

Advocacy by Library and Information Professionals

Statement prepared by the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa, 17th December 2013.

LIANZA is committed to the principles of intellectual freedom and equitable access to information. Advocacy is necessary in order to defend these principles within New Zealand.

LIANZA has adopted this statement for use by the Library and Information Profession in New Zealand, to summarise the approach taken by LIANZA to advocacy, and to assist Library and Information Professionals when advocating.

What is Advocacy?

In its simplest form advocacy is defined as “the act of supporting a cause or proposal”¹. Advocacy for the Library and Information profession is therefore showing support for the sector and its immediate interests.

Why Advocate?

LIANZA advocates by raising public awareness of issues that may impact the Library and Information sector in New Zealand, and by ensuring the government officials (at all levels) are informed about key issues for the sector.

As government policy continues to impact the library and information profession in New Zealand it is important that LIANZA and its members play an active role in the formation of laws and legislation. As stated by IFLA it is a Library Association’s role “to inform and educate government officials from all levels of government on issues that are pertinent to the information community”.

Individual members may choose to advocate within their own organisations and communities about both national and local issues. This may include advocating on matters of professional ethics such as encouraging intellectual freedom and working to ensure equitable access to information.

Professional Conduct and Managing Conflicts of Interest while Advocating.

Individual advocacy

It may be difficult for some LIANZA members to advocate on certain issues, depending on the sector or organisation in which a member is employed, or their employers stance on those issues. Members should be aware of, and familiarise themselves with “conflict of interest” guidance that the employer may have. Where there may be an actual or perceived

¹ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

conflict of interest, members should discuss the circumstances with their manager or HR representative.

If a member feels strongly about a certain issue they can approach LIANZA to advocate on their behalf.

LIANZA Advocacy

As LIANZA has members across a range of sectors and interests, and from time to time it maybe called upon to advocate on an issue that conflicts with one or more of these interests. A conflict of this nature will not necessarily prevent LIANZA from advocating on key issues on behalf of the interests of the profession or of society in the area of libraries and information.

At a governance level within LIANZA, all conflicts of interest need to be declared when an advocacy position is assumed. In practice this means that anyone with a conflict of interest may be requested to, or volunteer to, abstain from discussion or voting on the issue.

LIANZA will ensure it takes a non-partisan approach to advocacy, and act in an ethical and transparent manner while advocating.

LIANZA reserves the right to update this statement.