

Editorial



It seems that 2008 is the year for New Beginnings and here's hoping it is the year when Adult Learning is recognised for the influence it already exudes and the much greater contribution it can make to the productivity of the Australian community.

Already we have a submission with the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer along with many other relevant Ministers (see page 5). We hope Australia will begin the drafting of a Life Long Learning policy, the absence of which has generated scepticism about Australia's commitment to adult learning both here and overseas.

This issue of *Quest* reflects the scope of Adult Learning issues. It's jam packed full of news and information.

The young adult makes a dynamic appearance in this issue. Gillian Stillfried, a young adult who was hired by us for a relief role, but has become so passionate about adult learning we are finding it impossible to cut her off. In this issue she links her field of 'cancer research' to adult learning. It is a timely article (Page 12) as I had made a commitment to the U3A (NSW) that I would pursue the links between learning and longevity both in the workforce and life in general. This is a critical issue on which work will start soon with the Australian Minister for Health and Government.

On the other side of the fence, our eminent stalwart Dr Kaye Bowman has presented us with an excellent occasional paper (Page 16) linking ecosystem thinking to adult learning. As natural resource management is becoming increasingly important in Australia, this thinking is 'cutting edge'.

One of our articles reflects on the sixty plus major recommendations that have been made in respect of ACE and adult learning in general over three inquiries. It is amazing and very disappointing that so little progress has been made on these recommendations. Even though former Minister for Education, Science and Training Brendan Nelson condensed the key recommendations down to five (see page 11) still nothing significant has happened. We all hope the new Government will include these important recommendations as part of their vibrant Social Inclusion policy, known as the second pillar of their election platform.

Nominations for a Social Inclusion Board have already been called. The Government is pushing for the finalisation of the MCEETYA review and committing to making the national apology a thing of action rather than a set of words. We are sure this means better adult education for Indigenous peoples.

There is to be a national 2020 Consultative Forum of one thousand people in April.

We are certain many of our members will be keen to jump on board and embrace these initiatives. If you do become involved please let me know so that we can get the most out of this great opportunity.

I am pleased to say that our early overtures to Indigenous community representatives have been very favourably received. I will personally be pushing for our involvement in their growth into new arenas for adult learning.

The coming twelve months offer a fantastic opportunity to place adult learning on the front foot and this Association will be concentrating on bringing about satisfactory conclusions. We must all as individuals and organisations seize this opportunity – we must drive this agenda by promoting adult learning to politicians, governments and businesses. We must seek other opportunities such as talkback radio, encouraging other interested parties to join us as new members or simply telling this office about the issues that face you today.

I encourage you to either act on these opportunities or at least contact this office and let us know that the opportunity exists. I firmly believe our capacity lies in our on-the-ground members and those would-be members that are yet to join.

Peter Peterson (P²)

Chief Executive Officer

