



4 October 2006

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The General Manager
Adjudication Branch
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
PO Box 1199
Dickson ACT 2602

Attention: Mr Cameron Martin

Dear Mr Martin

**National Library of Australia (NLA) application for authorisation A91012 –
interested party consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NLA's application for authorisation to tender and negotiate collectively on behalf of the Australian library community, the terms and conditions for the use of certain electronic resources by Australian libraries.

I am commenting on behalf of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the national professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. The Association represents 6,000 personal and organisational members and the interests of 10.7 million Australian library users. ALIA is one of the peak library bodies which has been involved, from the beginning, in the development of the National Licensing Proposal to facilitate the provision of core online information resources to the Australian community through national level licensing agreements.

ALIA strongly believes that the major public benefit of the National Licensing Proposal is in its potential to deliver improved and more equitable access to online information resources, and especially to high quality and authoritative information that is available only by subscription, to the Australian community through the nation's libraries. As the NLA's submission states:

There remain a large number of Australians who do not have access to a basic subset of reliable and authoritative electronic resources. This is often because the libraries to which they have ready access cannot afford and do not subscribe to such resources.

For some libraries, especially school libraries, the National Licensing Proposal scheme may allow them to have affordable access to licensed online information databases for

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the first time. Libraries choosing to participate in the National Licensing Proposal scheme also stand to make savings through improved terms of supply and pricing for online information resources and in time and costs of negotiation for such resources; cost savings which could be directed by to improving other library services.

Through providing access to information, based on principles of equity and of commitment to the free flow of information and ideas, libraries contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic well-being. The National Licensing Proposal model of a national opt-in library consortium for licensing of selected online information resources, led by the NLA, will serve to enhance the benefits to the public of Australia's library services.

ALIA endorses the NLA's statement in its submission to the ACCC (paragraph 72), that the implementation of the National Licensing Proposal will not give rise to any public detriment. Participation in the scheme by individual libraries is at each library's discretion. Nor would successful tenderers have any requirement to supply only through the arrangements formalised under the scheme. The National Licensing Proposal is not intended to replace existing consortia arrangements by groups of Australian libraries, since in general these consortia serve more specialised information needs than is intended by a national consortium. Because the proposal is limited to Australian news and business, health and general reference information, there should be minimal lessening of competition between providers of subscription-based online information resources. The proposal does not reduce the scope for new entrants in the market for provision of online database resources.

In summary, ALIA supports the NLA's application and believes that the national Licensing Proposal scheme as outlined will bring significant public benefit, with minimal if any public detriment.

ALIA is happy for this submission to be made publicly available. If you have any questions about our submission, please contact me on 02 6215 8225 or by email at susan.magnay@alia.org.au .

Yours sincerely


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Sue Hutley
Executive Director