

Your voice

We forgotten few...

After reading Kate Burnham's letter last month I have to reply by saying the NSW Pay Equity award claim is *not complete!*

Some 150 library workers in the health area are still waiting. The NSW Health Department put us on hold telling us to wait for the New Health Award being finalised in November 2002. We are still waiting in February 2003.

I have always believed in belonging to unions and professional associations however I have been bitterly disappointed with HREA's [Health and Related Employees Association] lack of support of the health librarians in facilitated a speedy resolution.

Many health librarians have been refused re-gradings by some health areas who 'don't want to give librarians two pay rises'. We would just like to see one!

With increases in medical and nursing students in hospital, the move towards evidence-based medicine and research the demands on hospital libraries is increasing every year. Like other librarians the increased expectations and workloads placed on us far exceed our pay packets.

I feel like Kate that we should all be working towards a fair and equitable career path for all library workers. However I do not think the NSW Pay Equity Claim is complete until not just health librarians but public libraries have had their cases heard and are recognised for the ongoing contribution they make in their workplace.

Jacqueline Smith, clinical library manager, Macarthur Health Service

ED: Jacqueline's *cri de coeur* is thoroughly understandable. The health group in NSW is particularly deserving, not least because until quite recently its members were covered directly by the award varied in the recent Full Bench decision. Sadly, the wheels turn slowly in wage fixation and industrial relations. Kate Burnham and her colleagues can attest to that. And to the fact that some of their hardest skirmishes in the recently-won battle were with their own union! It's an unfortunate fact that new laws always require a Test Case before benefits can flow broadly. By definition, this involves most waiting in the queue until a precedent is established. Now that we have one, ALIA is working hard to develop arguments which encourage HREA to pick up the Full Bench findings and lodge a claim on behalf of Jacqueline and her colleagues. Whether the union does so will be decided primarily by how effective its members are in demanding action. ALIA is presently assisting members to that end.

Bravo!

Bravo Kate Burnham and all of the whole crew who took charge and saw through the protracted negotiations regarding the NSW

Pay Equity award claim (*inCite*, Jan-Feb 2003, p5)! Thank you Kate et al for the work you did on behalf of the profession.

Kate writes that there appears to be a push to 'punish' the library staff by forcing them to find the money for the new rates of pay. I loved her retort. It will be up to each of us to work through such unfavourable reactions. It is time that library professionals were paid their worth. It's a shame that it takes cases like this to achieve it.

Kerry Smith FALIA

Working with agencies

I write in response to Sally Goodenough's article on 'Starting a library contract' (p39) in the Jan-Feb 2003 edition of *inCite*.

As a former contract librarian with Information Enterprises Australia Pty Ltd (IEA), a niche employment agency specialising in library and records management personnel based in Fremantle Western Australia, and now their marketing and training co-ordinator I have received first hand experience of working with and for a good employment agency.

As a contract librarian, IEA ensured that I had the correct site-specific induction: I knew the duration of each and every contract that I undertook, who my supervisors were and the duties relating to each position, regardless of the length. Certainly I had to introduce myself to my fellow workers, but for the most part the ground had already been covered. Everyone knew how I was, and why I was there.

Now, working within the offices, I am aware of the work that goes into each placement, the quality processes and procedures that we have in place, and the occupational health and safety requirements and the duty of care that both the employment agency and the client (host employer) has with regards to their contract staff, neither of whom can contract out of their legal responsibilities.

If you are not being given vital information with regards to matters such as after hours working, site passes, who can sign time sheets etc, then it is vital that you speak to your employment agency. They are your employer and they should be able to answer all these and other vital questions that you may have.

Lorraine Lovett, BLS, AALIA, marketing, training co-ordinator and editor of the Australian Record Retention Manual, Information Enterprises Australia Pty Ltd

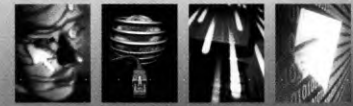
Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

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