



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

National Meeting of the National Advisory Congress

30th October, 2007

Via teleconference at 6.00 pm AEDT

Background

In 2007 sixteen regional meetings for the National Advisory Congress were held around Australia. Full reports of each of the regional meetings held are available on the ALIA website at <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2007/>

The recording of this meeting is available at <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2007/>

Attendees:

Sally Murdoch (Hobart), Bradley O'Brien (Library Technician Meeting), Ruth Marsh (Townsville), Jo Keleher (Rockhampton), Nathalie Smith (Alice Springs), Christopher Griffiths (Wagga / Riverina), Rebecca Parker (Melbourne), Gemma Siemensma (Ballarat), Benita Wheeler (Adelaide), Kimberley Hargrave (Gawler / Barossa Valley), Andrew Osborne (Brisbane), Alyson Dalby (Sydney), Andrew Finegan (Darwin), Alissa Suptore (Perth), Helena Zobec (Canberra), Tania Barry (Regional & Rural Meeting),

Roxanne Missingham (ALIA President), Derek Whitehead (ALIA Vice President), Damian Lodge (Director), Sue Hutley (Executive Director), Robyn Ellard (Assistant Director: Member Services).

Apologies:

Kate Watson (Director), Michelle Brennand (Director), Phillip Keane (Director), Helen Partridge (Director).

Welcome to the National Advisory Congress meeting

Roxanne Missingham welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an overview on the NAC which started in 2000 (then called the National Policy Congress). The first three years of these congresses were spent setting a new direction for ALIA. This year's series of regional NACs focused on Professional Education and Workforce planning.

Robyn Ellard advised that this teleconference was being recorded for non-attending Directors and that it may be made available for members to listen to. No-one objected to this.

Introduction of NAC representatives & Directors

Delegates were given an opportunity to introduce themselves, and what meeting they represented.

Round up of regional meetings

Roxanne asked every delegate to raise the top two issues from their regional meeting for discussion

Nathalie – Alice Springs

Employers

- Nathalie's regional meeting were concerned about organizational bodies that have little knowledge of library skills and workers role and the need to recognize that LIS workers need appropriate remuneration
- They stated that workforce is changing and employers need to be more flexible if they are to retain staff and have more options for short term work, support further study and offer better pay for positions
- ALIA needs to communicate to employers the salary recommendations and encourage employers to have less emphasis on qualifications and more on experience and knowledge base. In Central Australia there are a lot of people who have a variety of experience across libraries and other employment places.

Educators' roles

- It was raised that educator's need to provide a better skilled professional / para-professional by retaining / teaching the basic skills: Cataloging, Information Literacy, Customer Service, but also broaden the skills by teaching about budgeting, applying for grants, managing for the Net generation, Net skills for the management generation.

Ruth Marsh - Townsville

Generational issues

- Ruth's regional meeting stated that the younger generation in the profession may not feel ALIA has any relevance to them and they want more tangible benefits (not just the magazine).
- They also believe that senior staff should recognise the need to contribute to the profession as well and that their membership of ALIA is providing strength for the profession by having them there it will help instill in the younger generation the importance of ALIA.

Training

- The cost of training in isolated areas was raised and stated that it is often prohibitive. They want to see more online delivery, conference papers available on the website, more podcasting.
- The group did note that CAVAL has a role in training, but concern about cancellation of CAVAL courses

Jo Keleher – Rockhampton

Expressed similar concerns to Ruth

- The regional meeting stated that it's difficult to attract people to regional areas for work
- There's a need for more equitable pay to compensate for living in a regional area, especially for people who retrain to work in the LIS profession.
- Often librarianship is not seen as a profession in many communities (Universities, public etc).
- Jo requested that more podcasts be made available online
- The image of Librarians was also raised in their regional meeting

Roxanne suggested that the board builder module available online for management and budget skills would be useful.

Christopher Griffiths – Wagga / Riverina

- Christopher's regional meeting raised the difficulty of getting graduates in country areas (this applies to other sectors, not just LIS)
- They discussed how best to promote the profession as a profession
- Careers expos are a good vehicle for promoting the profession and could be a good partnership between LIS educators and ALIA, but sometimes universities don't support efforts in this way, saying there are already too many students. Universities have limited money for marketing. It would be great to have a kit to sell the profession, and which could be used by local volunteers at schools, etc. Maybe it could be a DVD sampler called "Beyond Google".
- They also discussed that finding new energetic volunteers for regional groups is always difficult

Gemma Siemensma - Ballarat

- Gemma's regional meeting raised the issue that members in Ballarat have not had a local ALIA Group since the restructure of ALIA some years ago. Attendees felt that there had been a decline in the feeling of community within the profession in the local area and that there is a great need to rebuild a local professional network. A Ballarat area LIS dinner is to be held on November 1, 2007 as a first step towards rebuilding a local ALIA Group
- The regional meeting noted that regional areas often have problems seeing the value of ALIA membership as they are able to attend so few face-to-face events.
- Regional members see that it is critical for ALIA to focus more resources in the future on providing access to PD activities and networking opportunities outside the capital cities. These events need to be both virtual and face to face.
- To counter the lack of face to face interaction members have with ALIA staff and volunteers, there needs to be more electronic contact made that targets regional areas specifically.
- Gemma stated that regional NAC meetings are essential and that regional members would like to see more visits from Board members and senior ALIA staff.
- ALIA needs to facilitate the sharing of experiences between regional Groups so that they can learn from what each other is doing and share ideas and resources.
- Gemma stated that it is often harder for regional employers to send staff to PD Events because the cost isn't only the registration, but travel as well.
- Career opportunities in regional areas are often limited and salaries are out of balance with capital cities.

Rebecca Parker - Melbourne

Expressed similar concerns to other delegates

- Rebecca suggested the term "library" could be changed to "Information Centre", "Learning Hub", "Education Centre" etc, but that the term "Library" creates warm feelings in the public
- She stated that we need to consider the LIS profile and why secondary students are not attracted to the profession.
- The regional meeting also raised the issue that many of the employers are concerned with the lack of skills in new graduates and suggests the employers need to be asked about what they expect from new grads. Do we need more practical hands on experience in professional training?

Sally Murdoch - Hobart

Education

- The meeting in Hobart stated that Undergraduate degrees in librarianship are important from a social justice perspective because it offers people a shorter career

path into librarianship. Cutting off undergraduate degrees may impact on the number of people choosing librarianship as a career.

- They requested more Graduate Certificate Courses to enable staff to specialize in areas, e.g. CSU offers a Graduate Certificate in Cataloguing, Legal Resources, Reference and Information Services, etc – like the model used by the nursing profession.

School Libraries

- Sally raised the issue of school librarians in Tasmania and the need for ASLA and ALIA to lobby the Tasmanian Department of Education and the Government. The level of teacher librarians employed in Tasmania schools is different to other states and Tasmanian schools are not a straight 7-12 system, it is years 7-10 High School and secondary colleges are years 11 and 12. Teacher-Librarians are considered specialist staff and employed at the discretion of the school Principal and there are no departmental guidelines as to how many you should employ or when you should employ them. Therefore not a lot of Teacher-Librarians employed, it is mainly Library Technicians or teachers' aides that operate and maintain the school library. This limits the students as they cannot be in the library unless supervised by Teachers and impacts on quality of information provision to students. Library Technician's are also not paid during school holidays and is an industrial issue.

Benita Wheeler - Adelaide

- An important issue at the Adelaide meeting was the marketing of Librarianship as a career and the high number of second career librarians. It's important to market to secondary students, but also to second career people.
- The regional meeting suggested that ALIA Champions be developed to work with schools to raise the profile of profession and ALIA and the diversity of jobs in the profession and to keep pushing that LIS professionals have IT Skills.
- It was also raised that ALIA is the common link to connect the educators, students and employers. The feedback was that a lot of students have considered membership, but haven't become members and how can we work together to improve this.

Kimberley Hargrave – Gawler / Barossa Valley

Expressed similar concerns to other delegates. Their regional meeting also mentioned how good it was to have an ALIA Director and staff member at a regional meeting in their area.

- Kimberley raised the issue of the status of Teacher Librarians' in regional areas and that there is the tendency not to value Teacher Librarians.

Andrew Osborne - Brisbane

- The Brisbane meeting focused on the difficulty of the local group to get new volunteers and that ALIA should help by connecting new members to the groups. There was also a focus on supporting employers to connect their new employees to ALIA.
- The regional meeting observed that there are lots of emails on the new grads elist from new grads who are unable to find work, and yet representatives of employers at the NAC described problems getting applicants for part time work. It was suggested that a story in *inCite* about a new grad who started working part-time and then went on to full time work. The article could focus on how many of the jobs new grads apply for see them up against stiff competition with people who have been in the industry for a long time and that part time work is away to get your foot in the door.

Alyson Dalby - Sydney

Future workforce

- The regional meeting raised concerns about moving the base qualifications to the Masters Degree would put people off in terms of commitment to study before being able to do profession practice
- ALIA has a number of ways to engage with the larger employers, but not with the smaller employers. In relation to the Education Summit and the role of employers it is worth noting that special libraries need to be considered.
- Alyson also noted that the skills set for the future of the profession tended to be generic skills not library specific skills
- It was felt that there was a lack of small / short courses offered other than CAVAL
- The Sydney local issue is the lack of committee involvement (NGG and Sydney)

Andrew Finegan - Darwin

Continuing professional development

- A lot of employers recognize eligibility for ALIA membership and not a lot of recognition for professional development. ALIA should communicate with training providers to make arrangements to make more available in regional areas
- Not enough Librarians in NT. Currently four P2 positions advertised, NT does not have the work force to supplement them and employers are having to attract people from other areas. It was suggested that ALIA could coordinate secondments, temporary opportunities and work exchanges between other cities.

Alissa Suptore - Perth

Expressed similar concerns to other delegates.

- Key issue raised at the regional meeting was about ALIA connecting with students. How we can get graduate data from the institutions about our future professional and what ALIA can offer the students to integrate them into the profession and professional association whilst impressionable eg free membership for students
- Another issue raised was marketing and the evolving nature of profession. It was suggested that ALIA needs to spend money on a professional advertising campaign and put a unique and modern spin on what we do. To bring new people into the profession and to tell the world that libraries and important, relevant in the modern workplace and education.

Bradley O'Brien – Library Technician Meeting

Many of the main issues raised were discussed at the Library Technician meeting

- One of the main issues was about getting the regional areas involved and active in ALIA
- Bradley sees a need for ALIA and the information profession to engage more actively with secondary students to increase their awareness of the LTs as a career option.
- Skills for the future were discussed and that cataloguing skills are important in Librarians, but that employers are not recognising the high level of cataloguing skills possessed by Library Technicians. Employers still wish to employ "Cataloguing Librarians" not "Cataloguing Library Technicians" despite the skills held by Library Technicians in this area.

Helena Zobec - Canberra

- The group talked about what makes an "employer of choice" in the ACT and the variety of library types in Canberra in terms of marketing when appealing to the same graduates.
- They reviewed professional education in the ACT since the library school closed at the University of Canberra and that not everyone can be involved in distance education and the impact this will have on graduates.
- The regional meeting discussed the age profile in the ACT. Many people are coming into the industry but it is as a 2nd career.

- Another issued reviewed was encouraging retired librarians (many in the ACT) to return and how we can access their skills with regards to succession planning.
- The main skills shortages in the ACT are reference librarians and cataloguers (both Librarians and LTs).

Tania Barry - Regional & Rural meeting teleconference

- Main issue at the regional meeting was the role of Librarians and recruitment and retention within the profession. The roles and responsibilities are becoming blurred and one of reasons could be remuneration of Librarians.
- They discussed that there is a need to focus on qualifications as well as experience. And there has been a move away from the recognising qualifications in lieu of experience and this may be causing the blurring.
- Another important role for ALIA is to connect with students at Library Schools and secondary schools

Roxanne Missingham – ALIA President

Roxanne reported on ALIA's Advocacy webpage and the new web page launched today which highlights ALIA's lobbying of the Federal government and opposition. Ministers and shadow ministers have responded to five questions from ALIA.

Roxanne also highlighted the Careers Working party who have been working on the image of the professional and have also been focusing on attracting / recruit people to libraries as a career. The webpage will include stories about working in libraries which will help us raise our profile

Sue Hutley – Executive Director

Sue will report on what ALIA is doing about many of the issues raised including any investigations done already, as well as costs.

Roxanne reminded people about the National Marketing campaign produced by The University of Canberra (partnering with ALIA) on "Join libraries" campaign which was sent out to careers counselors and to schools.

Sue advised that a copy of the campaign is available via Inter-library loan from the University of Canberra.

ALIA planning for 2008

Andrew Osborne raised the issue of Graduate Certificates and that they have the potential to assist the employer and employee in providing some advancement paths. It is an issue that many areas and professions can't keep skilled workers and the Graduate Certificate may assist with this. It was suggested that ALIA recognise Graduate Certificate courses.

Helena Zobec requested that Associate Degrees to be added to this same suggestion.

Nathalie Smith raised training and education. Nathalie believes it needs to be looked at on a smaller scale. Alice Springs is struggling to retain staff and to get people to move there. It was suggested that ALIA could facilitate or support more online vet training, registered training organisations at a library services Certificate II in Library Studies.

ALIA could work towards having trainers to come out to remote centre or have video link facilities for remote places, DVDs on PD training that have happened elsewhere and pass out to remote group.

Gemma Siemensma agreed that training in the workplace is a great way to promote the industry and if you are working in the library it isn't difficult to do a bit more work and get a Certificate III in Library Studies, but it generally happens in bigger organizations but not in smaller or special libraries and ALIA needs to look into.

She also requested a framework to be established for groups on how to run an event etc.

Sally Murdoch mentioned that the ALIA Online course currently available is FOLIOz which is an excellent training resource due the cost and availability in regional areas. It was requested that advertising of the courses be done more in advance.

Jo Keleher stated that the profession needs to lift our game in publishing research and we need to publish more broadly, which would raise our image as a profession. Publishing in IT and educational journals may promote our profession. Roxanne mentioned the "research culture" is one of our goals for 2008

Ruth Marsh requested the pay rates for Librarians and Library Technicians be added to the ALIA website as their meeting discussed the NSW IRC case.

Ruth also mentioned AWAs and what power ALIA has with regards to employee rights and pay scales. Roxanne stated that ALIA is not a union but could articulate the role of ALIA.

It was suggested that Heather Nash (ALIA IR Advisor) could write an article in *inCite* about AWAs and workchoices and ALIA's role in supporting its members.

Rebecca Parker requested ALIA research the education to employment ratio. It was believed that many employers were disappointed with the skills of new graduates. That maybe ALIA could do up a list of expectations for the skills new graduates have. Roxanne suggested this could be added to the work-level standards on the ALIA website. Roxanne stated that it should be a key issue for the Education and Workforce Summit.

Bradley O'Brien pointed out that was discussed at the Library Technicians meeting that ALIA could assist employers by providing them with the differences of a Librarian, Library Technician and Library Assistants and the duties and skills.

It was suggested that ALIA push this out to employers rather than leaving it on the website. Roxanne Missingham pointed out that it may not be able to be applied to workplace agreements.

ALIA Success Stories

Roxanne asked that all success stories be sent to Robyn Ellard (robyn.ellard@alia.org.au) as soon as possible for publication in *inCite*.

Any Other Business

Sue stated she and Robyn would to keep in contact with every National NAC delegate. Local Liaison Officers will be responding to regional reports about what ALIA is doing. Sue also requested that the delegates stay in contact with National Office, read *inCite* and subscribe to aliaNEWS.

Robyn raised the issue of how we can improve the National Advisory Congress. Delegates appreciated having the NACs' focus on a theme and that the Regional and Rural teleconference was a great opportunity.

Kimberley was very positive about having an NAC in a regional area and the combination of the NAC with a workshop worked well.

Andrew stated that by combining with the Top End symposium helped focus the issues raised at the NAC.

Benita suggested that the NAC regional meeting be broken into small groups as some people are not comfortable addressing a large meeting. It would also be good to offer PD points to members attending regional meetings.

Chris was very happy that Niki came down and, with Damian being an ALIA Director, has encouraged their regional group to meet again.

Roxanne suggested that at the 2008 NAC that one of the members of the Education and Workforce summit could report back on the findings.

Evaluation & Close

Roxanne Missingham thanked participants for their valuable contribution.

Robyn Ellard will send out evaluation forms and these can be returned to her at robyn.ellard@alia.org.au