

## **Inquiry into the Distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series: a submission from the State Library of Queensland**

### **1. The potential impact of changes to the distribution of the PPS made by the Presiding Officers, namely the tightening of eligibility guidelines and the cessation of blister packs to commence on 1 January 2006.**

State Library of Queensland supports the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)'s aim to "ensure the best possible access to government publications by all and maximize the role the library and information services sector can play in assisting the government to achieve this." (*ALIA response to federal government changes to access to government publications announced in the 2003 Federal Budget 17 June 2003.*)

State Library also supports the following ALIA principle regarding government information:

*Right of access by the public to government information and government business*

As a State Library we want to guarantee that the Queensland public has access to a complete set of Parliamentary Paper Series (PPS). With the closing of the government bookshop network libraries play an even greater role in providing public access to this material.

As stated by Penny Scott, Convenor, ALIA Expert Group on Government Publications: "The collection of the PPS in hard copy is primary source material for the information service provided by each library on the activity of the Australian Government. It will now be very difficult for libraries to collect, collate and bind a complete and reliable hard copy set of the PPS if the pamphlet copies of papers are received one by one throughout the year."

Maintaining ready access to government information bolsters government accountability and assures access to government business.

Often, more than 400 parliamentary papers are produced in a year. Issues from the pamphlet series do go missing. Considerable burden will be placed on library staff and resources to ensure that PPS sets are complete. This burden would be placed on every deposit library, with staff duplicating effort across the country, potentially leading to inconsistent standards. The blister packs present libraries with the best opportunity to do a complete bind of all parliamentary papers produced for the year.

### **2. The provision of the PPS in a digital format, either as an alternative or an adjunct to the hard copy series.**

State Library supports the following ALIA principle:

*Governments should guarantee the integrity and preservation of government information, regardless of format.*

Print copies of the PPS should also be supported by a link to a complete electronic version of the parliamentary paper from the electronic index at the APH Library site. (<http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/parlpapers.htm>). It would be preferable if this was an adjunct to a hard copy series and not an alternative.

Some public libraries have few resources for accessing electronic information and many library users do not have sufficient computer literacy. While it is understandable that all levels of government are struggling to streamline their services by offering them electronically, this service delivery model is problematic when applied to rural, regional and remote Queenslanders.

### **3. The feasibility of a subscription service, either in digital or hard copy form.**

State Library supports the following ALIA principle:

*Governments should not allow cost to obstruct individual users' access to government information. Costs incurred by creating, collecting and processing information for governments' own purposes should not be passed on to people who wish to utilize government information.*

Many public libraries are already under severe budget and infrastructure constraints. If a subscription, or cost recovery service is implemented, many libraries will encounter difficulty in making the PPS available to their users.