

An equal partner across the Tasman

Warren Horton, Director-General, National Library of Australia



To help Australian delegates who will be in Wellington in September, here are some observations about New Zealand libraries and the profession in general in New Zealand. My comments are of course very impressionistic.

I think it fair to say that New Zealand librarians are much better informed of Australian library developments than we are about New Zealand. There are several reasons for this, one being the relative size of the profession in the two countries, but most important is the impact of the *Closer Economic Relationship* agreement between the two governments. The Australian media also seems to

have a significant impact in New Zealand, although you may be bemused at the high level of British programming on New Zealand television services. But you can certainly expect knowledgeable contributions from New Zealand delegates on Australian library developments, and there is very considerable interest in the possibility of further cross-Tasman cooperation. Peter Scott, the National Librarian of New Zealand, has spoken publicly of a possible *Closer Information Relationship* by the end of the decade by the two professions, with very strong formal cooperation and many shared infrastructure and telecommunication services. The two national li-

braries are jointly developing the National Document and Information Services (NDIS), which embraces NZBN, ABN and other present computerised services.

The main driving element in professional debate in New Zealand since 1991 has been the development of the N-Strategy. The New Zealand Library and Information Association (previously the New Zealand Library Association until a name change at the 1992 Nelson Conference) and the National Library of New Zealand announced at the 1991 Auckland Conference a major joint project of implementing the 'N-Strategy'. This was intended as a major planning process throughout 1992 to formulate an agreed strategy for the development of New Zealand libraries over the next decade, with the mission statement saying *'the N-strategy is a project to improve the effectiveness of information use by New Zealanders for learning and prosperity...A country that values and encourages learning will be a prosperous country. Prosperity means more than just economic growth. A prosperous country is one that treasures cultural heritage and social richness, as well as striving for competitiveness and productivity.'*

The N-Strategy was developed through a four-stage process, culminating in a highly-structured yet democratic agenda for the Nelson Conference involving all delegates in formulating an agreed action plan. This dominates subsequent professional thinking in New Zealand. Our New Zealand colleagues are holding an N-Strategy open workshop on the Friday afternoon of the conference to assess progress and developments, and would welcome Australian observers.

The second striking development over the last few years has been the development by the NZLIA of a Maori policy and program, taking up the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi and recognising New Zealand biculturalism. The conference program and protocol reflect this, and Australian delegates will find it a most interesting development from which we have much to learn.

As to issues, New Zealanders seem to debate most of the same

Brian Toohey, keynote speaker



Brian will be speaking about political change in Australia over recent years and about emerging political, social and economic trends. He is well-qualified to undertake this task and is highly regarded for his thoughtful and insightful approach to social issues.

Brian Toohey is best known these days as a political commentator on Radio National's *Daybreak* (Australian Broadcasting Commission). He also writes a column for *The Sun Herald* and *The West Australian* newspapers. He

Brian Toohey on budget night in May with ALIA Executive Director, Virginia Walsh and staff members Carolyn Cherrett and Phil Teece.

has had a long history as a senior journalist with various newspapers. In the 1970s he was the bureau chief in the Canberra Press Gallery for the *Australian Financial Review* and later served in the Washington office. He was editor of *The National Times* and *The Eye* magazine. During the Whitlam Government, Brian was on the staff of the Minister for Defence (Lance Barnard). ■