

Award restructuring: what's in it for library staff?

Jennifer Evans and Maryna Mews describe the outcome of a recent seminar in Melbourne

THE ANSWER TO the question in the heading is: Plenty of complications! On Thursday 7 May the ELISS Section and the ALIA Victorian Branch held a joint meeting, which, judging by the numbers attending, was on a topic which is exercising the minds of many library staff. The main message coming out of the meeting was: *Award restructuring is an opportunity to change in a substantial way how people work.*

Susan Ainsworth, ALIA's Industrial Officer, was the opening speaker and set the scene with an interesting, provocative and very professional presentation. She pointed out that award restructuring has the potential to reduce inequalities, provide skill related career paths and more job satisfaction, increase the quality of the product and services, and improve relationships between management and employees. But she also said that library and information professionals need to question some of the terms used such as increased labour productivity, as much of this terminology arises from the manufacturing sector and is not readily applicable to the services sector.

Susan was followed by a panel of four. The first was Gabrielle Hawkins, Specials Section representative, who spoke about the new office-based structure in government and the pressure to dispense with mandatory qualifications. Gabrielle commented that award restructuring allowed many positions to be reclassified and that great care ought to be taken in defining position descriptions in case the employing body decides that it does not need the services of a librarian to fulfil the duties of the position.

School Library Association of Victoria Liaison Officer, Rae Frankhauser spoke about the new opportunities created by participation in resource based learning and career and skill paths for teacher librarians. She also reminded participants of the need to be informed and alert to the outside environment as in 1989 the Victorian State Government attempted to downgrade teacher-librarians to technician level.

What is the importance and relevance of staff involved in customer

service? Perhaps better remuneration is needed? This was the question posed by Julie Rae a public librarian, and deputy at Sunshine-Melton Library Service. Public library staff in Victoria have recently undergone award restructuring and are already being paid under a new award.

Academic institutions appear to be furthest down the path to award restructuring with some 400 awards and 4 000 classifications to streamline. Hans Groenewegen, Deputy University Librarian at Monash University, outlined a proposed 10 level award and spoke about a consultant's recommendations for banding library staff.

The progress of award restructuring and its consequences are very complex and varied, not only from one sector to another, but within each sector. The outcomes, or likely outcomes, are causing better conditions for some, while proving to be very threatening for others. No doubt some of these likely or actual outcomes will be the focus of continuing debate for some time to come.

Not very much has been written on this topic in relation specifically to libraries, so if you are interested in reading the papers from this meeting, they will be published in the next issue of Education for Librarianship and Information Services: Australia (formerly Education for Librarianship: Australia), copies of which may be obtained from the Editor, Kate Beattie, 1 Elgin Place, Carlton, VIC 3053, phone (03) 347 9194, for \$8. The speeches and discussion were also taped, and copies of the tapes are available from Jennifer Evans, Freelance Library & Information Services Pty Ltd, 27 Kasouka Road, Camberwell, VIC 3124, phone (03) 813 1925, for \$8.

Correction

In the *inCite 5* article on the new GEAC installation at La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria we mentioned that 'ADVANCE will support up to 96 terminals, but only 42 are currently in use'. GEAC would like us to emphasise that the limit of 96 terminals is imposed by the installation at LTUCNV, not by the ADVANCE system itself.

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