



**Gillian Hallam**

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### Feedback to your Board of Directors

Do you have an idea, compliment or concern about your Association? Contact any director and ideas will be reviewed at each Board meeting.

E-mail to [feedback@alia.org.au](mailto:feedback@alia.org.au) will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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In 'Frontline' last month, I touched on the topic of the governance and structure of our professional association, briefly describing the Board of Directors, the various committees and reference groups, and the wide range of ALIA groups. This month I encourage you to take some time to explore the governance area of the ALIA website — you will learn a lot more about your Association and how it is run. In the last column, I highlighted the complexity of membership organisations, where the members are not only customers but also owners of and producers within the organisation. Unlike a commercial enterprise, our focus is on timely delivery of relevant high-quality programs and services to members, rather than profit margins. A high level of interplay between membership and governance is absolutely critical to the success of a professional association.

The legal framework for the governance of this Association is provided by the Constitution; the duties and responsibilities of the members of the Board of Directors are guided by the principles of ethical behaviour, honesty and accountability and are subject to the provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001*. The role of the Board is to set the strategic direction, policy and advocacy, to ensure compliance with its financial and legal obligations, and to give professional leadership.

The Board of Directors of ALIA is comprised of the president, vice-president (president-elect) and five directors. The executive director is a non-voting member of the Board. Each year, a new vice-president is elected to the Board, and directors are elected on a rotational basis, with two directors appointed one year, and then three the following year. Directors serve for a term of two years and may seek to stand for a second term.

But why is all this background to governance important, do I hear you ask? I said that the interplay between membership and governance is critical. Members of the Board are members of the Association; they are elected to their positions by you, the members. It is after all, *your* professional association. Its success is in your hands and is determined by your voices.

The health of an association can be monitored by the level of engagement of its members; your own engagement as a member of ALIA is demonstrated by your involvement in groups, your participation in the PD scheme, your subscription to e-lists, and your active role in the election of directors.

The ballot papers for the 2006 elections are bundled with this March issue of *inCite*. Please don't put this important package to one side — make sure that you open it, read the materials and use your vote! This year we have an excellent field of candidates,

members who are demonstrating their engagement with the Association through their nomination. As president, I would like to thank all eight candidates for the interest and commitment they have shown. I would also like to thank the Board Nominating Committee, chaired by immediate past president Imogen Garner, for taking a proactive approach to encourage and foster greater interest in the Board nomination process, with very positive results.

Nominees for vice-president (president-elect) include Kevin Dudeney, Anne Horn and Roxanne Missingham. Take the time to read the candidates' statements of professional concerns, which offer concise insights into the issues that they wish to focus on, should they be elected. The curriculum vitae provide an overview of their experience and the professional contribution they have made during their careers.

This year we seek to appoint three directors. You have some difficult decisions to make as you consider how to vote. The nominees include Michelle Brennand, Rebecca Evans, Philip Keane, Marion Morgan Bindon and Helen Partridge. These candidates offer a range of professional, demographic and geographic attributes, which augurs very well for a vital new Board with a plurality of views.

I encourage you to take part in the ballot process. Certainly take the time to read the written information that has been distributed, it is, by necessity all too succinct. Your candidates have ideas and opinions that stretch way beyond the stipulated one hundred-word limit. So, what questions do you have? What issues or statements require further explanation? Nominees are encouraged to be visible and accessible candidates who will reach out to their electorate. If elected, these candidates will be representing you as a member, and they will be happy to discuss their ideas with you. Contact them using [feedback@alia.org.au](mailto:feedback@alia.org.au), ensure you can make an informed decision when you vote.

Let me reiterate: interaction between membership and governance is critical. Please make the most of your opportunity each year to consider the relative strengths of the candidates, the contribution they might make and *cast your vote*. Contact your directors during the year, touch base with them at conferences, ask them questions or discuss your key issues with them. And plan ahead — who do you know with the abilities and the capacity to contribute to ALIA as a director? Might it be you? You can contact the Board Nominating Committee to explore the opportunities so that the Association continues to be governed in the way you would wish it to be. For the present, however, please don't forget: the ballot closes at 5:00pm, Monday 10 April 2006. ■