

Library labour market survey

The most detailed snapshot ever taken of library and information sector working conditions will be available in the next few weeks. Approximately 1600 ALIA members have been asked to participate in the *Library labour market survey*, which is being conducted for the Association by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT).

ACIRRT is Australia's major research organisation in the industrial relations field. Located at Sydney University, it is an independent, multi-disciplinary body which is recognised by the Australian Research Council as a National Key Centre. It has strong formal links with business, governments, trade unions and the academic community. It maintains by far the most comprehensive databases on enterprise agreements and their outcomes available in Australia. Much of the national media coverage of labour market issues stems directly from ACIRRT's research and reports. And the Centre's senior staff are among the country's best-known and respected commentators.

'The final report will provide ALIA with detailed information on what is actually happening in library workplaces' says ACIRRT's director Ron Callus.

To date, no mechanism has existed to separate library staff in statistical reporting on wage movements, changes in working hours and the incidence of part-time and casual work. With this project, it will be possible for the first time to compare the experience of ALIA members with the workforce as a whole.

ACIRRT researchers have applied their extensive experience in labour market analysis to ensure the *Library labour market survey* is statistically balanced to reflect the sector's various components accurately. Participants have been identified by location, age, gender, qualification-level and occupational category. Following focus group meetings in Sydney and pre-survey testing, questionnaires have now been completed by library workers from around Australia. The State Library of New South Wales' Cheryl Grant was a keen focus group participant. She is enthusiastic about the project. 'It was interesting to hear what library staff from a variety of different organisations had to say about their jobs' Cheryl told *inCite*. 'And the mood of uncertainty was very evident', she said.

The survey will investigate many specific work issues including the mix of permanent, casual, part-time and fixed-term employment in the sector; the proportion of workers covered by industrial awards, enterprise agreements or individual contracts; and the structure of working time — spread of hours and weekend work.

Participants have been asked about the number of hours worked each week, the incidence of unpaid overtime and whether they would prefer to work more or less hours. Wage increases via awards, agreements and individual contracts are compared. Access to family leave and training opportunities is reviewed. And the extent of redundancy within library and information workplaces is assessed. Of particular interest is a range of categories in which employees are asked to express satisfaction levels compared with a year ago.

ALIA will be publishing the ACIRRT report in its occasional papers series. And seminars to consider the implications of its findings may be conducted during 1998. Further information will also be provided in forthcoming editions of *inCite*. Enquiries about the project may be directed to Phil Teece at ALIA National Office. ■

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