



Kay Poustie
Chair, Board of Education

Bill Linklater hopes that I can provide a concise overview of why continuing professional development is an issue of major importance to all members and the Association, and I am writing this *Front Line* on behalf of all members of the Board of Education, who have been developing a strategy for continuing professional development over the past two years.

For many of us, the way in which we have kept abreast of changes has been through the networks that ALIA has provided. These have included conferences, seminars, the opportunity to meet and talk with others at Divisional Committees or functions, through the professional networks that develop from these and through the regular publications of the Association.

However, new times require a new approach. The Federal Government's emphasis on training and development as a means to better productivity through the National Training Reform Agenda and the competitive environment created by leaner organisations demands that we must ensure that our knowledge, competencies and skills meet the requirements of our employers and our clients. If we ignore this we run the risk of losing our professional credibility, our relevance to our funding bodies and diminish the service we can offer to our clients.

In my experience, employees who are members of the Association are usually more aware of developments in their field, have a wider network for interaction and proactively look for opportunities to innovate and enhance services to their client base. The Association has an obligation to provide available, accessible, continuing professional development (CPD) for members and the time has come for the Association to actively plan and implement strategies for members to undertake CPD.

There has been much debate as to whether CPD should be mandatory and whether ALIA should implement a points system as used by some other professional associations to control and monitor member's compliance with set requirements for the participation in

CPD activities. Tied to this would be levels of membership which would indicate member's status as regards ongoing CPD participation.

In 1993 the Board commenced active work on CPD, using as the basis for discussion, a paper developed by the ELISS members in Victoria. Outcomes of the discussion included a consensus that CPD is the responsibility of the individual and that mandatory CPD was not a viable option for the Association. However, it was agreed that the Association must provide individual members with the opportunity to plan career development, identify ongoing learning and development needs and encourage and promote the establishment of CPD activities for members.

In order to provide members with the vehicle to plan career development and identify personal ongoing training and development needs, the Board recommended to General Council that the Association approach the Library Association (LA) with a view to obtaining a licence to develop the LA's *Framework for continuing professional development* to meet Australian needs and make this available to members. The Association received a positive response from the LA and the 'Framework' will be modified and enhanced and become available to members only. This document will also be of use for performance appraisal and salary negotiations as it provides for systematic identification of individual needs and recording of activities undertaken.

CPD has many forms, including formal studies, short courses, conference and seminar attendance, participation in Association and related organisations' activities and professional reading.

At its October meeting, the Board identified the need for ALIA-endorsed CPD activities. Endorsement of activities by the Association would ensure that they met the following criteria:

- provide evidence of professional competence outcomes;
- form part of a pathway which facilitates career development;
- provide evidence acceptable for assessment for credit transfer and prior

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learning purposes;

- satisfy the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (NFROT) principles; and
- are consistent with the requirements of the national training reform agenda, competency-based training and assessment, and work-place reforms.

Endorsement by ALIA of activities would provide quality control, ensure member discounts and give a marketing edge to providers.

The monitoring of member's needs for CPD would demand planning at both national and local level. Branch T & D officers would continue to be a vital link in planning and developing CPD activities and continual monitoring of trends in library and information services and developments in library and information services education would be essential. The Board of Education and General Council would play active roles in the monitoring and identification process.

The Association has recognised the importance of CPD and continued training and education for its members. The decision to appoint a full-time training and development officer is most welcome and advertisements have been placed for this key position.

It is essential that we continue to maintain a high standard of professional practice in our workplaces. The advent of the information superhighway and the recognition of the role that our members will play in providing community access to this, and the push by business and industry to take advantage of the opportunities it offers, means that we will need to be strategic players in our individual workplaces and communities, contributing to discussions on its implementation.

Complacency about the need for continuing professional development can only lead to a diminished role for our profession in Australia today. As individuals we must take responsibility for the acquisition, renewal and upgrading of our knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is the only way we will survive in the years ahead. ■