

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the *Australian Law Librarian*, the "new look" ALLG Newsletter. The Committee considered that the Victorians had developed the Newsletter so successfully that the time had come for us to present it as a journal rather than a newsletter. Tentative enquiries to the previous committee and others about a possible change of title were met with encouragement. I hope you like the new format.

Notwithstanding the change of title, I hasten to assure you all that the Committee remains very aware of the importance of up-to-date news. We shall do our best to include your notices and news as close to the date of printing as possible.

Turning to this issue, it is sad for me to have to feature an interview with Ted Glasson to mark his retirement. Ted and I have been in law libraries for much the same length of time. He made a most significant contribution to Australian law librarianship in the seventies with the Monash union lists. We have all relied on them, and his book on legal research, for many years, and still

do. His voice of reason, sound advice, and quiet achievements will be missed. Thank you Ted, for all you have done for us, and our best wishes for an enjoyable retirement.

This issue also features several articles on the Pacific. This is not a personal indulgence so much as a recognition of the need to broaden our horizons a little and to follow up on the Canberra Conference. I hope you enjoy the tales of our South Sea travellers and Peter MacSporran's interesting article on the law of Nauru. With the case against Australia proceeding in the International Court of Justice it is a topical piece on a subject that few know.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Victorian committee on the magnificent job they have done on the Newsletter over the last three years. In particular I would like to thank Fay O'Grady who has been so helpful and patient in assisting with the journal's transfer to Canberra.

JACQUELINE ELLIOTT – EDITOR

## NATIONAL CONVENOR'S NOTES

In December, I took the opportunity provided by the ACT Division, to visit Canberra to meet local members and, most importantly, to follow up the ALLG discussions with the National Library.

The aim of the meeting at the National Library was to develop a co-operative climate in which to resolve some of the concerns raised at the meeting held in Adelaide in 1989, and develop an agenda for working together to achieve the policy expressed at that meeting. I spent several hours with Warren Horton and Jan Fullerton, the ADG in charge of collections and services, discussing ways in which both the National Library and the ALLG can move forward together in developing the national legal collection,

and services by which to access it. Eric Wainwright did not attend the meeting because he was overseas at the time.

One of the first areas for discussion concerned recognition of the status of the ALLG as a national organisation. It was made clear that our work since the Adelaide conference in consolidating a national profile of the ALLG as a cohesive organisation with a more formal structure has had considerable impact on the way in which we are recognised by the National Librarian. He was keen to resume discussions with the ALLG and has been monitoring our developments in a variety of ways, including regular reading of the *Newsletter*.

The issues of how the NLA's law collection fits into the overall distributed national law collection, its development, and access, formed the basis for most of the discussion. The remainder concerned ways in which the ALLG could work with the NLA to achieve the best possible results in developing its role in these areas.

As a preliminary step, the NLA is commissioning a review of its law collections, to be undertaken by a consultant during 1993. The terms of reference for the review are broad and aim to evaluate the role of the NLA in providing legal information services and defining its client group in this area. The review will look at the content of the NLA's law collection; its organisation and access; and will recommend future directions. I emphasised the need for the review to be managed in such a way that it provided tangible outcomes which could be implemented, and both Warren and Jan were keen to stress that this would be the aim of the review. The terms of consultation will be put to the NLA Council in February 1993 and limited tenders for a disinterested and qualified consultant will be sought at that time.

There are several things the ALLG can do in preparation for that review. The first project that I am planning for the New Year, will be to organise a working party to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each Division's collections, in terms of their holdings. We can build upon the results of the 1984 Wilson and Glasson survey to monitor significant changes since that report was published, for example where new resources - perhaps in Asian law - are held, or where they have been endangered by cut-backs. A second project will look at specific implications of changed economic environments on service provision and networking between our member libraries, for example in inter-library loan relationships between government and firms.

This preparation will help provide a foundation for a submission from the group to the NLA review, about how the ALLG perceives its role

and client group in legal information provision. It will also be a valuable aid in reviewing the collection development policy of the NLA, particularly as Jan has agreed that Conspectus is not a very useful tool in evaluating law materials.

In terms of organisation of the collection, the NLA agrees that its current practices need improvement if better access to resources is to be achieved. The move to alternative classification, for example, is one area which is being considered.

The most significant change in the NLA's position, from that of the Adelaide meeting, is in its policy move towards developing subject expertise, particularly in reference services. The NLA's strategic plan offers this as a medium term initiative and the important consequence of this, for us, is that the employment of a law librarian, at a suitable level and in the not too distant future, is a real possibility. In the short term, an initiative the ALLG can offer the NLA is a program of training sessions for staff, both as workshops and exchanges. This would be useful, particularly for language specialists, dealing with international legal materials.

Other specific areas explored were ways in which the NLA could communicate with the ALLG at both practical and policy levels. Practical mechanisms, like the publication of NLA holdings lists and explanatory articles on how primary source exchange agreements work, were mooted as ideas for publication in the *Australian Law Librarian*. At the policy level, avenues for informal consultation have been developed, and formal meetings will be arranged, at least, to coincide with the conference.

As expected, there was much to discuss and there are still plenty of issues to resolve but I believe overall that good headway was made and that we are facing a climate of recognising and goodwill with the NLA accepting the importance of the ALLG as a national association of dedicated professionals with considerable expertise in managing a significant range of national information resources.

**JANE PONTING – NATIONAL CONVENOR**