Hi everyone,

This issue of Australian Education Computing is a celebration. I realise as I was writing notes to develop in this column that it was the last one for the century, so that is worth celebrating in itself. I wonder how I could not have made that conclusion with all the excitement about the close of last year and the beginning of this one, but I did. Perhaps we are all just too busy to notice.

The celebration is really two-fold. The first celebration is that ACCE has finalised a statement on learning technology competencies for teachers and although work in the project continues as folks use the documents, there is an element of closure and achievement to the people who participated. The second celebration is that we celebrate the life of Dr Ian Pirie, a founding member of ACCE. Ian passed away in August. He will be sadly missed, and ACCE has decided to dedicate this special issue of Australian Education Computing to him. His dedication and work is precisely the spirit in which this learning technology competencies project was developed and published. We are sure that he would have contributed to the process if he had been able.

Dr Ian Pirie is special because it was partly from his instigation that CEG members from each state met to decide if a national group should be developed to lobby government, support state groups and undertake projects nationally. He called and hosted the first meeting. In a dedication to Ian, written by Laurie Vogler and Sandra Wills, two other founding members of ACCE, the story of Ian’s contribution is outlined to share with us. Most current members of ACCE groups may not recall the history and I am thankful some old timers (with all respect), have helped us record such a significant event. It was within the ethos of original discussions that an Australian Council for Computers in Education would regularly develop statements of national significance and that the Association would take a leadership role in helping systems and groups understand learning technology in education. I am proud that ACCE has the opportunity to dedicate this issue to Dr Ian Pirie. It is a great celebration.

The issue contains a background paper on the context which surrounds current trends to pressure teachers to use Information and Communications Technology in classrooms and some position statements on a range of issues raised by the CEG community to ACCE. In developing the papers and in the consultation process, it became clear that terminology would be a minefield. We knew how hard it would be to share our intended meaning and use clear terms in the process. Our documents ask readers not to trap up on terminology but to use the context of the document, paragraphs and sentences to draw the meaning that they value.

We needed to be clear that our papers told the federal government that their use of the term Information Technology was inappropriate and inadequate when applied to the school sector of education. Thus, the deliberate use of the term Learning Technology was adopted as often as practical. We wanted to be clear that the terminology of the Technology Key Learning Area would not detract attention from the use of learning technology in all curriculum areas. We also wanted to point out to state and national government groups that Computer Studies as a discipline in school was an important area of activity and that it involved a substantial proportion of the senior secondary student population. We also needed to distinguish the processes of learning technology from the technological artefacts (equipment). It was always going to be tough.

The result is terrific. The draft and now final documents have drawn attention and have been used by many groups, schools and individuals. It is ACCE’s intention to continue maintaining this document store on the ACCE web site to collate evidence of Learning Technology competencies for teachers initiatives and projects, as well as collate feedback and ideas. If your school develops a program by using these and other competencies, please let ACCE know and let us acknowledge your wisdom and expertise on our web site. Please submit feedback and contact ACCE at http://www.acce.edu.au

My personal thanks to Ken Price who acted as a consultant on this project and to Janine Bowes who supported Ken all the time. Thanks also to Anne McDougal who worked with her ACS hat on to support us throughout the project. Thanks to all Board members who helped develop positions and provide lively debate. Finally thanks to all the CEG members who began this process in Adelaide at ACEC 98. This is an important document which will do much to draw attention to the learning technology expertise in our teaching community, and help systems and schools develop professional development programs to continue development of teacher competencies.

In closing, I would like to wish you all a wonderful 2000. We will achieve so much more this century.

Regards,
Michelle Williams
President ACCE