Direct Line

Virginia Walsh
Executive director

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Funds for Local Government libraries

We have received good bipartisan support during 1995 for issues involving the provision of access to electronic information through public libraries. One of our major concerns has been to convert the verbal commitment into financial resources. It is therefore gratifying that there are a number of recent and prospective initiatives that are providing the resources for our local government libraries. We understand that the Prime Minister's Innovation Statement, scheduled for release this month, will provide some funds for this purpose. A recent initiative has come from Minister Brian Howe's portfolio of Housing and Regional Development.

Local Government Development Program

In August this year the National Office of Local Government released Guidelines for the 'new' Local Government Development Program (LGDP). The new direction of this program now aims to secure more effective local government operations by providing $13 million each year for the next four years to:

- improve Local government performance through performance measurement, benchmarking and national reporting;
- encourage micro-economic reform at the local level, and encourage a more competitive and innovative housing industry;
- implement best practice and innovations;
- improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community access to Local Government services; and
- through additional funding, involve Local Government in community housing.

The LGDP provides a specific opportunity for library funding (see box) for activities 'which support community access to emerging technology, such as the Internet, through the public library network'. The first round of applications for funding were due in October this year and a second round is anticipated later in this financial year. Information about the LGDP is available from the regional offices of the Department of Housing and Regional Development (or use the national Internet address olg1@peg.apc.org).

In October, in responding to a letter from ALIA about the funding of communications charges, the Minister for Housing and Regional Development, Brian Howe, has written: 'Whilst the new LGDP will not provide funds for capital works, or for recurrent funding of services, there is scope under the social justice national priority element of the new LGDP to look at ways of assisting public libraries as local access points to electronic information, including the Internet, to ensure equity of access. The public library system provides an opportunity to build on existing network infrastructure to provide this access.' While many public libraries have availed themselves of this opportunity to seek funding for community access projects, I would urge others to give immediate consideration to the LGDP as a potential source of funding.

Social justice

Social justice priorities aim to meet individual needs and to improve community life through the development of safer communities and access to services, especially for those who are particularly disadvantaged.

Priorities under the new Local Government Development Program will include:

- Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities stemming from the resolution by Local Government Ministers in April 1995, for example:
  - participative planning to improve council services;
  - training of elected members and staff;
  - eduction to increase indigenous communities' participation in local councils; and
  - strategic planning and skill enhancement to complement the Commonwealth's commitment of $15 million over three years to upgrade roads on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.
- Measures which will complement the Safer Australia initiative announced in the Commonwealth's Social Justice Statement. Activities may include the modelling of community safety audits strategically linked to urban design and crime prevention processes.
- Supporting community access to emerging technology, such as the Internet, through the public library network.
- Community housing initiatives through Local Government.

The new program will support councils who are able to demonstrate an ability to improve service delivery and an understanding of the role they can play in wider reforms which broaden the social justice agenda. ∎

Melbourne biennial conference

We want to see everyone at our Biennial Conference in Melbourne next year. Put these details in your diary now: 6-10 October 1996, World Congress Centre, Melbourne. For further details on the conference contact Convention Network, phone (03) 9646 4122 or fax (03) 9646 7737.

Lobby for Libraries

The first Lobby for Libraries seminar took place in Perth on 1 November and many others are planned for the remainder of 1995 and well into 1996. The program looks like being a great success and we hope that many of you will have the opportunity to participate.

A year of ALIA conferences

I have mused previously, in these pages, on the quaint expression 'off-conference year' which is still frequently heard at ALIA gatherings. ALIA has held ten conferences this year some of which have boasted attendance levels well over the thousand delegate mark.

The year was off to a great start with the Online and on disk event at Darling Harbour Sydney and we recently concluded with the Public Libraries Conference also in Sydney. This, being the last issue of inCite for this year, is a good opportunity to publicly commend the conference committees who have worked tirelessly and professionally, without exception, to mount these excellent events. It is time now to relax for a while before embarking on planning for the next 'off conference year' in 1997.

Australian Library Week 1996

The Australian Library Week (ALW) management committee is supported by a consultative committee with representatives from every Branch and North Queensland. We are determined to make 1996 ALW a memorable occasion. The theme is *Reading the future* (the same as the conference theme) and the dates are 5–11 May 1996.

A busy year

1995 has been packed with opportunities for professional development such as conferences and seminars. We have continued with our lobbying efforts on behalf of the library community — with continued success. We launched ALIAnet and became the first national association to build its own web site. Our involvement in bodies such as the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers' Council has enabled us to strengthen partnerships with key individuals and organisations working within the library sector.

We here at the National Office look forward to continuing our efforts on your behalf into 1996. We all wish to thank those members who have supported ALIA activities throughout the year and to thank especially General Councillors, the members of the Board of Education and outgoing President Jan Gaebler for pursuing the interests of ALIA members in such a committed fashion. We wish all our readers a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. ∎