

Access: at what cost?

Report of the Access to Heritage Inquiry tabled

The Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, in July this year, tabled its report on the Access to Heritage Inquiry. In considering what constitutes heritage, the Committee reported that heritage ought to be defined as those 'things we want to keep, that is things we have inherited and would like our children to inherit'.

The Committee's report concerns user charges in museums, art galleries and national parks and, to a very limited extent, libraries. Taking into account the present levels of government subsidies, the Committee was asked to examine how costs for maintaining the nation's cultural and heritage assets should be apportioned between government subsidies and user contributions.

The Committee's inquiry did not consider how access and equity in the

public library system would be affected by user charges. They noted that the inquiry had received few submissions on this issue, but acknowledged that the subject is an important one and should receive separate consideration. The Committee did recommend that sponsored research be conducted to investigate the affect of user pays systems on equity and access to services provided by libraries and archives.

The Report also recognises that the socio-economic profile of library users is lower than the average visitor profile for museums and galleries and therefore where libraries concerned, equity and access considerations are different.

In its conclusions, the Committee strongly emphasised that user charges for core and value added services should not be levied if the affect is to discourage wide community access to public places. ■

ALIA Membership

ALIA welcomes the following new members who joined the Association in November and congratulates those who have upgraded their qualifications

New Members

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Upgrade to Associate

Vagn Gudiksen QLD

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The Scholarship is open to practising library technician members of the Library Technician Section of the Association.

Nomination forms are available from
ALIA National Office, PO Box E441,
Kingston ACT 2604 ph 02 6285 1877,
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Application information is available ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston 2604 phone 02 6285 1877, fax 02 6282 2249 e-mail awards@alia.org.au

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Nominations close 15 March 1999

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