

ACT BRANCH MIDWINTER DINNER

David Combe, Canberra lobbyist, recently appointed as the Australian Trade Commissioner, Vancouver, told librarians to go out and lobby for what they believe in, but they need to make a plan and achieve their goals by hard work.

Over seventy ACT librarians heard David Combe speak at their annual midwinter dinner and prizegiving at Canberra's aptly named 'The Lobby' Restaurant in sight of Parliament House. Branch President Pauline Haldane welcomed David Combe and his wife Meena Blesing.

As is customary at the midwinter dinner, LAA ACT Branch prizes were presented by the Branch President to outstanding 1984 students at Canberra College of Advanced Education and Canberra TAFE.

- *Prudence Byrne* for Best Student Library Studies Course, Canberra College of TAFE.
- *Thais Mary Turner* for Best Undergraduate Student in Information Retrieval BA (Librarianship) Course, Canberra CAE.
- *Edward Anthony Bristow* for Best Graduate Diploma in Librarianship Student in Information Retrieval, Canberra CAE.

In addition Rosemary Blemings received her award as joint winner of the John Balnaves Award for the best student in librarianship at the CCAE. The other joint winner, John Salmon, at present working in the Northern Territory, could not be present, but shared with guests some of his NT library experiences in a letter.

With Parliament in winter recess and a temperature of minus seven overnight, the audience was receptive to entertainment, but was also inspired by the speaker's enthusiasm and pointed analysis.

David Combe spoke with some authority on associations having been Federal Secretary of the ALP for almost ten years. As prior briefing to his topic 'Lobbying and Libraries', he had been given documentation on LAA activities and he had really read them carefully. He commented that the Association was in a very sound financial position with 7,000 members and good assets including the property in Ultimo. He felt that a lot of careful attention went into the smooth running of the Association. However, he queried if the greater effort was given to its internal affairs when the major effort of the Association should be given to achieving the goal of recognition of



Pauline Haldane, President of the ACT Branch (left) with David Combe and Jenny Adams, Executive Director, LAA.

the value of libraries in society by those outside the Association.

Mr Combe recommended that the LAA should move its national office to Canberra or at least have a local presence. The Sydney office could be maintained for day-to-day operations, at least for a while. A block of land for a major building could be obtained at a low cost from the government land reserves for national headquarters of associations and an office block built with a large commercial rental area to provide funds to the LAA.

Having so identified one major step to improving the viability of the Association, he urged libraries to develop plans to achieve their goals by preparing a plan of action. No really significant new programme could be achieved in under two years of lobbying. The campaign against sales tax on books had shown what could be achieved. Modern media must be used. TV and talk-back radio interviews should be sought as they have the greatest public impact and mould public opinion. He suggested several well-known identities, who might be approached to advertise how they use libraries. In ministerial approaches, he advised that we should not be satisfied by getting a hearing or receiving verbal support. He gave us some examples of

what *not* to accept:

'I did my best for you in Cabinet'; 'I was rolled'; 'Not in this year's budget'.

His jocular summaries had a very familiar ring to his audience. Librarians themselves must be prepared to convince, not just the minister, all cabinet ministers, the backbenchers, and the general public must be made very aware of the reasons for any suggested action by government.

In answering a query as to whether the LAA requires a lobbyist, he replied that the answer might be a professional communicator to help the Association develop its programmes.

Marie Sexton

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