

Dear members

Voting

First, a reminder: your view counts, so please send in your vote on the proposed new constitution this week. The ballot closes on 16 July.

ALW

Secondly, a plea! Please get on line and register your ALW event on the national calendar at www.adultlearnersweek.org/calendar.html. The software has been revised, making it easy to enter data. We know lots of you are already making plans and it will help us tremendously in our own planning to get an idea of what's already underway.

If you haven't decided yet what to do for ALW this year, what about being part of the chain of literacy debates that will be taking place around the country?

See www.adultlearnersweek.org/events/greatdebate.html for details.

Or perhaps you could link up with your local MP? If they are interested in becoming involved in ALW, the National Office will be delighted to help you put together an event. Contact Jane Speechley at j.speechley@ala.asn.au.

Are you a writer? Or do you know someone who is? If so, don't miss this year's ALW short story competition, which carries a first prize of \$750!

Details are at www.adultlearnersweek.org/events/shortstory.html.

ANTA

Ms Janina Gawler will be ANTA's new Chief Executive Officer. She starts work on 28 July. See www.anta.gov.au/news.asp?ID=224 for a brief biography. Adult Learning Australia looks forward to working with Ms Gawler, who has had extensive experience working with Indigenous communities.

Commonwealth, State, and Territory ministers endorsed, in principle, the national strategy for VET 2004-2010 at their meeting in Darwin on 13 June. See www.anta.gov.au/dapstrategy.asp. Negotiations continue on the next ANTA Agreement.

Higher education

I have just returned from Indonesia where amidst the headlines about civil war in Aceh and the Bali bombing trial (and further arrests) was prominent news about new fee structures in Indonesian universities. As in Australia, so in Indonesia, deregulation is leading to big fee increases which, many fear, will mean that it is the rich not the cleverest who gain access to tertiary education.

In the meantime Senator Kim Carr (ALP) has referred the Government's budget changes to a higher education to a Senate committee inquiry. See www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/highed2003/tor.doc for the terms of reference. The committee is to report by 30 October. Do members wish ALA to make a submission (due 15 August)? If so, please email f.beddie@ala.asn.au with your views.

ACE in NSW

The NSW Department of Education and Training has proposed a major departmental restructure that is likely to result in job losses, including the position of Director of ACE. The future of the ACE board is unclear, with one possibility of it merging with the VETAB and BVET boards. This would threaten the separate identity of ACE in NSW. A discussion paper has been posted at

www.det.nsw.gov.au/special/intro.html. Submissions are due by 8 August. You can send in your views to feedback@det.nsw.edu.au but if you do could we ask that you copy them to ALA (j.cross@ala.asn.au) in order to inform our own submission on the paper.

We have been asked by a NSW ACE provider, the Gravesend Adult Learning Association, to tell you about a Quilt Challenge they are holding as part of their 20th anniversary celebrations. If you would like to know more, please contact Di Quinn pm gala@northnet.com.au.

ACE in Victoria

Sue Christophers, who has been the General Manager of Adult, Community and Further Education in the Victoria, has moved to a position in the Schools Division of the Education Department. She has been replaced temporarily by Sue McDonald.

ACE in WA

I attended the ACE Making Connections Conference in Perth on 20 and 21 June. One of the striking things about the conference was the high profile the WA branch of ALA has achieved in the State. As always, meeting practitioners highlights the fact that adult learning practitioners are a tremendously dedicated lot despite always having to grapple with the problems of chronic underfunding—certainly the case in WA. The challenge thrown up by keynote

speakers was the need to think creatively about the way in which ACE engages with the workforce, formal educational institutions and in the community. The diversity of attendance at the conference suggested that this process of creative thinking is already underway.

The WA Department of Education and Training is drafting a new strategy for adult community education. See www.training.wa.gov.au/resources/docs/adult_community_education_paper.doc. ALA has commented on the draft—see www.ala.asn.au/docs/wa_ace_strategy.pdf. While a strategy can serve to maintain the profile of adult learning, without funding commitments (there are none) one has to wonder whether this is just another piece of paper.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A strong theme emerging in my discussions in WA—and everywhere else—is the question of effective recognition of prior learning and skills. This is an area I believe ALA needs to be more research and lobbying. I would therefore be very pleased to hear members' views. You will be aware that we have already submitted views to the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, which is to report to MCEETYA on the subject. We'll keep you informed.

For those interested in the subject, NCVET has published a paper on RPL, **Giving Credit: A Review of RPL and Credit Transfer in the VET Sector 1995-2001** by Andrea Bateman and Brian Knight, www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr1032.pdf. The report documents how and where RPL is applied and its perceived benefits and barriers. It also discusses emerging issues and implications for VET. The authors put forward policy proposals regarding RPL and credit transfer to enhance the flexibility of

training and assessment in the VET sector and assessment practices nationally.

McGarvie forum

It is with regret that we had to postpone the proposed online forum on the role of governors, owing to the death of Richard McGarvie in late May. We do, however, intend to proceed with the forum, which will be dedicated to Mr McGarvie's distinguished contribution to Australian public life over many decades. A paper, based on his writings, will soon be posted on the website, with a discussion to follow in early August. You will be advised further about the forum.

Website of the month

Operating across Western Australia since 1977, Read Write Now! (www.read-write-now.org) is a community based volunteer organisation with over 1000 tutors providing free one-to-one assistance to adults wanting to improve their literacy skills. Importantly, Read Write Now! recognises that literacy goes well beyond reading and writing—noting that it takes many forms, encompassing language, knowledge, culture and communication in our society.

The website, while aesthetically unremarkable, is filled with relevant and regularly updated content, reflecting the commitment and enthusiasm of the organisation's volunteers. It includes an events calendar, discussion forum, news bulletins, national and international literacy links, resources for tutors and students, stories behind some students and samples of student writing.

Francesca Beddie

Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia