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It's a delight to start this month's Picket Line with congratulations to Queensland local government librarians for an important industrial victory. Good news is always worth repeating.

In recent columns I have highlighted problems experienced by librarians in various workplaces which are adopting single-stream or integrated classification structures. In several cases the approach to classification of librarians has been markedly differently to that adopted for other groups. The result has been one of salary disadvantage for ALIA members.

This is a very serious issue for the profession. The use of one classification structure for all employment groups should be the mechanism through which historical salary inequities are addressed. It is an important way of encouraging equality of employment opportunities. As such, the policy has considerable potential for librarians to achieve wage outcomes more consistent with those of other professionals in their organisations.

But gains will only be made if librarians are treated fairly at the point of translation to the new structures. If they are not, the end result will be not only a failure to redress existing unfairness but will, in fact, lock in an unjust relationship between the salaries of librarians and other professionals for the foreseeable future. In other words, this is a classic 'threshold issue' which is worth digging in and fighting over. I have been trying in recent months to help a number of groups do just that.

So it is especially pleasing to report a win for Queensland members who have fought a long battle with the state Local Government Association about this

very issue. The result shows that persistence does sometimes pay dividends

Early last year the Queensland LGA, when transferring staff to the integrated classification structure in the industry's new award, refused to recognise as professionals ALIA members who qualified by passing the Registration Examination. At a stroke this group lost salary relativity with other local government librarians with whom they had historically been on a par. Equally important for those affected was their loss of status as compared to colleagues who had been peers over many years. The blow was as much to the pride as to the pocket. Early attempts to overturn the decision failed.

To their great credit the librarians concerned refused to take no for an answer and sought ALIA's help in contesting the issue. A closer look at the LGA decision only confirmed its unfairness. And particularly galling was the fact that health surveyors who had qualified via a registration examination had secured full professional recognition under the award. Here was a classic case of different treatment for librarians, notwithstanding the rhetoric of a single approach to all professional categories.

Earlier this year ALIA made further written and oral submissions seeking review, and in June the LGA agreed to reconsider its decision. To our surprise and disappointment the initial ruling was confirmed. To add insult to injury ALIA's request for reasons for the decision was denied.

Doggedness is clearly a characteristic of our Queensland members, however, and further arguments were developed to reverse the finding. And finally

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some 18 months' persistence and determination had their reward when after further reconsideration the Queensland Local Government Association recently agreed to recognise the Registration Examination. This means that all ALIA's associate members will now be treated equally under the award. More particularly, librarians have achieved equality with other local government professionals as far as application of the award is concerned.

This small case study should encourage members everywhere to protest loudly when they are obviously being taken advantage of in new industrial arrangements. Equal Employment Opportunity arguments should be emphasised strongly.

EEO is not only law but in most organisations is presented as a fundamental element of personnel policy. Members need to confront employers with the reality of that policy commitment to EEO. In other words, they should remind employers that practice needs to match the policy rhetoric.

Most importantly, members should recognise that once the provisions of new awards or agreements are put in place, it will be very difficult to reverse their effect. Obviously, librarians won't always achieve their preferred outcome when they oppose what they see as unreasonable proposals. But well researched arguments presented with determination and persistence can succeed. Queensland local government members have demonstrated that very clearly.

The National Office Industrial Service exists for the express purpose of helping members develop and present such arguments. I will be delighted to hear from any of you needing help. ■