

Clare Burton – equity cause loses a champion



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The findings of the recent landmark Pay Equity Inquiry in New South Wales have created enormous interest among librarians, both within and beyond that state. That was reconfirmed when about 150 people attended a recent seminar in Sydney at which I outlined the Inquiry's background, findings and probable implications. The event was organised by ALIA's State Branch in conjunction with Zenith Management Services.

The findings on the work of librarians have been discussed in this column previously and several ALIA divisions have asked me to speak about them at local meetings in various parts of Australia. The outcome to date has been very promising in terms of improving recognition of the value of the important and highly-skilled work that librarians do. For the first time there has been major judicial recognition that the work of librarians is seriously undervalued. Moreover, the vast increase in work value which recent technological innovations have spawned has been acknowledged by the presiding judge. Those responsible for putting the formal case to the Inquiry on behalf of librarians have done an excellent job. ALIA is indebted to them all.

With that in mind, it is sad but important to acknowledge the death of an icon in the field of equality of employment opportunity — a person whose evidence to the Inquiry was extremely significant in achieving recognition of the undervaluation of the work of librarians and other feminised occupations.

Late last year Dr Clare Burton, a hugely-respected academic and consultant, died suddenly, just weeks after she had made a major contribution to the Pay Equity Inquiry. She was not able to see the final judgement, but Australian librarians will remember Clare warmly for the contribution she made to a positive outcome for them.

Now to commemorate her life and work, the Australian Technology Network [ATN], a major executive development program for women in the major universities, is hosting a series of memorial lectures to honour the contribution made by Clare Burton to gender equity in higher education and other areas. Clare worked as an academic at Macquarie University and Kur ing gai Col-

lege of Advanced Education [later the University of Technology, Sydney] before becoming director of equal opportunity in public employment in New South Wales. She was later appointed commissioner for public service equity by the Queensland Government. Subsequently, in her work as a consultant she conducted major equity reviews for a number of universities and carried out high-level reviews of both the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces. She did much valuable work for the Women's Electoral Lobby and for the National Pay Equity Coalition. Among her many publications are *Women's worth: pay equity and job evaluation* [1987], *Redefining merit* [1988] and *The promise and the price: the struggle for equal opportunity in women's employment* [1991].

Dr Burton's family and friends have asked for the memorial lecture to focus on her area of particular expertise: pay equity. Accordingly, the 1999 lecture will deal with the impact of the NSW Pay Equity Inquiry and will be entitled *The beauty therapist, the mechanic, the geoscientist and the librarian: addressing the undervaluation of women's work*. The topic should be of great interest to ALIA members everywhere. They are encouraged to attend. The lectures will be delivered by Professor Rosemary Hunter, currently principal researcher at the Justice Research Centre in Sydney. She is on secondment from the Law Faculty of the University of Melbourne, and is a leading expert in equal opportunity law, affirmative action, and women's employment. She is well-known as author of *Indirect discrimination in the workplace* [1992], perhaps the definitive book on the subject. Professor Hunter was also a key witness to the New South Wales Pay Equity Inquiry.

The lectures will be given in six locations later this year. Dates appear in *inCite's* Events section.

Full details can be obtained from: National Office ATN WEXDEV, PO Box 123, Broadway 2007, phone 02 9514 2909, fax 02 9514 2930, <http://www.uts.edu.au/oth/wexdev>, or e-mail: jane.clifford@uts.edu.au.

Alternatively, I can provide basic details via phil.teece@alia.org.au or telephone 02 6285 1877. ■

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