

Executive Director's Report



The major activity for WEA Sydney in 2010 had in fact started almost a year earlier. Faced with an ageing building, new compliance legislation for disabled students, and lifts which were in need of a substantial refurbishment, WEA Sydney had applied in early 2009 for funding to address these problems, under the Federal Government's Building The Education Revolution package. With the application approved, and initial funding received by the end of 2009 to cover the initial architecture design, project management, certification and City Council regulatory requirements, the actual work of the renovation started early in 2010. Disruption to student access and movement around WEA House (with only one lift

in service from January to July) was expected, and duly occurred. WEA Sydney's Board had acknowledged that this activity would bite into enrolments, and thus income, for the first half of the year, and a deficit was therefore written into the 2010 operating budget. Slight delays in the renovation process, and the continued bite of wider financial problems, particularly affecting parts of WEA Sydney's main student body, caused this enrolment drop and loss of income to be higher than expected. The result, as shown in the pages of this report which detail the financial performance for 2010, was a drop in enrolments from 16,020 (2009) to 14,575, a fall of 9%, and a final deficit figure of -\$86,102. Declines were noticeable in all aspects of the association's educational offering, excepting the ever-buoyant foreign language program, with general studies and computer training bearing the highest level of cancellations.

Yet the final result for the association, despite this statistical return, is a re-vamped building, with both lifts completely renovated, the construction of two dedicated training rooms (with modern audio-visual equipment and proper hearing aid loops) on the second floor, and a modern entrance enhanced by the installation of a small lift for mobility-disadvantaged students, together with an expanded student lounge area right next to the WEA library. A full report on the renovations can be found on page 12.

However, the success of this year-long activity was tempered by the on-going illness of two staff members, one of whom, building attendant Sam Moraitis most sadly passed away in November. WEA Sydney's staff however remained professional and committed in the face of both this loss and of the demands placed on them by the building works, and it is to them that the most thanks are due for the maintenance of WEA Sydney's standards of service during the year. Equally all of WEA Sydney's tutors deserve praise for their ability to continue to deliver value-packed and high quality courses during the refurbishment program, and it was noteworthy to record how many students had in fact returned to their favourite tutor by the end of Spring term.

WEA Sydney's governance system also continued to work efficiently throughout 2010, with animated and informed discussions occurring at both Board and Council meetings. Council meetings featured regular guest speakers, including tutors revealing their classroom methods, and the September meeting included an edited viewing of the DVD *The Guide to Good Governance*, produced with considerable input from WEA Sydney by the Community and Migrant Education Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training. There was a seamless transition of office-holders at the Annual General Meeting, with Leth Maitland taking on the role of President from Dr Adam Marchant. In addition to its regular duties, discussion and review of reports, the Board also agreed to the formation of a committee to work towards the development of suitable activities to celebrate the centenary of WEA Sydney in 2013. The Board also continued with its valued support of the officers' work in management, audit procedures, financial reporting and overall control of the association's vast program of activities. While many of these are described in the following pages, highlights include:

- 14,575 enrolments taken in total

- over 45% of enrolments taken in WEA Sydney's core Humanities and Social Sciences program (including the Discussion Group Program)
- continued growth in enrolments in foreign language courses, which now contribute 26% of overall income
- 44% of enrolments received from the over 60's age group
- 34% of enrolments taken into courses with a vocational or career improvement content
- a developing range of corporate computer and training courses, particularly servicing groups from the Department of Education and Training
- joint provision with NSW AMES of courses under the Certified Linked Skills program in Hospitality and spoken and written English
- the delivery of training in the TAA Certificate IV qualification to students in Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok, in association with Kent Institute
- nearly \$69,000 in fee income conceded through concessionary fee support
- active participation in celebration of History, Science and Adult Learners' Weeks

The current economic situation, and the effect that it has on the spending choices of parts of WEA Sydney's prime demographic, necessarily means that WEA Sydney looks to the future with a mix of caution and optimism. Yet with substantial renovations successfully accomplished, WEA Sydney remains committed to its mission to bring varied and valued educational activities to the people of Sydney. WEA Sydney's record of good governance, a healthy asset base and its well-deserved reputation for the provision of top quality courses, should see the association well positioned to thrive into the coming years.

I therefore commend this 2010 Annual Report to our members, and to all who support the ideals of the Workers' Educational Association.



Michael Newton
Executive Director