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# Workwatch

This month's column provides brief advice on various matters affecting the workforce in different states and territories and at the Federal level.

## Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)

OH&S matters featured prominently in announcements from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting held in early July. As part of the process of harmonising a range of regulations which affect businesses operating in more than one state or territory, the Premiers and Chief Ministers have agreed on adoption of uniform OH&S regulations by 2011. While details of these regulations will continue to be negotiated over the next year, the COAG agreement has explicitly stated that under the uniform regulations there will be no reduction in the safety standards covering Australian workers in any jurisdiction. This guarantee is a clear reference to concerns expressed in New South Wales in particular, where current OH&S regulations are regarded as the strictest within Australia.



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## Salaries within the library sector

Library workers will be aware that the salaries recommended by ALIA for librarians, library technicians and library assistants are those paid to employees of libraries within the public sector in New South Wales. These salaries are adjusted each year when all salaries paid to NSW Crown Employees are reviewed as part of the state wage case. ALIA has been advised that the 2008 wage case is not likely to be finalised until September. Until new salary levels have been determined, the salaries applying from 1 July 2007 will continue as the benchmark salaries for the library sector.

Current salaries, together with related worklevel guidelines, are at <http://www.alia.org.au/employment/salary.scales/roles.and.pay.html>. As soon as future salary levels for NSW are announced, ALIA's employment pages will be updated.

Salaries for teacher librarians in all states and territories are also set out in ALIA's employment pages. For teacher librarians there is no one salary range recommended by ALIA and the salaries published for each state and territory are those set for government schools. Salaries in non-government school libraries frequently vary from those set for the government sector. As mentioned in the June 'Workwatch' column, there have been delays in finalising 2008 salary levels for teaching staff in Victoria and the Northern Territory. For other parts of Australia, salaries have been increased within the last twelve months. ALIA remains in contact with the Australian Education Union concerning any movements in teaching salaries.

## Workplace laws

ALIA members will be aware from press reports and earlier 'Workwatch' articles that the Commonwealth Workplace Relations Act has been amended to abolish Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) from the end of March 2008. Some disputes involving terms and conditions of AWAs are, however, still being heard in various industrial relations forums as the cases involve situations arising during 2006-08 when AWAs were a feature of the industrial system.

It should also be noted that some sections of the workforce – estimated at about 30% – are outside the scope of Federal laws, due to Constitutional limitations. Other than in Victoria and the territories, many workers are covered by state awards and where an enterprise extends beyond the boundaries of one state, those enterprises that are not corporations will be governed by local employment conditions. This is relevant to many law librarians working for legal firms whose structures are often based on partnerships and whose employment conditions will be governed by the jurisdiction in which a particular office of the firm is located.

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