

# A busy time for ALIA...

Jennefer Nicholson, ALIA executive director

With the feel of an early election in the winter air, the pace of federal parliamentary activity seemed to increase. The winter session was also a busy time for ALIA with submissions, hearings and legislation watch.

### Senate inquiry into the role of libraries in the online environment

<http://alia.org.au/advocacy/inquiries/detail.php?ID=19>

The government's response to the Senate Committee's report was tabled out of session on 2 July 2004. The response essentially outlines activity within current government programs and offers no new funding or initiatives. Our advocacy arising from the recommendations will continue to be guided by the Board's response to the report and particularly on access to government information and improved telecommunications arrangements. ALIA is collaborating with the National Library of Australia to host a round table of government publications later this year and the report on the LIW 2004 Forum which picked up on recommendation 7 of the Senate report is at <http://alia.org.au/advocacy/alw/2004/>.

### That Free Trade Agreement

#### — get ready for copyright changes

<http://alia.org.au/advocacy/inquiries/detail.php?ID=18>

It is looking likely that the balance of interests of copyright users and owners will tip in favour of owners, unless provisions can be included. This will mean changes in access to information for users and increased access costs. There is still considerable work to be done to ensure that if the Agreement is signed, intellectual property and copyright matters can be resolved beforehand. The enabling legislation has been passed by the House of Representatives and is now with the Senate, to be considered when parliament resumes in August. The prime minister is determined to have the legislation passed by parliament before the next election. The Opposition is yet to declare its position in the Senate and could well use this as a tactic to influence the election date. It is a pretty-safe bet that the date will be announced soon after the FTA legislation goes through.

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (Australia and US Free Trade Agreement) has released its report to parliament. The report supports the copyright term extension, but as a result of strong lobbying by copyright users

— including ALIA — makes three recommendations: 16, 17, 18 (p238) designed to assist 'educational, libraries, research and similar institutions to provide community access to knowledge'. The ALP members presented a Dissenting Report calling for an extension of time for more substantial analysis of the agreement to determine 'that the eventual outcome is in the national interest...'. One of the areas of their concern is 'access by universities, educational institutions and libraries to copyright material under the proposed arrangements' (p275). There has as yet been no government response to the report.

The Senate Select Committee on the Australia/US Free Trade Agreement has released a draft report. The Opposition notes its concern 'about the lack of consultation and evaluation throughout the AUSFTA negotiation process in relation to Chapter 17 [copyright and intellectual property] and the significant legislative and policy changes to Australian IP law which it requires'. The Government members support the intellectual property section without reservation.

The Australian government is now moving quickly, and with little consultation, to accede to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) copyright treaty (WCT) and performances and phonograms treaty (WPPT). ALIA has submitted that Australia should not ratify these treaties until parliament has had the opportunity to consider them in the Free Trade Agreement deliberations and in the light of recent Australian copyright law reviews. We argue that the US *Digital Millennium Copyright Act* (DMCA), on which much of the contentious copyright and intellectual property terms in the Agreement is based, is highly-prescriptive and goes against the minimalist principles approach of the WIPO treaties that assist the balancing of the interests of owners and users of information.

### Copyright Law Review Committee review of Crown Copyright

<http://alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/crown.copyright.html>

Following our submission, we will attend the July consultation forum.

### Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee Inquiry into the Progress and future direction of life-long learning

<http://alia.org.au/advocacy/inquiries/>  
Our submission highlights the need for

the library sector to have direct input into policy development and direct access to funding for learning initiatives. It recommends that policy development focus on creating a learning community infrastructure which draws together all learning providers, including libraries, employers, education, and adult and community education providers.

### Submission to the Review of the Gender Pay Gap in Western Australia

<http://alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/wa.gender.html>

Phil Teece, our employment and industrial adviser, has provided an outline of our submission in his Workwatch column in this issue. See p28.

### Parliamentary Services Amendment Bill 2004

The bill was introduced in the last session of parliament and is scheduled to be debated in the August session. It establishes the position of parliamentary librarian, following the merger of three parliamentary departments. ALIA president Imogen Garner has written to the presiding officers of parliament supporting the position and the requirement that the parliamentary librarian must have either or both professional qualifications in librarianship or information management and professional membership of a recognised professional association in the discipline of librarianship or information management.

The explanatory memorandum states that the inclusion of information management in the description of appropriate qualifications reflects the fact that this is another commonly-used term for tertiary courses in librarianship. It notes that in the 26 currently-available tertiary courses recognised by ALIA, 13 course names have the word library, and 13 have the words information management.

### Australian Bureau of Statistics review of the Australian standard classification of languages

ALIA members from NSW with expertise in multicultural services provided comment on the review of the Australian standard classification of languages (ASCL) and declared that the proposed changes are positive. The ASCL is used in the analysis of the census question on languages other than English spoken at home. ALIA has previously made a submission to the ABS on the significance of this census data for planning library services for multicultural communities. ■