



## Welcome to the Spring edition of QUEST

The Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) recently brought Dr Geoff Bateson from the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership to visit Australia. ACAL kindly made time available to ALA for Dr Bateson to visit Canberra to talk about the contribution lifelong learning makes to the regeneration of neighbourhoods. He made two presentations, the first was hosted by DEST and addressed senior departmental officers from a number of Federal Government Departments about the development of Birmingham Core Skills Partnership. The second was to academics and practitioners with an involvement in the learning communities. Participants at this presentation were introduced to a learning city audit tool.

Such is the interest being generated around the learning communities that we are presenting as our main story a paper entitled *What a Nation can do* by Barry Brooks, Acting Director, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, Department of Education and Skills in the UK. While this paper provides a national policy perspective to basic skills acquisition, implementation is focused at the regional and local levels.

You will have received a copy of our Awards Nomination Form. Please promote it widely to those you think have made an outstanding contribution to the learning field. The awards this year have been co-sponsored by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) with prize money of \$2,000 for each category winner and \$1,000 for each category runner-up. The winner in each category will be flown to Adelaide to receive their prize at the national conference.

This issue also carries a brief profile of the current ALA Board Members.

By the time you receive this issue you will have just experienced Adult Learners' Week and Learn @ Work Day 2004. Our team in the national office, along with a very co-operative, creative and energetic team of state and territory co-ordinators, have collaborated to continue to make this a successful celebration of learning in the community.

As a prelude to the ALA conference we have been fortunate to have Dr Tom Karmel, a keynote speaker, provide a paper on a *New national research agenda for Indigenous students*. This paper reports on some ongoing research that will continue into 2005.

Our special guest in this issue is an old friend of ALA. Senator Ursula Stephens briefly describes her career and outlines some of the experiences that have shaped her values and attitude about lifelong learning.

John Cross, 'international' presenter, and researcher on lifelong learning for ALA, reports on his recent visit to Taiwan. John presented a paper on behalf of ALA at the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) symposium. The context being the development of an APEC statement about lifelong learning. John's presentation can be found on the ALA website [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au). Immediately prior to the preparation of this issue John had taken the position of Executive Officer of Museums Australia. It was with very mixed emotions that we farewelled John, but on an optimistic note, we are already searching for possible points of linkage between our respective organisations.

Supporting Learning Communities development through ICT is a theme that will be on our agenda for a while at ALA. Kim Harrington reports on the June launch of the Caboolture Learning Network and the role of website help.

ALA in partnership with our colleagues in the Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN) will be undertaking a 'Think Tank' survey, funded by DEST, in four states, focusing on our Learning Communities Catalyst Website to:

- review current satisfaction levels with our existing website,
- identify changes and additional tools that could be developed
- encourage broader sector engagement in Learning Community discussions
- encourage Local Government and business input.

To contribute your opinion, if your not able to attend one of the Think Tanks, call Mary Hannan at the National Office.

Finally, in our Looking Back section, Bob Holderness-Roddam, in an article taken from the Australian Journal of Adult Learning April 2003, mentions the importance of recording our history, suggests where documents should be lodged, gives advice on sourcing information and publication options.

**Ron Anderson**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR