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Australian Dictionary of Biography

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The Secretary
Parliament of Australia Joint Committee Inquiry
into the Effects of the Ongoing Efficiency
Dividend on Smaller Public Sector Agencies
Parliament House
Canberra ACT
18/7/2008

Dear Secretary

The on-going efficiency dividend's impact on the National Library of Australia (NLA) is adversely affecting not only individual researchers but also cultural organizations, such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB), that rely on the many innovative, online bibliographic services developed by the NLA.

The NLA was of immeasurable assistance to the ADB during the process of transferring our seventeen published volumes of biographical articles to an online environment in 2006. As well as providing valuable technical advice to us, the NLA's online bibliographic services, such as Picture Australia and Libraries Australia, saved the ADB hundreds of hours of effort. Rather than having to search separately all library catalogues for portraits to accompany the 10,000 biographies in ADB Online, Picture Australia enabled us to search - in one go - the pictorial collections of all Australia's cultural institutions. Libraries Australia enabled us to search all library catalogues at the same time. Dictionaries of biography in other countries have expressed envy at our access to such services.

More recently, the NLA has been developing People Australia, another innovative 'one-stop' service that will provide links to authoritative websites, such as the ADB, and to other bibliographic services such as Libraries Australia, Picture Australia and digitised Australian newspapers. We have been following the progress of this development with great interest and are, once again, keen to make full use of it once released.

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It is with great regret that we have learnt that development of People Australia will be delayed because of the effects of the efficiency dividend.

In the 21st Century, on-line information sources are of immeasurable benefit to students, people in the workplace and the general community. Innovation in this area, such as that continually displayed by the NLA, should be properly supported.

Yours faithfully



Melanie Nolan