

PICKET LINE



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Library technicians and award restructuring

All industrial awards in Australia are being restructured according to the structural efficiency principle (SEP). The first measure listed by the Industrial Relations Commission when defining this principle in August 1989 was the establishment of skill-related career paths which provide an incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill formation.

It is my intention here to examine whether award restructuring has brought about skill related career paths for library technicians. Members have provided brief summaries of how library technicians are being treated under different awards.

Australian Public Service

No classification exists for library technicians. Library technicians remain employed within the Administrative Services Officer (ASO) grades. That is, they compete for non-professional vacancies in APS libraries with individuals who are unqualified and have received no formal training.

In award restructuring negotiations, the Professional Officers' Association (which covers librarians) proposed that library technicians be included at the lower pay level of the common professional stream. This proposal was accepted. Library technicians were not placed in the common technical stream which includes other TAFE-trained technical workers.

The National Library of Australia

The National Library of Australia has instigated a local designation of 'Library Technicians' for Administrative Services Officers working within that organisation. There are no mandatory qualifications required for applicants to these positions. Library technicians Grades 1 to 4 equate to ASO Grades 2 to 5.

New South Wales Public Service

Negotiations between the Public Service Association and the employers broke down badly earlier in the year. The employers have been pushing for separate agreements for each department. Thus library technicians may be placed in different pay and classification structures for each department.

New South Wales Local Government

The skills audit being carried out by the NSW Local Government Industry Training Council is still proceeding. A new award, which will include new classification structures, will be agreed to after the skills audit is completed.

Northern Territory Public Service

The Northern Territory Public Service has been going through a job evaluation exercise as well as award restructuring. Library technicians are now placed in the Administrative Office stream. A new award will be operative from 1 September. Mandatory qualifications will be retained.

The job evaluation review has resulted in a number of lower positions being upgraded. This has resulted in a bunching effect, where there are now a lot of positions at the AO3 level. Some positions may drop to a lower level when current occupants leave their jobs. Library technicians working as school assistants have also had positions upgraded due to the job evaluation review.

Queensland Public Service

A second 3 per cent p.a. pay rise has been granted from early July 1990. It is proposed that an occupational task group comprising library technicians and librarians be developed in the State public service. This would not include technicians working as teachers' aides or teacher-librarians.

Current union and management discussions revolve around how restructuring will proceed, rather than looking at individual parts of the award. It is still unclear whether skills based on task based criteria will be used.

Queensland Local Government

Within current awards library technicians are employed within library assistant positions. The Municipal Officers' Association (MOA) has proposed that these positions be relocated in both an administrative services stream and a technical/supervisory stream. This would provide definite positions for library technicians which require the possession of mandatory qualifications.

However, this is only an MOA proposal. Members of the ALIA Queensland Branch have indicated that they have had extreme difficulty in obtaining information on the progress of these negotiations.

South Australian Public Service

It appears that library staff will be grouped in the Consultancy and Information Services part of the Administrative stream. Mandatory qualifications will be retained for library technicians. There is a 21 December 1990 deadline for the restructuring of this part of the SA Public Service. This deadline may not be achievable.

South Australian Local Government

All library staff, excepting chief librarians, have been placed in a Planning and Community Development stream. This will include clerical library officers, library assistants, library technicians, senior library technicians and librarians.

Tasmania

The State Library is the provider of public library services in Tasmania. Library technicians have been employed in library assistant positions. Under the award restructuring process, a task analysis project was commenced. This looked at duties performed by various library staff, and was expected to lead to new work level guidelines and classifications.

However, this process has halted due to the government ordering a review into the Department of Education and the Arts (which administers the State Library). This review will be completed in mid-September. The award restructuring process is expected to recommence after the Departmental review ends.

Victorian Public Service

Library technicians have been placed in a common technical stream with other TAFE-trained technical workers.

Victorian Local Government

A pilot study was being done, looking at jobs and possible job redefinition in 22 local government authorities (including councils, shires and waterboard type bodies). However, negotiations have broken down between the unions and employers.

Western Australian Public Service

Please see a separate article in this issue of *inCite* from Evette House.

Western Australian Local Government

The classification structure is currently remaining the same with library assistant positions being open to library technicians. The City of Stirling has its own award which contains library technician positions.

Once again, negotiations have broken down between the unions and the employers. It is likely that a skills audit will be done by the City of Perth Council.

