

NZALT President's Report

from Adèle Scott, NZALT President

Christchurch LangSem "Celebr8 the new Learning Area"

Massey LangSem **007^F** "Licensed to Language Teach "

Waikato LangSem Hamilton – it's on!



I have recently had the privilege of attending three of this year's NZALT LangSems, the professional learning days for language teachers held in regions around the country in non-conference years¹. At the Canterbury, Massey and Waikato events the sun shone brightly and as the titles of these days suggest there was much to be joyous about with great turnouts across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. However, with 805 out of every 1000 New Zealanders able to speak only one language (New Zealand Census 2006), there is still plenty to be accomplished and the release of the New Zealand Curriculum to include the new learning area: Learning Languages is indeed very timely.

With the release of the new curriculum, the spotlight will be on all language teachers and those supporting languages programmes. As an organisation we are gearing up to ensure we support and represent our members effectively and appropriately. 'The Speak Up Award' announced in this issue has come about as a direct result of teachers responding to our survey for primary and intermediate teachers of languages where a need was identified for funding to be made available for attendance at target language proficiency courses. Further consultation will come in the near future as your elected Executive sets about to draft a strategic plan to provide a clear focus for the Association for the next three years and beyond. Look out for your chance to comment early in 2008.

The challenge for many language teachers with our new curriculum will be to encourage ALL students who might want to begin the language learning journey and to keep them motivated to persevere through the tentative early efforts to pronounce strange sounds and try out new ways of doing things to mastering verb conjugations, and vocabulary lists to a point where they can communicate in the target language in meaningful and appropriate ways. The NZALT conference in July 2008, in Wellington, promises to be a great opportunity for us to hear about and share ideas about how we motivate our languages students. In the words of Dörnyei (2001, cited in Scott and Butler, in press), who provided a colleague and me with some useful thoughts on motivation and the language learner: 'the learner's enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure'. Certainly without these characteristics, learners would find it difficult to cope with the demands of learning a second language. He also declares that motivation is more important than aptitude, stating that "without sufficient motivation, however, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language".

Scott, A. and Butler P. (in press). 'My teacher is learning like us': Teachers and students as language learners. New Zealand Association of Language Teachers
