Dr. Ian Pirie died from cancer in August this year, aged 57 years. The Australian Council for Computers in Education wishes to acknowledge Ian's substantial contribution to advancing the study and use of information technology in education.

Ian played a central role in the development of computer education in Australia over more than 20 years. While professional associations dedicated to the use of information technology in education were still being formed, Ian was active through the computer education committee of the Australian Computer Society. In recognition of his contribution, Ian was elected a Fellow of the Australian Computer Society in 1987.

It is easy to forget that a mere 20 years ago there were very few computers in schools and that people like Ian had the vision and drive to know that something had to be done to ensure that Australian education kept pace with the rest of the world. Ian is recognised as one of the pioneers of computers in schools in Australia. It sounds weird to call him a pioneer when he was not yet 60 but that's the nature of the rapidity of change that information technology has engendered in some parts of society. Ian worked hard to establish computing as a subject of study in its own right in secondary schools. He served on the various manifestations of the computing syllabus committee for the NSW Board of Studies for over 15 years, including positions as Chair and Chief Examiner.

Ian was active at the national level (Commonwealth Government's Computer Education Program) as well as the local level (Keiraville Public School Council). During the 1980's he took on the role of Chief Education Officer of the newly founded Computer Education Unit for the NSW Education Department. He provided leadership and management of a vigorous team that opened up new frontiers in the uses of computers in schools and in educational software development. When he took up this position, a number of his former students joined his staff, which speaks highly of the esteem in which he was held. During this period, he also made a significant contribution to the success of the World Conference on Computers in Education, held in Sydney in 1990. At the international level, Ian represented the Australian Computer Society on the International Federation for Information Processing for five years.

Ian was one of the initiators in the establishment of a national professional association to represent and support the specific area of information technology in education. He convened a meeting in Wollongong in December 1982 for representatives from each of the state organisations. By the end of two days of solid discussion, debate and negotiation, it was resolved to establish the National Committee for Computers in Education. As soon as legal and constitutional matters were settled, the Australian Council for Computers in Education was quickly established. Ian's skills in leadership, advocacy and negotiation were very evident throughout this process.

Ian was Deputy Director of the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources at Wollongong University for the past three years. At various times his roles also included Manager of Interactive Multimedia, Chair of Teaching and Learning Facilities Advisory Committee, and for six months, Acting Director. Prior to that he was a Senior Lecturer in Informatics/Computing Science. In the 60's and 70's he worked at Bathurst Teachers College, University of Glasgow and Goulburn College of Advanced Education.

Ian was an engaging and popular lecturer. His research at Glasgow, for which he was awarded a PhD, was concerned with the factors that influence the success of students studying computer science. He lectured mostly to large first year classes and achieved the positive outcomes that one would expect from his exposition of method training in the teachers' colleges and his research in Glasgow. He was nominated solely by students for a Vice-Chancellor's teaching excellence award. His rapport with students was clear evidence of his aptitude for teaching and his devotion to serving the needs of students.

Ian's passing leaves a large gap in many people's lives - his happy smiling face, his accumulated wisdom and his dry sense of humour are missed.

Laurie Vogler
Sandra Wills