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**B**ill Linklater has invited me to write about workplace reform, one of ALIA's identified priorities for action in 1994. He believes that it is important that our members have a concise overview of workplace reform issues from a public library perspective. The National Office has produced two excellent brochures on one of the aspects, enterprise bargaining, which outlines the national economic context and the general applicability to library and information workers.

One consistent thing about public libraries is their uniqueness: at the local level, one library is quite unlike another; even their funding arrangements differ from State to State. Similarly each State and Territory presents a different industrial scenario but with a common element throughout, ie. the rapid rate of change that has taken place over the last five years. The changes have obviously been driven by national wage case decisions, the differences relate to timing and emphasis. The agendas include award restructuring and broad-banding, enterprise bargaining, and compulsory competitive tendering. Lately the issues have been compounded by local government amalgamations. The following is a brief description of what is happening at the State/Territory level:

#### ACT

The ACT Library Service has been un-

der a series of reviews over the past five years and has been restructured into three, largely and increasingly autonomous, regional services, co-ordinated by a central administration. Recently the ACT Legislative Assembly passed legislation to establish a separate ACT public service. Discussion and negotiation is continuing to fine-tune the implementation of this policy. Some workplace issues, for example enterprise bargaining, are being negotiated on a Department-wide basis and the library service has had little opportunity to negotiate matters of interest to the management or staff. The Public Sector Union has such a broad coverage that the negotiations are covering matters of general concern to a large number of diverse agencies of which the ACT Library is but one small part. As yet there has been no consideration given to compulsory competitive tendering (CCT).

#### NSW

Restructuring (of Councils and resulting from changes in the Local Government Act, 1993) has seen the development in some Councils of improved staff appraisal systems, pay for performance, and opportunities to move to other areas of Council administration. Negotiations for enterprise agreements are underway with few completed. The difficulties encountered include the spread of hours over

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seven days, incorporation of shift payments and a strong push to have different salary rates for existing and new staff. Despite some cases of inadequate recognition of skills and standards of services, library workers now have greater involvement in the compilation of their Council's Management and Strategic Plans and in the development of meaningful performance measures. Libraries are well ahead of many other local government services on productivity improvements and customer service.

#### NT

Workplace reform has proceeded across local government areas with the introduction of award restructuring, the broad-banding of positions and a new Municipal Officers Award during 1992/93. Broad-banding generally worked well for professional and para-professional library workers who had traditionally been classified below engineers and other technical workers. Amalgamations have not been an issue to date. Larger municipalities in major regional centres and some smaller community councils in remote areas have a reasonably strong tradition of contracting out services but not yet of library services. Enterprise bargaining has been slow with the most advanced of the Councils still finalising the preliminary process agreements with unions before the establishment of 'in-house' joint

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committees. Flexible working hours and payment of penalty rates will be an obvious area of bargaining for extended library-opening hours.

## QLD

A new Local Government Officers award was introduced in 1992. The transition was slow and difficult particularly in the area of achieving appropriate levels on the award for experienced qualified librarians and chief librarians. There are still many cases before boards of reference. Councils are in the preliminary stages of working towards enterprise bargaining. Where amalgamations and changes to local authority boundaries are not occurring, joint agreements are being drawn up which include provision of library services. In March this year a new Local Government Act was introduced, totally changing the face of local government. This will require further time-consuming restructuring and planning.

## SA

Workplace reforms, first in the form of award restructuring and now with the first round of enterprise bargaining have demanded that library workers are more accountable than ever for the provision of both quality 'traditional' library service and access to up-to-date information technology and networks. The introduction of the principles of total quality service, continuous improvement and self-managed work teams in many metropolitan Councils has required the participation of library managers and their staff in assessment of traditional work practices and their redesign, often with very positive results. Cross-discipline exchanges amongst management staff has also included libraries. One of the major challenges will result from the proposed Council boundary mergers which are to occur over the next year. It is hoped

that the existing strong networks and linkages to the central computer system (PLAIN) will be advantageous to libraries in the competitive tendering environment.

## TAS

Public libraries are operated and administered by the State Library of Tasmania which is funded by the State Government. Legislation has been passed to enable enterprise agreements to be negotiated between employers and employees, and as part of this legislation, industry awards no longer override the State Service Act. Professional and para-professional staff working in public libraries are covered by State awards, and in future their wages and conditions will be largely determined by workplace negotiations. Enterprise agreements will be negotiated on staff's behalf by their union. A close watch is being kept on the likely impact of the new industrial relations legislation.

## VIC

Award restructuring has generally benefited library workers, particularly in relation to parity with other local government employees. Staff development schemes have enabled more effective planning and the meeting of organisational objectives. Enterprise bargaining has been on the agenda for some time but as yet few library specific agreements have been concluded. The most advanced is that negotiated by Eastern Regional Libraries which is now before the Industrial Relations Commission. The current restructuring of local government boundaries and the massive reduction in the total number of authorities will impact on both regional and single municipality libraries. The State Government has passed legislation to introduce compulsory competitive tendering from October 1994. Councils are to tender 20% of total expenses in 1994-95 rising to 50% in

1996/97. The options will include whole libraries or selected parts e.g. technical services being tendered out or tendering in their own right.

## WA

Broad-banding is the current issue. Libraries operating under the Local Government Award are working on revising duty statements, looking at skill levels and consulting with management to achieve a broad-banded classification structure. Contrasting with the local government amalgamations currently taking place in other states, is the division of Perth City Council into four separate authorities. Enterprise bargaining is being phased in and individual departments in local authorities will be encouraged to form committees to draft enterprise agreements. CCT is being discussed, and the West Australian Municipal Association recently circulated a questionnaire requesting local authorities to identify services that they supply and the estimated value of these to residents and businesses.

No matter which approach has been taken, or the amount of progress made so far, it must be said that most library services and librarians have benefited from the changes where they have been embraced as opportunities and dealt with in a co-operative manner. The strong networks between libraries and librarians need to be maintained however, to ensure the so-called benefits of structural change and reform, and the effect of the introduction of competency standards, are directed to our library's patrons and our Association's members. ■

*(I am indebted to John Brudenall, Ross Barrett, Diana Oliver, Diane Vance, Beth Davidson-Park, Peter Conlon and Kay Poustie for their State/Territory summaries)*

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