

New award for NSW library and archives workers

Kate Burnham, chairperson, Library and Archives Industry Working Party, Public Service Association of NSW

Under the new Equal Pay Remuneration Principle in New South Wales, the Public Service Association has lodged a new award to cover librarians, library technicians and archivists employed in the public sector in New South Wales.

The new award has been the product of four years' hard work by a union working party comprising elected representatives from the three groups. The award seeks to redress some of the inequities, outdated structures and pay scales to reflect custom and practice in the workplace as well as to provide for the first time a salary structure that is commensurate with similar occupations within the state's public service.

There has been a gradual widening of the gap between pay scales for library and archives workers and other professional occupations in the public sector. In addition, employers have sought to circumvent existing inadequate awards by paying library and archives workers under a clerks award, which immediately eliminates the requirement for specialist, recognised qualifications and standards.

The new award will also for the first time include definitions of skill levels required at each grade, as well as incremental steps within each grade.

One of the key factors in preventing higher grades from being fully implemented in the past has been employers' lack of recognition of specialist skills in favour of supervisory or management responsibilities. In practice, that has meant workers with highly specialised skills and subject knowledge in small one-person libraries have not had access to the higher grades if they did not have management responsibilities. For most special libraries in the government sector, subject specialty rather than size is the reality. The new award includes both aspects as

'either/or' options to assist employers in determining the value of the skills they require of their library and archives staff.

An additional senior grade has been added for library technicians, while at the entry level those without a completed professional or technician qualification are to be classified as library assistants. Pay rates, in four incremental steps, are sufficient to encourage progress through chosen courses of study, but movement beyond this classification into librarian or library technician can be achieved only if the applicant has completed their course of study.

For all three groups (librarian, archivist and library technician), the binding criterion for appointment is eligibility for an appropriate category of the relevant professional organisations — a first for library technicians, but a continuation of this important protection of specialist training for librarians and archivists.

Transitional arrangements, from the old award to the new, deliver one-off salary increases to existing employees ranging from 2.85 to 9.98 per cent. For some grades, access to additional incremental steps provides increased salary progress in the future that has simply not been available under existing awards and agreements. Options for re-classifications are clearer, and increments at each grade provide a fairer, more logical approach.

The industrial system that we operate in has given us the best opportunity for some years to establish our case for better pay through the Equal Pay Principle, which was a direct outcome of the 1998 Equal Pay Inquiry. ALIA, EEO organisations (public, community and private sector) and, most importantly, the trade union have all contributed to this opportunity through the inquiry for librarians, archivists and library technicians in New South Wales. ■

ULVERSCROFT GROUP LTD

.....is proud to announce
that on the 19th January 2001
it acquired.....



ISIS PUBLISHING LTD and SOUNDINGS

This exciting development forms part of the Ulverscroft Group's strategic plan to continue to deliver the high quality product and service expected by its customers. The acquisition brings together two of the three big players in large print and unabridged audio books.

All product will now be distributed exclusively by Ulverscroft.

This reinforces the long-standing world wide reputation of Ulverscroft which pioneered the publication of the first large print books in 1964.

Today the Ulverscroft Group of companies consists of:

- Ulverscroft Large Print Books
- Magna Large Print Books (Including Story Sound)
- Isis Publishing
- Soundings
- TJ International
- Subsidiaries in Australia, Canada and the U.S.A
- Agencies in Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa