Welcome to the second issue of 1998 where the work of computer education groups across the country is celebrated, continuing a thread from issue one where recording the history and purposes of the Computer Education Groups (CEGs) and ACCE continued in print. Like most teacher associations, CEGs play three important roles. Firstly they provide a network for the expertise within teacher communities. Such a support network nurtures newcomers and enables leaders to break new ground and shape the association. Secondly, CEGs provide a structure for educators to gain support regardless of employer and employer system. Thirdly, CEGs act as a political lobby. The reports in this journal highlight how CEGs are working within these broad agendas.

In July, the 1998 Australian Computers in Education Conference was hosted by CEGSA for ACCE. The conference achieved a couple of important milestones. I would like to share my reflections of those two significant issues. It was clear that the conference had a national conference atmosphere, different to that experienced in state conferences. It contained reports of significant research in computer education, some of which will redefine what we are defining as authentic computer education activity in this country. Teachers expressed some that the practical ramifications of the research were significant and they were delighted to have had opportunity to find out first about such work at an Australian Computers in Education Conference. It is essential that ACCE provides a structure for new and experienced researchers to report and discuss Australian research with us. The conference balanced the celebration of Australian ideas with national and international speakers sharing visions and new ideas. Furthermore, leading Australian teachers had opportunity to share their classroom work and industry groups were able to contribute to the conference themes and provide all of us with new ways of considering the impact of industry progress on our classrooms, schools and universities. The national conference is an important opportunity to bring the most significant Australian computer education people together to further the agendas which affect classrooms. Congratulations to CEGSA for achieving this significant combination.

The conference also enabled ACCE to take an active role in debating issues and setting political agendas. The ACCE Board hosted a session at the conference defining the issues about teacher competencies in computer education. Labelled differently in various states, the systemic agenda seems to be about defining learning technology competencies or capabilities and about setting in place procedures to ensure (or help) teachers in schools take responsibility for demonstrating competencies in classrooms.

The conference enabled ACCE to uncover these issues. It was clear that there is increasing pressure on reluctant teachers to achieve competence with learning technology, with some states alluding to mandatory conditions of employment. It was also evident that the three states with published definitions, had adopted a broad understanding of learning technology competence focusing on teachers curriculum understanding, classroom management, resource management and ability to contribute to school planning and decision making rather than technical skills. Finally ACCE had a loud and clear message to act proactively on behalf of teachers.

Conference participants asked ACCE to proactively lobby systems to define competence, especially in those states where definitions have not been published and to perhaps help define standards for learning technology competence. Delegates were also keen for ACCE to lobby for improved opportunities for teachers to gain competence and to debate teacher ownership of computers.
access to quality professional development as opposed to training programs and opportunities to be recognised for contributions to learning technology initiatives. Agendas about management of computing facilities, recognition for the work of computer coordinators and opportunity for teachers to build networks of expertise arose from discussions about enabling teachers to have greater ‘say’ in systemic initiatives. The role of CEGs and ACCE is clearly to create opportunity for informed debate and to encourage systems to recognise the value of practitioners’ opinions.

ACCE has thus undertaken a project to define standards for learning technology competence. It will develop a number of statements about the consequences of such standards and the issues involved in helping our teacher workforce achieve such competence. The research is done. The debates are soon to be launched on oz-teachers and within state’s online communities. Please join in and help ACCE shape such a range of positions statements with you.

A sad element of the conference was the lack of NSW teacher participation. CEGNSW decided to host their conference at the same time as the national event. The Board of ACCE hope that in future, CEGs will join in the collaborative spirit of ACCE and become part of this important event enabling all Australian teachers the opportunity to celebrate statewide expertise and participate in the national agendas.

Important work has begun in supporting the redevelopment of the New Zealand Computer Education Society. ACCE have been providing a support network for society board members and interested educators. In the project Bev Gower, current president has visited the ACCE Board. I had the opportunity to attend their national conference, present ideas for a society model and attend some meetings to help unite their CEG structure within a stronger national umbrella. I will be attending a national meeting again in November where I expect the New Zealand team will finalise their structure. ACCE has offered a reciprocal affiliate agreement which will enable Australian teachers to participate in New Zealand events and access New Zealand publications. More than this we have discussed combined conference programs, opportunities for Australian teachers to undertake professional development tours of New Zealand and opportunities for joint online projects. The New Zealand team are very collaborative and offer us so much.

An agenda for the ACCE Board in the later half of 1998 is to offer support to Northern Territory teachers to reform their CEG. I hope that Northern Territory teachers will contact me or any ACCE Board members and offer their support and advice. I hope we can celebrate the Northern computer education initiatives in an AEC in 1999.

Further, in the latter half of 1998 the Board will be finalising ACCE membership categories, moving from a one tiered MACCE membership structure to a three tiered structure. I expect that you will hear so much about that in the 1999 journals.

In closing, I want to say thank you for your support of your CEG’s activities in 98 and for supporting the work of the ACCE board. I wish you and your families a safe and happy festive season and holiday.

Regards,
Michelle Williams.

Each year the ACCE takes nominations from state and territory groups for the award of ACCE Educator of the Year. This is one way of acknowledging the work of teachers who make outstanding contributions to the quality of educational computing activities.

The ACCE Educator of the Year for 1998 is Mike Leishman from Newman College in Western Australia. Mike, a Computer Studies teacher, has pioneered a variety of excellent computer education initiatives with students in schools, and has been extensively involved in teacher professional development activities with ECAWA. Michelle Williams, President of the ACCE, presented the award at the conference dinner at ACEC98, and Anne McDougall, Australian Computer Society representative on the ACCE Board, presented Mike with the 1998 Educator of the Year trophy provided by the ACS. We offer warm congratulations to Mike.