



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC Regional Reports 2009

Hobart
Wednesday, 30 September 2009

1. Attendance:

Derek Whitehead (chair), Heather Jones, Allison Winchester, Karmen Pemberton, Vanessa Warren, Denis McDonald, Jill Abell, Sally Murdoch (notes), and for the last part of the meeting, Ian Morrison and Jasper Morrison (asleep). Several apologies were received.

2. Selected representative to attend the national meeting of the NAC (they must be a member)

Name: Vanessa Warren

ALIA membership no.:056946

3. Review of the outcomes from the 2008 NAC topic '*Staying smart in a complicated world - professional development*'

- PD Postings e-news is very much appreciated.

4. Discussion topic: *Lobbying and Advocacy: working together to make a difference*

- Marketing is about promoting the value of something while lobbying & advocacy is about making a stand point.
- They are related but quite distinct; you will not be good at lobbying if you are not good at marketing.
- Marketing/advocacy examples, like Library lovers day and NSS, are both public library focused.
- We don't market the profession.
- Successful organisations at lobbying include Pharmacists, AMA, Newsagents, and Accountants. What can we learn from them? The Publishing industry in the parallel importation legislation used high profile writers. They were effective because publishers used people who would attract sympathy for them. Mem Fox has been vocal, in the USA, Presidents and Barbara Bush have been vocal for libraries. Publishers used people who were less obviously self-interested, were more appealing than publishers, had a simple targeted message and aimed their message at Australians who would influence politicians.
- ALIA has an obligation to stand up for some issues. Advocacy is important, e.g. internet filtering, broadband, the importance of libraries, staffing and qualifications issues. ALIA is the peak body and has an obligation to comment and should show leadership by commenting.
- ALIA should make statements on:

- School libraries. In Tasmania they need support, private school libraries are getting better while government schools are run by library technicians, often part-time, are badly resourced and this is one of the reasons why parents choose private schools. ALIA should be marketing the value of school libraries. In one American state when school libraries were abolished, marks went down – ALIA could assist by funding research that shows the values of libraries and use ‘evidence-based’ examples like this. The Federal government stimulus package has resulted in many school libraries being built. In Tasmania, these libraries will be run by cleaners, parents, teachers and some library technicians, - hardly any will be run by teacher-librarians. This would be a good campaign for ALIA to run, ‘Would you leave your new library in the hands of a cleaner?’
- Professional qualifications/maintaining standards. (See *Local issues* section.)
- Libraries and staffing. It was suggested that ALIA could use the recent publicity around *The Librarians* television series by running a campaign on ‘The real librarians’.
- Parallel importation.
- Privacy.
- Online content and censorship, especially internet access. In Tasmania, the State Library is part of the Department of Education and internet access is filtered.
- Copyright. Laws are lagging behind public practice, e.g. recording from television, downloading songs from the internet. By paying a small amount to providers, we could do away with copyright. Creative commons may be a model for the future. Copyright needs to balance intellectual property rights with economic benefit.
- ALIA has no Lobbying group or standing committee, if one was created, Vanessa Warren would be interested in being on this.
- ALIA needs to decide where to position itself, influencing government or making a real stand on issues.

5. Local issues

- Professional qualifications/maintaining standards. Within the State Library (now Community Knowledge Network, CKN) library qualifications are not required for some duties/positions. Under the new State Award, library technicians can be appointed without library technician qualifications. The Award also means that lab technicians and IT technicians can also be appointed without qualifications. One concern is that this is an attempt to reduce costs in response to current financial concerns. ALIA has been working with the union, and has contacted the relevant government department, as well as the CKN director.
- Several suggestions were made:
 - ALIA and ALIA members and their friends could write letters to the editor on this issue.
 - Start a ‘love your library staff’ campaign along the lines of ‘would you take your car to an unqualified mechanic?’ It was recognised that this could be problematic – even though most people would agree that public libraries are an intrinsically good thing to have even if they don’t personally use them, the public don’t know (or care) about qualifications, and just don’t understand that a qualified person can offer more than a person with no qualifications.

- ALIA members could communicate with their local members of Parliament to outline their concerns. School principals, Library managers and library users need to do the same. Lobbying and advocacy is our individual and collective responsibility.
- Templates would be useful for ALIA to produce. They could include a brief summary of what to write on issues such as qualifications, internet filtering, funding for libraries, etc. It was recognised that this kind of letter can take up to a day for an individual to write, and templates would cut this down and allow for people to add their own concerns and issues.
- Library technician qualifications are out of date and sometimes no longer relevant to the workplace. The LT Training package is now five years old, and took a few years to create. It was suggested that a work-integrated model might be a better way to go in the future. Although lots of students want to enrol in the library technician course at the Tasmanian Polytechnic, there is scarce resourcing and only a few teachers.
- The Tasmanian New Graduates Group representative provided some feedback – generally indifference from new graduates as to the benefits of ALIA. The feeling was that membership was not worth the money. Discussion centred on the move by ALIA to make the benefits of membership more exclusively for members. A suggestion was to include a free membership to those who paid \$900 (for example) to attend a conference.

6. Any other comments from the meeting?

None.

7. Evaluation

The following is a brief summary of evaluations and comments.

All completed and returned evaluations received scored highly (4 or 5) on Opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, discussions; Program and content; and Organisational aspects.

Comments:

What was the most valuable aspect of the regional meeting?

- Discussion of issues, sharing of ideas, networking.
- Being able to see the way issues are negotiated between ALIA and members.
- Good reminder of issues.
- Hearing that other people have the same issues.

What could we do to improve the regional meeting?

- Hold more often.
- Increase participation.
- Start half an hour earlier.

What other comments or suggestions do you have about the ALIA National Advisory Congress?

- Thanks.

Many thanks to the Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, for the venue.