Ann-Marie Anderson-Mayes

The last two months have seen me come across some issues related to education, which I thought I would share with you.

First, at the recent ASEG AGM an incidental conversation led to a discussion of the likely withdrawal of funding for the *Primary Connections* and *Science by Doing* programmes. These programmes were established by the Australian Academy of Science in response to concerns over the quality of science teaching of science in Australian schools. *Primary Connections* has developed materials which assist teachers (who are typically not trained in science) to integrate science material into their numeracy and literacy programs. The programme only requires a further small investment of $1.5 million to become self funding, and yet this funding was not forthcoming in the recent federal budget.

Science by Doing enables high school teachers to present science in a fun, hands-on, and engaging manner. It has been successfully piloted in 28 schools across Australia, but again withdrawal of funding at this point potentially impacts on the future of this initiative.

Second, I had the pleasure of recently attending and addressing a group of senior earth science teachers at a professional development day run by Earth Science WA. My small contribution to the day was to give the teachers a brief overview of some of the free material available to them on the Internet related to earth science. In particular, I chose to show them online magazines and resources that were available from professional societies (like the ASEG) and geological surveys, both in Australia and overseas. At the beginning of my talk, I asked how many of the teachers present were members of either GSA or AIG. To my surprise only one teacher was a member of AIG. I found myself wondering why more of these teachers were not members of a professional society directly related to the subject they were teaching.

These two unrelated events have really left me thinking hard about science education. Why is this relevant to the ASEG? Because the future of our profession depends on inspiring young people to become interested in science now. And it seems to me that the very best way of inspiring students is to inspire and support teachers first. The teachers are our front line in education and if we give them the confidence and interest to teach science, this will naturally flow into improved student experiences in the classroom.

The ASEG already supports Teacher Earth Science Education Programme (TESEP) (see *Preview*, Issue 142, p. 25). But, it seems to me that as members of the wider earth science community, we should also be taking an interest in issues such as those highlighted above. Successful science education programs deserve continued funding, because a small investment now will make a real difference towards improving participation in science in schools. And perhaps there is some way in which we can encourage secondary school earth science teachers to join a professional science society relevant to their subject area. In this way teachers would have access to the latest earth science news and research, and professional societies will gain members who can give them clear ideas on how to promote their field of science, particularly to the young Australians who we need to be scientists in the future.

Initial Notification for Nominations for the 2012 ASEG Honours & Awards

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- **Recognition of innovative technological developments**
- **Promotion of geophysics to the wider community**
- **Significant achievements by younger ASEG members**

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For further information, or to notify an initial expression of interest for an award, please contact:
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