

It's TAFE's turn!

Anne Hazell explains why this campaign is so important

THE ALBURY WODONGA Conference gave the TAFE National Section a great platform for launching the ALIA/ACLIS sponsored campaign aimed at increasing funding for TAFE learning resource centres around the country.

It's TAFE's Turn sprang from the final session of the TAFE Section Conference in Adelaide in October 1991. John Levett, then ALIA President, challenged participants to turn their concerns about the inadequacies of the funding of TAFE libraries into a positive lobbying campaign. They needed to convince the politicians and bureaucrats that changing the 'lucky country' into a clever, competent country needs more money directed to TAFE libraries. Improvements in vocational education depend on improvements in the provision of library and information services.

Members of the TAFE National Section based in Adelaide were inspired by the accelerating agenda for national education reform evident in such documents as the Deveson, Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports. They worked first to raise the money to mount the campaign, then to develop the lobbying materials and finally to establish the network necessary to carry the message forward.

At the Albury Wodonga Conference the Lobbying Group, with a little help from their friends, handed out pamphlets, addressed plenary sessions, put up posters, pinned badges on participants, contributed items to *Ebsco express*... An unexpected bonus came in President Bev Kirby's opening address when she used the quote from Simon Crean (in 21C, Autumn 1991, 23) which features in much of the lobbying material and drew attention to the campaign:

'I would argue that the greatest task facing Australia is recognising that the most important commodity in the 21st century will be knowledge, and the most important capability will be that of accessing, creating and using knowledge. Having and using knowledge will determine how well nations adapt, survive and prosper in a global



environment characterised by accelerating change and increasing uncertainty—economically, environmentally, socially.'

The campaign aims to raise awareness about the serious state of TAFE libraries—a direct consequence of inadequate levels of funding by successive governments. The Lobbying Group wants to see TAFE libraries guaranteed an appropriate part of funds directed into the vocational education and training sector, particularly from the Commonwealth government.

At the state level, the campaign is being spearheaded by joint ALIA/ACLIS groups whose targets are local politicians, bureaucrats, educators and industrialists with an interest in TAFE. In Canberra, the lobbying will be carried out by the executive officers of the two sponsoring associations, with briefings from the National ALIA TAFE Section members.

The campaign begins in earnest in November 1992. To be successful, it will need a long-term commitment from all of us in the library and education sectors. Help make *It's TAFE's Turn* a reality! Support the campaign whenever there is an opportunity. This country deserves much better TAFE libraries. ■

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