

President's Message



The holiday season is now over and the AICA executive are busy attending to the business that lies ahead. It is very difficult for any executive that performs its function in "extra time" to make progress as quickly as they would wish and your executive is no different.

The first and very important goal is to put all our affairs in order to enable the association to become an incorporated body. It came as a surprise to us that this had not already happened as we have been in existence now since 1984. However, a search of the titles office shows this not to be true. Before this process can begin the constitution requires considerable changes and these are well under way. These proposed changes will be circulated to all financial members by your state president as soon as possible to give you the required 12 weeks to study them and make comment. The proposed changes will then be put to the vote at the Annual General Meeting in Sydney in May. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to our credibility as an organisation and the security of executive members to both finalise our constitution and obtain corporate status.

The year passes very quickly for the executive as it does seem to for everyone. Separated by vast distances and controlled by our financial restraints, it is not difficult to understand why progress is so slow. This does not make it any less frustrating. The face-to-face meeting held in Melbourne in October was, as usual, the most fruitful of the year with long hours spent attending to the business of the association. It is only when you attend these meetings that you appreciate the effort and dedication devoted to a few people in their own personal time.

Three new members joined the

executive at this meeting. They were: Jacqui McLean from the Royal Adelaide Hospital who takes on the role of secretary; Bronwen Mander, Western Hospital, Footscray, Treasurer; and Helen Bedford from the Public Health Division of the ACT Health Department. All have a lot to offer in the way of knowledge and enthusiasm and we make them welcome.

High on the agenda was the issue of the number of infection control policies and guidelines now being produced in this country without any obvious input from Infection Control Practitioners. I was directed by the executive to write to the Federal Health Minister as well as each state minister expressing our concern in this matter and seeking assurance that it would be rectified. For years Infection Control Nurses have been responsible for teaching health care personnel as well as designing and implementing infection control policies in their institutions that ensure safety for both patients and staff alike. Yet today we are faced with the situation where these policies and standards are produced at some cost to the tax payer from a variety of "expert" committees, mostly without consultation from professional bodies such as ours. These policies are not only unworkable in a hospital setting but contain many unnecessary and costly recommendations. The morbidity and mortality associated with preventable hospital acquired infections is of great concern to us and the enormous associated cost should be to the government, yet Infection Control programs remain unfunded and poorly staffed. All ministers have responded positively and we are now committed to keeping up the pressure and maintaining this contact.

To this end, National Standards for Infection Control have been designed and are nearing completion. It is envisaged they will be finalised and made available at the National Conference in May. It is not intended for these standards to replace those already in existence in each state but to be used as a guide by such organisations as the National Health and Medical Research Council who in drafting "Infection

Control in the Health Care Setting" commented on the need for such a document and the Australian Council of Healthcare Standards where it may complement the "Charter for Change".

The standards, 18 in all, are concise, comprising a standard statement and the criteria required to meet that standard. All are referenced and have been the result of a national effort with all states participating.

Amongst other business discussed at the executive meeting was the establishment of a permanent mailing address for AICA to reduce the confusion caused by the frequent alternating of key executive positions and to facilitate continuity for correspondence.

Numerous NH&MRC draft documents were tabled for discussion as well as the ACHS "Charter for Change". Work on position statements for executive members has now been completed and will be put to you for ratification at the AGM. Past experiences at the AGM have highlighted the need for the introduction of a formalised meeting structure. To this end the executive have agreed that all Annual General meetings will now be conducted under the rules of Renton. (Guide for Meetings and Organisations, Volume 2, Sixth Edition). Those not familiar with these simple rules which are used widely by organisations throughout the world, and who wish to make a contribution at the AGM should contact your state president or purchase a copy for yourself and become familiar with them before the meeting. The publisher is The Law Book Company Limited which has sales centres in each state.

I hope we will see as many of you as possible in Sydney for the 10th National Conference which promises to be exceptional value. I commend all the people for the work they are putting into this conference and the Editorial Committee for yet another excellent journal.

Madeleine McPherson
President