



Editorial

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Quest!* At the national office, we feel proud of the new-look magazine as it approaches its first year in existence. Many thanks to all who have contributed to getting *Quest* established, especially to Margaret Bates who coordinates its entire production. We hope you, Adult Learning Australia members and other readers, are enjoying the magazine and would love to hear your opinions. I encouraged you in an earlier edition to start writing letters to the editor. I reiterate that invitation.

Adult Learning Australia needs to know what you are thinking to help it cater properly to your needs and to make informed decisions about its lobbying and research priorities. Selecting the most important issues, crafting clear arguments to support our position and precise recommendations for action will be vital if we are to have an impact in the lead-up to a Federal election.

Happily, we are already well into the planning stages of Adult Learners' Week 2004. This year's theme will be intergenerational learning, which has already received some airplay in political circles with the new ALP leader, Mark Latham, championing the importance of family learning. We bring you an article about intergenerational learning designed to start you thinking about the topic.

Sharing views was a strong feature at last November's annual conference. Building 6 at the University of Technology Sydney hummed for three days with friendly, though sometimes quite heated, discussions about learning. For those of you not able to attend, we bring you a report on the atmospherics of the conference. Many of the conference papers are available on the website,

www.ala.asn.au, thanks to the efforts of Jacqui Levan who has been maintaining the website even after taking up a permanent position with the Australian Institute of Criminology. We wish her well.

One remarkable moment at the conference occurred during the presentation of the 2003 ALA award to Vi Jorgensen from Queensland. I had just explained to those gathered that the judges would have loved to give three awards but the funds did not stretch to that. Dr Nelson, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, responded in a surprising and very gratifying way. He announced that his Department would be delighted to assist Adult Learning Australia to expand the award. Thanks to this support, in 2004 there will be four categories in ALA's national award for an inspirational contribution to adult learning: individual, program, provider and Indigenous community. Further details will be announced in the winter edition of *Quest*.

The new Board of Adult Learning Australia will be meeting at about the time you receive this edition of *Quest*. They will be considering the association's strategic direction over the coming year. The priorities I will be putting before them include: encouraging greater action on, rather than rhetoric about, whole-of-government approaches to learning and community strengthening; pushing for greater flexibility in the use of training accounts for job seekers; the introduction of learning guidance to assist **all** Australians plan their learning pathways; and the fostering of the learning communities. Many of these topics are discussed in the following pages.

As most of you will already know, this will be my last editorial for the Adult Learning Australia magazine. I will be moving on in April, although I do hope to remain engaged with the issues we have been championing. They are too important to ignore, a fact I believe is dawning on policy makers all around Australia. Let me wish the association a vibrant future and express my thanks to all those who have offered advice and support during my stewardship of the association.

Francesca Beddie

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR