President's Column
by Ralph Leonard (President ACCE)

Having recently been elected to the position of President of ACCE, I begin the role with considerable appreciation for the work of previous Presidents. ACCE has been a highly proactive organisation for many years and contributes to many aspects of the national environment for the use of ICT within Australian schools. Much of the recognition accorded to ACCE in recent years has been due to the efforts of Michelle Williams, my immediate predecessor. Michelle's strong commitment and belief in the role of professional associations has been expressed on many occasions and in many ways, but perhaps the most significant has been in her vision for ACCE to become an active participant in nationally significant projects and in some instances the instigator of national projects. That has been a defining feature of her presidency. Michelle also emphasised the role of ACCE in supporting its member associations and fostering their participation in ACCE activities. Through her efforts, ACCE has grown and matured as a national professional association and she deserves to retire as President with pride in that achievement and with many thanks from our community. Michelle continues on the ACCE Board as the Immediate Past President.

It is important that our community remain closely connected with the numerous national initiatives that are currently active. The ACCE Board is a vehicle for ensuring that the collective voice of CEGs can be heard on issues that will affect ICT activities in schools and the work of teachers. A current example is the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education which has a focus on innovation with particular emphasis on science, technology and mathematics. ACCE is represented on the Reference Group for the Review by Cathy Crook, the ACCE Board member from CEGACT. The second discussion paper from the Review, Young People, Schools and Innovation: towards an action plan for the school sector, makes particular reference to the concept of the knowledge economy and as educators, with a strong interest in the way that ICT is used, we need to be aware of the contribution that ICT has made to the development of the knowledge economy.

Another example of current activity is the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Programme (CQTP). ACCE was instrumental in forming the consortium of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), National Curriculum Services and ACCE which successfully tendered for the National Quality Teacher Information Exchange Project, a strategic national initiative within CQTP. Within the project, which continues until the end of this calendar year, ACCE has had responsibility for the website which contains information about CQTP and the national and state/territory projects that have been conducted within CQTP.

ACCE has on several occasions initiated its own projects. In 2000, it devoted an edition of this journal to the topic of teachers competencies for ICT. This topic later became the focus of a project of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (as it was then called), which was conducted by University of Western Sydney, ACSA and ACCE, and resulted in the report Raising the Standards. Continuing with that approach ACCE hosted a forum, at the Australian Computers in Education Conference 2002 in Hobart, to consider the issue of standards that might apply to the teaching of the formal Year 11 and 12 courses in Information Technology. ACCE has initiated its own project in this area, commissioned a report and is now completing that report.

This ACCE activity is occurring at a time when national education systems are also deciding future options for standards. There are a number of groups working on this issue and several documents have been published. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) established the Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce with terms of reference than include "Professional standards for teachers and principals, both for entry to the profession and to meet the ongoing needs of students over time". The taskforce has published a consultation paper inviting discussion and feedback on a proposal to develop a national framework for standards for teaching. Within that paper, the Taskforce acknowledges that a single fully elaborated set of standards may not be appropriate within the federated Australian environment and notes that "the various subject associations seeking to define the specialized practice unique to particular disciplines will continue to manage their own standards agenda". In collaboration and cooperation with the Taskforce but via a separate project, a group of practising teachers together with representatives of professional groups (including ACCE), unions and employers have participated in an extended dialogue which has resulted in a National Statement from the Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism.

Hence it is an appropriate time for ACCE to continue its work in addressing the issues of standards for teachers of ICT and the ACCE Board will focus on ways to progress the work already undertaken.

The remaining area for ACCE to consider further development is its relationship with industry. There have always been close ties between ACCE and the Australian Computer Society (ACS). The ACS assisted the initial formation of ACCE and remains a member organisation with a Board representative. Within the ICT industry, various organisations support the state/territory CEGs especially during state and national conferences. However there are potentially valuable relationships that can be fostered between the ACCE and industry organisations. That beckons as the next step for ACCE in its role as the national peak body for ICT in education.

1 http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/teachingreview/
2 http://qualityteaching.dest.gov.au
4 http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceETYA/taskforce/task2212.htm