

Workwatch

Industrial Relations laws and collective agreements

ALIA members will be aware from press reports and ALIA updates that the first stage of the Rudd Government's industrial relations (IR) changes took effect from 28 March 2008: see <http://www.alia.org.au/employment> Further legislation will be introduced in at least two stages and become fully operational by 1 January 2010.

As the exact content of the final legislation might not be known until late 2009, some uncertainty could exist as to terms that may or may not be included in collective agreements (also known as enterprise agreements) due to be negotiated within the next 18 months. This timeframe will apply in many government departments, local government and tertiary education institutions. The ALIA National Office Collective Agreement also expires in mid-2009. Within large organisations, negotiations in the lead up to expiry of an agreement will be led by unions or other recognised bargaining units, but for all organisations there are several possibilities for industrial arrangements in any period where an agreement is due to expire but where applicable legislation has not been finalised.

The simplest course is to vary the existing agreement by extending the expiry date. In the case of a collective agreement, any proposed variation such as simple extension of time or variation of terms and conditions of employment, must be approved by a majority of the employees covered by the agreement. All employees must have been given notice and an information statement concerning proposed variations to an agreement, which must be lodged with the Workplace Authority within 14 days of agreement being reached.

A second scenario arises where an agreement has expired, usually because negotiations have not concluded. In those situations, the terms of the expired agreement continue to cover the relevant workplace until a new agreement is in place. An example of this situation has been the ongoing negotiations in the Victorian education system, affecting teachers and teacher librarians. While the dispute about pay levels was resolved during May, up until that point the 2004-2007 agreement continued to apply, even though it formally expired in August 2007.

Library workers with queries as to the status of agreements covering their employment, either individual or collective, should confer with their workplace human resources office or with the relevant union.

Salary scales and work level guidelines

Advice concerning ALIA's recommended salary scales and work level guidelines for librarians, library technicians and library assistants are on the ALIA website at <http://www.alia.org.au/employment/salary.scales/roles.and.pay.html>

The recommended salary scales are those paid to library workers in the New South Wales Government sector, following the 2002 Gender Equity pay case. Revisions to these salaries

take effect from 1 July each year, following the annual NSW state wage case. The 2008 case is currently being heard and any changes to salaries are expected to be announced in mid-June.

For teacher librarians, the timing of any salary increases varies between states and territories, depending on negotiations between government and education unions. In most states and territories there have been

salary increases during the last year and in some cases increases have been announced for later in 2008. As mentioned above, salary increases for teachers and teacher librarians have just been determined in Victoria, subject to ratification, meanwhile negotiations are continuing in the Northern Territory. As soon as these negotiations have concluded, the ALIA employment site will be updated to show any salary increases.



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