



Editorial

This edition of *Quest* is being put to bed during Adult Learners' Week (ALW). I hope you will all have had a great week and that we'll have managed to improve people's understanding of the serious literacy problems adult Australians are facing. The courage of people coping with such problems was very poignantly expressed in the entries for this year's Adult Learners' Week short story competition, co-sponsored by Adult Learning Australia and the Australian Society of Authors.

To further discussion on literacy, we plan to bring out an ALW 2003 publication which will feature some of the short stories and reports from the Great Literacy Debate.

This will be a tool for further advocacy on the issue: literacy will be on Adult Learning Australia's agenda well beyond Adult Learners' Week 2003. In terms of the UN Literacy Decade it is 2005 which will focus on adult literacy, giving us time to mount the case for greater international attention on adult learning needs.

The issue of the disengaged learner also remains high on our agenda. While Learn @ Work Day has been successful in drawing to Adult Learning Australia an impressive set of partners who share our conviction about the importance of learning, we still have a long way to go before we reach those who are not exposed to learning at work. With an increasingly casualised and part-time workforce, we need some very imaginative thinking about how to deliver training to these workers. I hope that the forthcoming ALA conference will provide one venue for that thinking to occur. Don't forget to register!

The conference will be accompanied by a particularly important Annual General Meeting at which the results of the election to the new nine-member board will be announced and by the inaugural meeting of the ALA Council. The current executive is drafting regulations to support the new constitution. In so doing, it is conscious of the need to build in flexibility to deal with matters that arise during the transition to a new *modus operandi*, one which I am sure will serve the Association well.

Accompanying this magazine is a pamphlet summarising one of our first pieces of work conducted under the ANTA research grant introduced in 2002/3. The grant enabled us to purchase some questions from ACNielsen about where Australians prefer to learn. We hope you will find the research useful in informing you about potential client groups and in prompting some thinking about how or where to best catch their attention.

In addition, you will soon receive notice of an *Increasing Participation Toolkit* John Cross has developed out of the ALW 2002's focus on the learning needs of older men. The toolkit is designed to stimulate informed planning conversations about marketing and developing programs that engage new audiences.

I would like to end this editorial on the same theme as I started: literacy. In these times of international instability, it is easy to forget that there are an estimated 880 million adult who cannot read or write, two thirds of whom are women. As terror and war disrupt societies, the number of children not attending primary school will also rise. At the moment it is around 113 million. These are unacceptable figures because without literacy people will resort to guns, not words, making the prospects for peace even more remote.

Francesca Beddie

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