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Last month I was able to visit a number of ALIA groups in Queensland and Victoria to discuss some of the issues that are currently concerning members. Some trends are worrying and there is little doubt that General Council's recent decision to increase attention on workplace matters is timely.

Local government is a particular sector where difficulties are being experienced by library workers. In several areas a tendency to denigrate the importance of formal education in library science is developing. Sometimes this is being proposed by reference to competency based training and the need for flexibility. But it is apparent that the approach is not even-handed. There is no evidence, for example, of similar action in regard to other professional employment categories like engineering, surveying or town planning. In these circumstances, librarians are entitled to be cynical about the real motives.

ALIA's Workforce Committee is currently considering this issue and is looking to develop further statements on the importance of formal training and education in the workplace. It hopes to be able to provide material which will help library workers argue against attempts to bring unqualified people into professional librarian positions.

ALIA, of course, does not oppose present national trends in education and training. Indeed, as members know, the Association is actively involved with employer and union representatives in the industry's national project for development of competency standards.

What ALIA does object to is precipitate action by employers now

to lower standards in advance of the findings of a national process supported by and involving all parts of the industry. Clearly, this can only compromise the chances of a sound national outcome with which all parties can ultimately be satisfied.

I would be grateful if members would contact me if they become

### **Enterprise bargaining**

the new industrial relations for Australia in the 1990's

- how will it work?
- are working conditions safe?
- will you get a pay rise?
- what's negotiable?
- what are the issues for ALIA members?
- how do you negotiate an agreement?

ALIA has produced a new series of booklets on *Enterprise Bargaining and Workplace Reform* to help members master the evolving industrial relations system. Contact ALIA National Office for more details.

aware of attempts to remove the requirement for professional qualifications from selection criteria for librarian positions.

A recent survey of more than 50 000 employees by the Sydney organisation Childcare at Work provides some interesting information on the effects of family responsibilities on workers. The survey finds that an average of four days a year are taken off by employees because of childcare problems.

A further five days are severely disrupted. More than 40% of female employees were seriously considering giving up work because of childcare difficulties.

Almost 60% said they would use employer sponsored day care facilities if they were provided. Other work-based assistance requested included more variable working hours (65%), special leave to care for sick children (62%) and more flexible re-entry to the workplace after maternity leave (40%).

*I would be grateful if members would contact me if they become aware of attempts to remove the requirement for professional qualifications from selection criteria for librarian positions.*

These are topical findings given the Federal Government's ratification of International Labour Organisation Convention 156, 'Workers with Family Responsibilities'.

A very high proportion of workers in the library and information sector are women with children. As enterprise bargaining gathers pace there will be an opportunity to bring a wider range of issues onto the negotiating table. If you are affected by questions of closer alignment of work and family responsibilities, you can validly raise these issues on the grounds that the nation is now committed to action in this area by its international obligations.

Members in this category should think carefully about how they would like to adjust their working conditions to fit in better with their family responsibilities. Unions are committed to pursuit of new policies in this area and you should encourage them to adopt your ideas. If you are not covered by a union, you should discuss changes with your employer and refer to the Government's commitments when doing so.

### **Jobline**

Regrettably, the Association has been forced to discontinue the Jobline service which it has been working hard to develop over the past few months. There has been a disappointing response from employers despite early successes and strong promotion by ALIA. The Association was also highly dissatisfied with the standard of support it received from the company operating these 0055 telephone services. Our costs have exceeded our returns, and since clearly nobody is benefiting any more we have thought it best to pull out. ■