolidation (accessioning) services
- supply of serial publications
All Commonwealth

Government buyers subject to the Audit Act and Finance Regulations are required to use the DAS Period contracts. When publications or services are supplied under the contract a 2% fee is charged by DAS. This means that for every book purchased the supplier must pay 2% to DAS.

Librarians believe that the DAS contract system has been very useful to ensure that the best prices and conditions are available to Commonwealth libraries. The librarians also believe that the 2% is an unreasonably high charge given the low costs to DAS of negotiating the contract, particularly because of the co-operative work by the commonwealth Librarians in developing the recommendations for the contracts.

The most recent contract, for the supply of serial publications, resulted in a letter from the Technical Advisers, Nancy Mason, (Australian National Audit Office) and Roxanne Missingham (Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service) requesting a review of the 2% fee. A response has not yet been received from DAS.

If you are interested in the contracts Buyers' guides for the contracts, or further information on the DAS contract system contact Anne Cartwright on (06) 295 4825.

We shall let you know what response we get from DAS in a future issue of *inCite*.

Roxanne Missingham ■

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