

## Planning a career?



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Manager,  
personnel &  
industrial relations

*'Flexibility' seems to be slanted almost entirely toward a management, rather than an employee agenda. Arguably, a better balance between the needs of employees and those of their organisations is most pressing...*

As a very eventful year ends, major reports confirm unprecedented change in Australia's industrial relations practices and outcomes, despite the slow parliamentary progress of legislative reform. The most authoritative — *Enterprise Bargaining in Australia* (Department of Industrial Relations) and *Agreements Database and Monitor: Report No 10* (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training) — reach similar conclusions.

Wage movements are becoming much more varied, both between and within different industry sectors. The average annual increase from all agreements registered in the last quarter is 6.1 per cent. This is down from 6.5 per cent in the previous quarter.

When industry comparisons are made, they reveal a surprising level of diversity. It suggests attempts to prevent flow-on of wage settlements across industry are succeeding already. Between sectors, average wage increases vary from 8.3 per cent in mining and construction to 3.3 per cent in recreational services. But it is the range of outcomes in different enterprises in the same sector which provides the biggest shock.

Across all industries, wage settlements in all currently operating agreements vary from a low of 0.3 per cent per annum to a high of 18.5 per cent. There is an average increase of 5.7 per cent. In sectors where ALIA members are well represented, results include: community services (highest increase 12.0%, lowest 0.75%, average 5.7%), public administration (highest 9%, lowest 1.0%, average 4.6%) and recreational services (highest 9.0%, lowest 1.2%, average 3.3%). Some of the sharpest contrasts are found in the financial services sector, where annual wage rises vary from a low of 0.75 per cent to a high of 18.5 per cent.

This represents sea-change for Australian wage fixing. It also confirms the comments made in this column last month about the importance of careful career planning. Clearly, in the current labour market, where ALIA members are working will be an increasingly vital factor in determining future opportunities, and salary levels.

The form of labour regulation is changing too. Employment conditions are now provided solely by industrial awards for only thirty-five per cent of the workforce. A further thirty-five per cent are covered by registered enterprise agreements. But only five per cent of employees are covered solely by an agreement. In other words, most registered agreements are 'add-on' documents read in conjunction with an award. Sixty per cent of employees are thus still subject to an award to some degree.

But the most interesting finding here concerns the extent of individual employment contracts.

Already they cover thirty per cent of employees. While an increase in individual arrangements is certainly an important component of proposed new federal industrial laws, these figures clearly show the trend is well-advanced anyway. For many organisations, debate about whether to move away from collective negotiations has progressed to consideration of how to do it. And the experience of many ALIA members around the country only confirms this to be so.

Even where collective approaches to industrial relations remain dominant, the reports identify transformation of the process used to set working conditions. A year ago, just half of workplace managers were carrying out industrial negotiation of registered agreements. Now, eighty-three per cent take on this responsibility. In the same period, direct involvement by external managers (from head office or the corporate personnel department, for example) in developing agreements has slumped from seventy-four to forty-four per cent. Use of workplace consultative committees is up from thirty-two to sixty per cent in the same period. And the role of local workplace union delegates (as opposed to paid officials) is increasing, with almost seventy per cent of agreements having involved a leading role for them.

But delegates are expressing increasing concern about their ability to bargain effectively. While exactly half of all delegates believe they have sufficient negotiating skills, a quarter describe their bargaining capacity as inadequate and the remaining quarter say they have no skills at all. Given the clear trend to localised bargaining, this is a serious concern, especially since weaknesses in local delegate structures and a lack of training in negotiation were identified in the first major Australian Workplace Survey in 1991. This is one area where it seems little has changed.

As far as the content of agreements is concerned, the data suggest a narrowing agenda. From a managerial perspective, there has been a dominant — almost exclusive — focus on freeing up working hours. An amazing eighty-nine per cent of enterprise agreements addressed this item as a principal management objective, whether via abolition of penalty rates, extension of the working day or other changes. Again, ALIA members are confirming this, especially in the local government sector.

Productivity improvement was, of course, the primary reason for introducing enterprise bargaining in the first place. So it is probably the most important yardstick for measuring progress under a changing system. Sixty-two per cent of managers say labour productivity has improved. None report a decline. Higher product or service quality is reported by forty-six per cent of managers. Forty-four per cent say profits have increased and

forty-six per cent identify a rise in workplace skill levels.

Many employees, however, are finding that workplace change is difficult and demanding. Fifty-eight per cent say they are working harder and longer. Fifty per cent report higher stress levels. And more than a quarter are finding the balancing of work and family responsibilities harder, notwithstanding some media reporting to the contrary. In this regard, it is disappointing to note the paucity of innovative approaches to working flexibility for employees, again despite media coverage of the topic. Only two per cent of agreements include even the slightest reference to child-care policies, for example. Less than 1.5 per cent

provide for home-based work. And a miserable 0.1 per cent encourage career breaks.

'Flexibility' seems to be slanted almost entirely toward a management, rather than an employee agenda. Arguably, a better balance between the needs of employees and those of their organisations is the most pressing requirement if further progress is to be made. The two principal aims of Australia's swing to enterprise bargaining were better long-term enterprise performance and improved quality of working life. If the legacy of workplace change for a majority of employees is only to be greater stress, longer working hours or lower job satisfaction, we can probably be certain that neither will be achieved. ■

## ALIAppointments

These and other job advertisements may be found on our website, **ALIANet**, at <http://www.alia.org.au/aliappointments.html>. Some late-breaking advertisements not appearing in *inCite* appear exclusively on **ALIANet**.

## LEICHHARDT MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

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### GLEBE BRANCH LIBRARIAN

POSITION No SPV 91/96

Council is seeking an innovative and enthusiastic librarian to manage Council's new Glebe Branch Library which will be completed April 1997. The successful applicant would commence in January 1997 to assist with the final preparations.

The Librarian would be expected to provide, develop and promote the collections of Glebe Library relevant to the needs of the community as well as contributing to the general operations of Council's Library Service.

Conditions of employment are in accordance with the Local Government (State) Award. The commencing salary is \$728.92 per week, plus shift allowance. Evening and weekend shifts will need to be worked regularly.

Written applications **addressing the essential requirements** of the position can be lodged with the Recruitment Officer until 4.00pm 13 December 1996. **Please quote "Position No 91/96"** and include relevant personal details, telephone number for contact and copies of references.

#### Enquiries

Further information and a Position Description can be obtained from the Co-Ordinator, Library Network Services, Barbara Hunter, on (02) 9367 9266.

Administrative Centre      Peter Head  
7-15 Wetherill Street      Acting GENERAL MANAGER  
LEICHHARDT NSW 2040

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### Editor Australian Academic and Research Libraries

Applications are sought from suitably qualified and experienced persons for the position of Editor of Australian Academic and Research Libraries, to succeed Peter Biskup, who will be retiring from the position in early 1997. AARL is the journal of the University, College and Research Libraries Section of ALIA.

The position will primarily be responsible for editorial content. It is expected that design, advertising, production, marketing and distribution currently undertaken by the editor will be managed by ALIA National Office.

The Editor's tasks will include:

- Selecting, accepting or rejecting material according to agreed criteria, in line with general objectives of the editorial board;
- Working with authors to create articles which are accurate, interesting, clearly expressed and of a high professional standard;
- Soliciting materials as appropriate;
- Provision of edited copy in electronic form to ALIA National Office for publication.

A sound knowledge of contemporary library and information science issues and experience in the field of library and information science is essential. A high order of oral and written communication skills is required, with particular emphasis on liaison and editorial skills. A proven ability to achieve deadlines is essential.

An appropriate honorarium will be negotiated with the successful applicant. Consideration will be given to an Editor/Associate Editor arrangement.

Written applications, including two referees' reports, should be sent to Eric Wainwright, Chair AARL Editorial Board, C/- National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600 not later than Thursday, 12 December 1996.

For additional information and copies of the job description and selection criteria please phone Eric Wainwright on (06) 262 1377 or e-mail [ewainwri@nla.gov.au](mailto:ewainwri@nla.gov.au)



Australian  
Library and  
Information  
Association

## Marketing consultant

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is preparing a marketing plan with a focused campaign to raise awareness of the value of all levels of library service, thereby demonstrating publicly the significant role that librarianship is playing in provision of and access to information in all sectors of society.

The initial phase of this plan is the investigation of existing relevant research and analyses of literature and media coverage. It requires an historical scan of changes in perceptions of librarians, libraries and librarianship as a career, and a review of current activities and comparative studies.

ALIA now seeks an appropriately-qualified consultant to undertake this secondary research to be completed by mid-April 1997.

Briefing documents are available from Jennefer Nicholson, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston 2604.

Telephone (06) 285 1877, fax (06) 282 2249,

e-mail [jennefer.nicholson@alia.org.au](mailto:jennefer.nicholson@alia.org.au) or

URL: <http://www.alia.org.au/gc/marketing/>

For further information contact Cliff Law, President, ALIA ACT Branch.

Telephone (06) 262 1503, e-mail [cliff.law@nla.gov.au](mailto:cliff.law@nla.gov.au)

Applications close 15 January 1997