

Privacy and the handling of personal information

Getting ready for 21 December 2001

In December 2000 the Federal Government amended the *Privacy Act* which, until now, has covered only public sector agencies. The Act will now apply to most private sector organisations and will come in to effect on 21 December 2001.

The amendments to the Act provide for a national and consistent set of privacy standards for the private sector. It implements a set of National Privacy Principles (NPPs) that outline minimum requirements to how private sector organisations should collect, use, keep secure and disclose personal information.

The principles also give individuals a right to know what information an organisation holds about them and a right to correct it if it is wrong. The Act also provides arrangements for enforcing these rights.

The Act applies to organisations that have an annual turnover of \$3 million or more per year. Therefore, ALIA is not obliged to comply with the legislation or adopt the NPPs. However, ALIA has decided to take advantage of the benefits that can flow from complying with the legislation as 'good privacy is good business'.

ALIA collects and uses personal information as part of its ongoing activities. For example, member information, personnel information and media contact information.

Organisations like ALIA that hold significant amounts of personal information will need to make a number of changes to the way they collect, use, disclose, keep secure and give people access to that personal information.

The ALIA National Office is currently in the process of developing and implementing guidelines for the handling of personal information that comply with NPPs. We have also written a briefing paper for members on implications of the NPPs for members in their professional practice. The briefing paper will be sent to all institutional members in November.

By adopting the NPPs, members dealing with ALIA will have greater confidence in knowing that their personal information is handled in an appropriate manner.

As the peak library and information services association in Australia, adopting the NPPs sets an important example to industry members and regulatory authorities regarding ALIA's commitment to privacy protection. ■

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ALIA at IYPS 2001

In August, the Association sought applications from interested ALIA members to attend the International Young Professionals Summit. Sue Hutley, electronic services librarian at the Toowoomba City Library was chosen and attended the Summit held at the Gold Coast from 2 to 5 October.



The summit focussed on four main themes: poverty, environment, sustainability and social capital. The summit brought together young professionals from around the world to provide an opportunity for dialogue, information, knowledge and skill sharing, and networking with the aim of facilitating concrete actions to address some of the world's most pressing problems. Each participant was allocated a theme, a region and an action area to deal with, and the summit program mostly took the form of small groups brainstorming problems, issues and possible resolutions and actions for each area. The regional group of Oceania participants also proposed projects to work on as a group after the summit.

Sue said that 'The summit was challenging both personally and professionally and it made me realise again how important it is for us all to act locally on global issues'.

An IYP Foundation has now been established and the next summit will be held in 2003. For more information about the summit take a look at <http://www.iyps.org> or contact Sue Hutley at s.hutley@toowoomba.qld.gov.au. ■