ALIA's National Advisory Congress

Tuesday 19 September 2006

Thirty-six people attended the meeting, including ALIA Directors, the President, Vice-president, Executive Director, regional NAC meeting representatives and interested members. Dagmar Schmidmaier AM welcomed the delegates. What follows here is a brief summary of the main points of the meeting. A complete report of discussion is available on ALIAnet at http://alia.org.au/governance/nac/2006/national.meeting.html and follow the link 'Report of the NAC held 19 September 2006'.

Representatives from each regional meeting presented their success stories, which have been published on the ALIA website.

Attendees then divided into small groups to discuss 2007 planning, based on the document 'ALIA planning 2007: discussion paper for consultation – summary of comments received' (http://alia.org.au/governance/nac/2006/planning.summary.pdf).

Two main points emerged from the 'Membership growth' discussion.

- ALIA should be supporting different career stages and targeting information and services to the different stages. The stages were identified as student, mid-career and retiree. It was also suggested that institutions should encourage staff to participate in ALIA.
- Value and responsibility of membership is a two-way street between ALIA and the members.

'Empowering and supporting ALIA groups' identified groups as the key to membership growth and defined three priorities.

- There should be an evidence-based approach to groups. (This included getting more data from the membership database and using different models for groups.)
- More administrative and general support for groups was needed.

It was suggested that support for groups could include a regular column in *inCite* on groups, an announcement when a new group is formed, improvements to the ALIA website and better communications to members on group issues. Training needs to be provided for group office bearers and their relationship with the Local Liaison Officers should be optimised.

Developing and promoting a vision for education for the profession was identified as a priority, with a co-ordinated professional development program as a second priority. The importance of co-operation with employers in managing CPD and training was emphasised.

Directors then reported on their Standing Committees. For more information go to http://alia.org.au/governance/committees/standing/.

The 'Proposal to change governance arrangements' was introduced by Roxanne Missingham, who summarised the main points and outcomes from the regional NAC meetings. The document 'Proposal to change governance arrangements: summary of comments received' was distributed at the meeting (and is available at http://alia.org.au/governance/nac/2006/governance.summary.pdf). Most of the points of governance change had both supporters and detractors. Supporters of change felt it was an opportunity to create more efficient processes, those against felt it offered the potential for discontinuity in Board membershipand was no particular improvement on current operations.

A general meeting is organised for 30 November 2006 in Sydney at the University of New South Wales and this will be the chance for the membership to vote on amendments to the ALIA constitution that will introduce the proposed governance changes. Proxy votes of members unable to attend can be sent with members attending the meeting. The next steps in the process are:

- to finalise the wording for the proposed changes to the constitution.
- to send this information to members at least 21 days before the 30 November general meeting.

The governance discussion concluded with questions from the floor. Members were concerned about the level of commitment required for a two-year term (both from members and their employers), about the level and type of consultation about the changes and the question of knowledge transfer if all Board members were to be up for re-election at once.

The final topic of discussion was the National Advisory Congress model. The President asked for feedback about the NAC model, specifically about the possibility of holding the NAC with the Biennial conference. She suggested that perhaps for the future one key issue should be identified for NAC to comment on. There could be more preparatory discussion electronically and then bring people together. The Board will develop recommendations over the next few months.

Finally the ALIA Local Liaison Officers and individual members were thanked for all their work in assisting in organising regional NAC meetings.