The tender trap

Christine Mackenzie

The Public Libraries Section (Victorian group) and the Office of Library Services jointly sponsored a seminar dealing with compulsory competitive tendering and libraries in Melbourne at the end of May. The seminar attracted eighty delegates, including library managers, local government officers, commissioners and chief executive officers of library services.

The day was officially opened by the Hon Robert Maclellan, Minister for Planning and Local Government, and the Minister responsible for public libraries in Victoria. He reiterated the Victorian Government's strong support for public libraries and for the public library network that has ensured Victoria's leading role in the provision of library services.

The seminar featured Sue Williams, manager of benchmarking at the City of Monash, who explained some of the processes Monash have been through, and recommended that libraries consider benchmarking against other industries, rather than just other libraries. Ross Gibbs, director of the Office of Li-

Robert Maclennan, Minister for Plannning and Local Government at the seminar with Christine Mackenzie, president, Public Libraries Section (Victoria)

brary Services, provided a summary of what is happening nationally in regard to standards, especially in the context of the Council of Australian State Libraries' work in this area. David Eedle, Manager of the Bendigo Performing Arts Centre, gave an entertaining and interesting perspective from an allied industry.

The afternoon featured a panel discussion chaired by Graham Dudley, Office of Library Services. Pat Salau (Swan Hill), Cathy Hunt (Port Phillip),

Elisabeth Jackson (Hume Moonee Valley) and Jane King (formerly Yarra) gave survival tips and encouragement to libraries faced with the prospect of tendering.

One of the major concerns that the Public Libraries Section in Victoria has with compulsory competitive tendering is the threat to co-operation that the competitive environment poses. Seminars such as this keep communications open and continue to promote and support a strong network. ∎