

Thank you and au revoir

It has been a full six years for me as ALIA Executive Director, a position which I have always seen as a privilege, a challenge, and a unique role within the industry. As you read this, I am packing my boxes and bags to return to my home state of Queensland and a new role that, happily, still means I will be active in this much-loved profession. Such endings and beginnings always give pause for thought.

One of the many things I am pleased to look back on is the forming of the TAFE and Special Libraries Advisory Committees and the strengthening of the Public Libraries Advisory Committee. These committees are continuing to produce tangible results for the benefit of all ALIA members, not just in their particular sectors. It is this bringing together of key groups and individuals that builds on our profession's natural networking mindset and which also gives us hope for a sustainable future.

The progress we have made with the once-in-a-lifetime House of Representatives *Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians* and our work with the Australian School Library Association has also been significant. Our collaborations with the Council of Australian University Librarians on the leadership of issues such as copyright and access to information are proving beneficial too, along with closer relationships with educators and researchers in library science.

We can, as an Association, also be proud of the *Library Initiative* project with the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This project has put in place a fruitful relationship with the Federal Government to improve access to the collections of libraries across Australia. Projects such as this have helped substantially to put libraries and information services directly in front of those most able to make or change the policies and funding structures that directly affect us all.

As you read this, the commencement of the National Year of Reading 2012 is but a few short weeks away – although there's already much activity and some projects are well-advanced. As you will read in these pages, over 800 libraries have registered to be part of it, dozens of high profile ambassadors have joined the team and the whole program is in the good hands of the Founding Partners, National Office co-ordination and the National Year of Reading team.

Along with raising the profile of the profession and the Association with external organisations and agencies, ALIA's program of advocacy can deliver long term benefits through the relationships we nurture in delivering on such projects as these. To capitalise on the advocacy activities we have already undertaken however, the Association needs to be strong financially to be able to put resources (both in terms of funding and staffing) into this work.

ALIA is a broad organisation with so many elements, topics, committees and issues. Our membership is also broad in opinions, expertise and perspectives. We are an organisation that, to serve our profession, must also survive as a business enterprise. And we really do need to work better together as a profession and as a sector (or whatever you want to call the library industry) to achieve our greater goals.

Which leads me to membership – and the fact is that it remains static. It is a simple fact that, to deliver continuous improvement in services and professional advocacy, membership fees are crucial. To do what members tell us ALIA "should" be doing, many more of the 27,000 employees in the library and information services sector need to be active members of this, the peak body of our profession. ALIA remains the national association with the runs on the board in successfully seeking out and securing millions of dollars in funding for projects across the sector. If you are not a financial member, your voice may not be heard. If you are a financial member, remember your advocacy role includes reaching out to colleagues who have opinions about what ALIA "should" be doing and encouraging them to be part of making it happen.

As I wrap up my time as ED, I must thank a lot of people. I have enjoyed greatly working with our key volunteers – Advisory

Committee Chairs, Group Convenors and Conference Committees. While there is always the serious work of the Association to consider, we have also shared the dance floor and drinks at the bar over the years. I have made many friends and have many valued memories of shared successes and good times.

Thanks must go too, to the Board members during my time as ED, who share with me the (at times) tough decisions required and put their hearts into the necessary responsibilities and requirement for leadership the role demands. Thanks especially to the Presidents for their time, sage advice and support. To the good friends I have made, and close colleagues – my thanks for your personal support and encouragement as well.

Finally, a special and sincere thank you to all the staff I have worked with – National Office staff, State Managers and our project officers for your support and hard work.

And happy Christmas time to all.

Sue Hutley

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NOTE: Rob Miller, ALIA Chief Operating Officer, will be Acting Executive Director from 2nd January 2012 until the next Executive Director commences work. Correspondence and enquiries should be directed to executive.director@alia.org.au.

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