

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

CANBERRA RULES

Richard Griffiths' column 'Canberra Rules' is always of interest, and his contribution in the last issue of the **Australian Law Librarian** (Volume 3:6 December 1995; 218-21) was even more so to those of us involved with the implementation of the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (which is known locally by its acronym of FRLI, pronounced 'frilly...'). The article does contain a number of inaccuracies which should be corrected, and I would also appreciate the opportunity to bring readers up to date with the progress of the SCALE upgrade since I wrote for ALL (Volume 2:6 December 1994; 365).

The FRLI itself is in three parts. As instruments are received they are imaged and stored. The full text of the instrument is to be provided and stored in SCALE. The third component, also kept in SCALE, is an index to the instruments - this will provide a structured approach to what may well be examples of unstructured original documents.

Mr Griffiths is correct in saying that access to SCALE (including access to the FRLI index and the text of the FRLI instruments) will be provided via the Internet, and it is intended that the Internet server operated by the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) be the host for this data. Of course, an advantage of the Internet as a delivery mechanism is the ability of other sites to provide 'pointers' or links to the original host and ensure the widest possible exposure of the material to users no matter where they are located.

It is simply not true to suggest that only 'computer nerds or special librarians' have ready access to the Internet, and that 'not all public or even legal libraries' have that access. Readers will recall that a goal of the recent Access to Justice initiatives was the delivery of legal

materials at low or no cost to the Australian community. The wide reach and increasing availability of the Internet makes it ideal for that delivery and Government sponsored initiatives such as the proposed EdNA (networking the Australian Education System - <http://www.deet.gov.au/edna>) and CIN (a community information network - <http://www.cin.gov.au>) are putting Internet access within the reach of libraries, schools and other publicly available points such as shopfronts, and community and information resource centres. Australia must be soon approaching the critical mass where it will be the absence of Internet access rather than the presence which causes comment, in the way that we now assume that everyone has an E-mail address.

Of course, Internet access for our colleagues in the tertiary education sector has been the envy of us all for many years and the use made of SCALE by law schools and their libraries was another factor influencing our choice of the Internet as a delivery mechanism. It is our expectation that SCALE data will be available from the AGPS Internet Server in the second quarter of 1996. Some SCALE data is already available from the AustLII Internet site (<http://www.austlii.law.edu.au>). Most importantly, Internet access to SCALE data will be free, whether it be from AGPS, AustLII, or any other site.

Mr Griffiths is critical of the potential elimination of the Government Gazette Notices Gazette. I suggest that the FRLI, by providing users with both the electronic text and, if required, an image of the instrument, addresses both the very problems that the Gazette failed to solve - finding out that an instrument has been made and then getting hold of a copy of it. A specific aim of FRLI was to get those exercises of delegated authority which were stored at the 'bottom drawer' out of the drawer and in to the open.

Another criticism is directed at the short lead time between the introduction of the Bill and the possible startup date of 1 January 1996. As Mr Griffiths noted in a postscript, the Bill did not achieve passage before the parliament was dissolved. Accordingly, the 1 January date could not be met. The Bill will be considered by the incoming Government after the election on 2 March 1996.

Mr Griffiths considers that prescribing in the Bill the medium by which the FRLJ will deliver data is a problem. I simply point out that the medium is described only as 'image based'. The reason for adoption of that technology was to enable a fast, secure and reliable mechanism to capture instruments which, it is expected, may arrive in the Office of Legislative Drafting in a variety of bewildering formats - including the possibility of original manuscript, or manuscript amendments to printed copy. The technology involved in this is well understood and robust.

Yours sincerely

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Dear Editor

In response to Mr Warren's article, 'Australian Legal Literature: Gaps in the Indexing' which appears on page 27 of this issue I should like to note that the journal articles he indicates are missing from ALLI, have in fact been indexed and are available on the database currently in its "raw" form (which can be subscribed via AARNET) They will also appear on the next release of the CLS product and on LEXIS and KIWINET (where ALLI is also available)

I should also like to add that ALLI is a new product on the commercial marketplace, one which we at Monash very much believe in. We have high hopes for its future and intend to expand its coverage to include as many publications from the Asia-Pacific region as possible. If the support for this Australian endeavour continues to grow, then we will be able to commit greater resources to the enterprise, to increase both the breadth of indexing and its timelessness. Comments and suggestions are always welcomed and encouraged.

Yours sincerely

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NATIONAL CONVENOR'S NOTES



A warm welcome to you all for the new year. I hope everyone had an enjoyable festive season and that there aren't too many stray kilos hanging around! Can

you believe it is March already? As I look at the agenda I've set myself for this year, I'm beginning to wonder where the time is going.

Convenors' meeting

In early December 1995 I had the pleasure of meeting with all the ALLG convenors in Melbourne, in order to discuss the direction of the ALLG for the next twelve months. Before telling you some of the initiatives that have come from that meeting, I'd just like to say it was a really positive, worthwhile day and it is really inspiring to see what great people we have representing the ALLG.