

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

DR JIM WATTERSTON, FACEL



It is a privilege for me, as the incoming ACEL National President, to be providing a foreword to this edition of *The Australian Educational Leader*. For a few decades or more this journal (and its forerunners) has provided me with a primary source of educational inspiration, advice, leadership and research. As a Principal

for twelve years and more recently as a system administrator, I have relied upon ACEL to keep me in touch with educational best practice through quality professional learning and a range of highly relevant publications that have kept members at the cutting edge of their profession. Now I have a chance to give something back to an organisation that has given so much to me in the past. It is an honour to have such an opportunity to add value to an Association, whose Educational Leadership in Australia and beyond, has been so progressive for so long.

So how do I propose to make a difference you may ask? My three priorities as President over the next two years are focussed on furthering the influence and potential reach of the Association.

Firstly, I want to help bury the public versus private debate that, I think, has stalled educational achievement in this country. Regardless of which sector we work in, we all surely have a similar moral purpose. That is, we want to do whatever it takes to ensure that every student in the nation receives the intellectual nourishment, support and care to be successful as they make active choices throughout their lives. The only way that can truly be achieved across every school and every home in the country is through collaboration, a willingness to share and make authentic connections. Teachers in every school can become better at their work through learning from others; whether those others are in Catholic, Independent or Government schools. Just as we are asking teachers to open the classroom doors then so it is that schools should open the gates and systems - should remove barriers so as to connect with others who may have solutions or answers to challenges that have so far been unresolved in other locations. It is also incumbent on schools in all sectors to share the 'heavy lifting'. That is, to provide supported places for students from low socio-economic areas; offer opportunities for those with disabilities; improve outcomes for indigenous students; and to broaden their cultural mix to ensure that, as a nation, we can collaboratively close the gap between our highest achievers and those at the tail. I am certain that ACEL is best placed to facilitate this heightened level of national collaboration.

Secondly, my focus for ACEL is helping to broaden the membership base to ensure that Teacher Leaders see this as their professional association of choice. All teachers have a fundamental leadership role and need to contribute to the level of innovation and initiative that is required to guarantee success for all. We need to target more teachers to join our Association so that we can continue to be the primary source of influence and thinking in regard to contemporary educational practice.



My third priority is to ensure that ACEL continues to lead in setting national and local agendas as we continue to strive to improve outcomes for all students. ACEL is a truly independent organisation that can shape the thinking of key stakeholders, policy makers and politicians. We need to speak as a strong and united affiliation of knowledgeable and committed educators to ensure that resources are sourced and effectively deployed in order to bring about the improvements we seek.

As I take up the ACEL Presidency, it is with great sadness and deep respect that I note the passing of former ACEL Patron, Gold Medal Winner, Patriarch and 'guiding conscience', Hedley Beare. Hedley's influence across the Australian educational landscape has been profound and is arguably without peer. His pragmatic and inspirational leadership will continue to resonate across our schools and institutions so long as those who were touched by Hedley continue to contribute. We are all better educators and people for having known Hedley Beare. He was also the first Chief Executive of the ACT Education system; a position which I now hold so it is with great reverence and humility that I attempt to follow in Hedley's gigantic footsteps in both my ACT and ACEL roles. I understand and fully appreciate the achievements and progress that Hedley has orchestrated before me and this legacy provides benchmarks to which I can only aspire to reach. On behalf of everyone at ACEL, I acknowledge his wonderful life and thank his family for sharing such an outstanding pillar of society with us.

I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor, Neville Highett, for his outstanding contribution to ACEL as President for the past two years. Neville's commitment to this organisation was clearly evidenced in the stewardship he provided during his term in office when the future of the organisation was unclear and was the focus of merger considerations. Neville's leadership has stood the organisation in great stead with a clear vision provided for the future. On behalf of all ACEL members, we salute you Neville and honour your significant contribution.

In closing I would like to reiterate the excitement I feel about the term of office before me. Please feel free to make yourself known as I make the rounds of branches and attend ACEL events in the coming months. If you have thoughts and ideas about the future of the Association then I would welcome your contribution.

I finish with a quote from my hero Hedley Beare who said during his address in response to his award of Membership in the Order of Australia (AM) in June 2009 ...

"We are privileged then to be called to be educators. It is among the most worthy endeavours anyone could be called to do."

Until next time, keep up the great work.

