

Salary increases and negotiations, occupational health and safety, workplace legislation

The main news for the end of 2008 is the granting of salary increases to Crown Employees in New South Wales, the sector which includes library workers employed by the NSW Government. As ALIA members will be aware, NSW salary levels are those recommended for librarians, library technicians and assistants employed throughout Australia.

As mentioned in recent Workwatch articles, the NSW State Wage Case for 2008 has been before the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW for several months. The Commission's determination regarding the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries 2008) Award was handed down on 2 October. The determination provides increases of 4% per year for the next three years, backdated to 1 July 2008 and taking effect from July each year up to and including 1 July 2010. The salary increases relating to each level of the library sector are set out on the ALIA website at <http://www.alia.org.au/employment/salary.scales/roles.and.pay.html>, together with information about the principles involved in setting the relevant salaries.

Teacher librarians: Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales

On 10 November, the Northern Territory branch of the Australian Education Union announced that it would conduct a ballot on the NT Government's offer, dated 30 October, of pay increases and classification restructure for public school teachers in the Territory. The offer included a salary increase of 4% from 29 January 2009, backdated to 1 September 2007. Implementation of the first phase of a classification restructure for teachers would also commence from the end of January 2009, with the second phase and a further 4% salary increase to take effect from 29 January 2010. Conduct of the ballot will conclude on 17 November and outcomes will be notified on the AEU-NT's website at <http://www.aeunt.org.au>. Details of any agreements concerning salaries will be shown on the Employment section of the ALIA website where teacher-librarian salaries are set out.

In South Australia, industrial action continues as the state branch of the AEU and the State Government have yet to reach agreement over salary increases and other conditions of service, especially terms of employment for School Services Officers (SSOs), and proposed changes to the Student Centred Resource Funding Model (SCRFM). Information concerning the ongoing industrial campaign is on the Union's website at <http://www.aeusa.asn.au>

The New South Wales Teachers' Federation has also begun industrial action in support of its claim for a 5% salary increase for its members. The State Government has opposed the increase and NSW generally is facing cutbacks due to the State budgetary situation. Updates on the Teachers' Federation campaign can be found at <http://www.nswtf.org.au>. The current award covering teachers expires on 31 December 2008 and it is unlikely that agreement on salaries and other conditions will be reached before that date.

Review of OH&S laws

The National Review into Model Occupational Health and Safety Laws has released its first report, which can be found at <http://www.nationalohsreview.gov.au>. The review is part of a wider program by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to rationalise and bring greater consistency across states and territories to a number of issues affecting business and workplaces.

The thrust of the OH&S Review findings is that breaches of OH&S laws should be criminal and not civil offences, and that sanctions should be more related to culpability for breaches than to outcomes. It is recommended that the most serious breaches be indictable offences (permitting trial by judge and jury) and that there be significant increases in fines for all levels of breach. The report also recommends that a uniform onus of proof of breaches be borne by prosecutors. The final report of the National Review is due on 30 January 2009.

Workplace relations legislation

At the time of preparing this article, the next stage of the Rudd Government's legislation to amend further current workplace relations laws has not been introduced to Parliament but it is expected that this will have occurred before the end of November. The ALIA website will be updated with advice as to the content and timing of the foreshadowed legislation. Ongoing information is on the relevant Australian Government website at <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Publications/WorkplaceRelations>



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