

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S NOTES



I have reported in the past few issues of the *Australian Law Librarian* on the very good progress which has been made by the ALLG in our discussions with the National Library of Australia over the Law Collection. I have just finished reading the *Review of the Law Collections and Services* of the National Library of Australia, by Rob Brian, and would like to make some personal comments on this important document.

Copies of the *Review* have been circulated to all State and Territory convenors, and I have asked that ALLG members comment on the contents; by the time these notes are published, I will have collated these responses and submitted them to the National Library of Australia.

When I commenced working as a law librarian one of the first things I became aware of was the frustration which had been felt by law librarians over the years in their dealings with the NLA's law collection. The ALLG had consistently pursued the line that the NLA was doing itself and its users a disservice by not appointing a law librarian to oversee that part of its collection, and felt thwarted that its comments and recommendations had been ignored.

Rob Brian, to his great credit, has been able to take his accumulated knowledge of the history of these dealings, and use the short space of a four week consultancy to critically analyse the NLA's collection, and bring the two together in a concise and clear report.

Rob has been able to give concrete examples of a myriad of problems, covering classification, binding and cataloguing inconsistencies which should be of great concern to us all.

In 1991, I was asked to familiarise myself with Indonesian law prior to setting up a law firm library collection in Jakarta. As part of the preparation I visited the NLA to find out what they held and how it was organised. Apart from gaining some insight into the various forms of Indonesian law, and the importance of presidential decrees and regulations, alongside the legislation, I remember well walking out of the NLA shaking my head at the inconsistencies in classification that I had observed. As a user, with law library experience, I had not found it easy to check the stacks to locate all the material I wished to view. The collection at that time was overseen by the South East Asian specialist who admitted her lack of familiarity with Indonesian law.

From this very brief experience I can understand the difficulties Rob must have encountered in his four weeks, and can only admire the very practical examples he was able to gather for his report, because it is only by giving such examples that he can demonstrate the shortcomings in the collection.

The overwhelming impression left with me on reading the report is that Rob emphasises that the librarian's role in a specialised area such as the law is to make the collection accessible. This can only be achieved by consistent cataloguing and classification practices which are put in place by knowing *how* the user accesses the collection. I congratulate Rob

on the report and hope most fervently that the NLA, and the policy makers, are able to find the funds necessary to bring to fruition the vision of Sir Edmund Barton who, in 1901, describing the Library of Congress, mentioned that "they have a parliamentary section, a general section and a law library" and went on "there is a great deal to be said

in favour of the establishment of such an institution" As Rob Brian suggests, perhaps this is a vision for the year 2000

RUTH BIRD - NATIONAL CONVENOR

[*Postscript* : The Editor apologises to the members of the ALLG National Committee whose names were unfortunately reversed in the photograph in the last issue. The mistake occurred in the printing stage - JE]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I have finally got around to checking a couple of facts given in Elizabeth Estberg's article on "Legislation of the Australian Capital Territory" ((1993) 1(6) *AustLL* 263).

Page 269 last paragraph - Subordinate legislation does not come with explanatory statements, although ACT Publications (Leo Clarke) says something is in the wind.

Page 271 'Commencement' paragraph 2 - alphabetical indexes are not published monthly, but annually. The weekly Gazette publishes a list of S (Special) gazettes published to that date, which includes acts and rules.

Debbie Mudin

MacPhillamy Cummins & Gibson

Dear Editor,

I enclose a contribution which may fit into some section of your very fine Journal. It's not a review for stated reasons and I don't know whether it should be a letter to the Editor.

I have been associated with law librarians since the early 1960s and a subscriber to your Journal for a number of years. Since my retirement from active service as a law publisher this is one of the journals I continue to read with enjoyment. You may recall that I contributed an article on my attendance at a BIALL conference in York a couple of years ago.

As a lawyer and a law indexer in my advancing years this work struck me as a classic contribution to the legal literature of Australia by a librarian, and I have been in correspondence with Rosemary

I hope to write a full review for one or two other legal reviews.

Subject Index of Legislation Victoria

In view of the detailed account of the compilation of this Index in Vol 1 No 6 (Dec 1993), a review of the usual kind may not