

ALIA General Council reaffirms commitment to new peak body



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At a meeting of ALIA General Council held on 17 July 1998, progress toward a new association was discussed. Members of General Council re-affirmed their commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding to which both ACLIS and ALIA unanimously agreed in 1997. The Memorandum outlined the basis for the establishment of a representative organisation which would replace both ACLIS and ALIA.

The Memorandum is quite explicit. The process of creating the new peak body will be undertaken in three stages:

- the combining of service delivery to ACLIS and ALIA members from 1 January 1998;
- the carrying out of all activities through a revised ALIA organisation structure from 1 July 1998;
- the creation of a new organisation no later than 1 January 2000.

Later, the Leadership Committee, in an effort to move to the establishment of the new organisation more quickly, considered an alternative mechanism:

- wind up ACLIS by end 1998;
- wind up ALIA by end 1998;
- establish new company by 1 January 1999.

This reflects a general desire by members in both organisations that the process should not be delayed unnecessarily. However ALIA General Council is concerned about the legal and accounting complexities that apply in the event that ALIA is prematurely 'liquidated'. Further, if there is to be a new and better association for the sector, more detailed planning is required before a new constitution, incorporating significant organisational reform, can be recommended to members.

It should be noted that the process of reform is already underway. Many of the services previously provided by ACLIS are now undertaken by ALIA. Institutional membership of ALIA has been extended to all ACLIS members who also have the right to vote in elections and to nominate individuals for election to office.

What is the most efficacious way to proceed? There is support for the proposal that both organisations wind up simultaneously and to transfer their assets to a new entity which would have a different name and organisational structure. This seems a feasible, sensible and logical action to take. Symbolically, it would quickly signify a new beginning. There is also support for the more gradual change agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding. This process would allow members time to discuss the myriad of issues associated with the purpose and functioning of an organisation which represents a wide spectrum of interests and opinion. In the opinion of General Council it is only through thoughtful and considered debate that we can achieve meaningful reform within a corporate governance structure which will serve the new association well into the next century.

Members of General Council remain committed to the creation of a new organisation by 1 January 2000 and believe that it is achievable by undertaking many of the changes within the existing ALIA structure before moving to incorporation under the Australian Companies legislation.

General Council adopted the recommendations contained in the services consultancy under-

taken by Veronica Lunn and Ian McCallum on behalf of the Leadership Committee which suggested that ALIA should: *Renew — Reframe — Revitalise — Restructure*.

ALIA General Council has also taken up the suggestion of the consultants that ALIA adopts a *Charter of Renewal* to meet member expectations. The general content of such a charter was discussed and it is expected that it might include:

- a commitment to repatriate the *Royal Charter*;
- incorporation under the provisions of the *Australian Companies Act*;
- altering the composition of General Council to permit a wider representation of member interests including those of institutions and the divisions;
- increased support for branch activities;
- creation of a new membership category which recognises continuing professional development;
- some re-organisation of ALIA National Office;
- financial assistance for future Association presidents to be used to compensate employers or the self-employed for the time spent on Association business during the presidential year.

The resolution of General Council on 17 July was intended to provide ALIA members of the Leadership Committee with a re-affirmed basis for discussions regarding progress toward a new organisation. At no time did General Council consider ceasing negotiations with ACLIS or withdrawing its commitment to the intent and content of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Leadership Committee will continue its present advisory role.

In making the resolution, General Council sought to give a clear and sufficient assurance to the process of change. In order to proceed with the process of change, General Council resolved to hold a Special General Meeting of ALIA in October 1998 in Adelaide at the biennial conference. It was foreshadowed that the meeting would be asked to consider and vote upon at least two motions concerned with incorporation under the provisions of the *Australian Companies Act* and support for the change process to be based on a *Charter of Renewal*.

Comments about the name of the new organisation are still being received following the article in the July *inCite*. The possibility of a plebiscite of members was discussed. General Council believes that this is a very important issue and requires consideration and consultation in the context of the other reforms contemplated.

I remain committed to the concept of a single body representing the interests of the library and information services community. As president of ALIA, I am aware that strength and viability of any association rests with its members, and that there are aspects of the Association which need to be changed.

It is my belief, that by continuing to work together, we can achieve the objectives contained in the Memorandum of Understanding. Whatever the new organisation may be called, or how it is organised, the same people will be involved and we have to work together. The important thing is to ensure that the Australian library and information community has a strong and effective organisation to represent its interests. ■