



# Australian Association for the Teaching of English

## Citation for AATE Life Membership: Susan Dennett 2011

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For a person's surname to be re coined as a verb or an adjective is a rare tribute. When this occurs, the individual concerned is elevated to the stature of an Orwell or a Dickens in the eyes of their colleagues and peers. Sue Gazis, a former AATE president, once said we need to invent a new verb to characterise Susan Dennett's contribution to AATE and the English teaching profession: 'to dennettise – to bring order where once was randomness.' Sue was referring, of course, to Susan's long service on AATE Council, including seventeen years as Treasurer, and the clarity, precision and foresight she brought to issues of governance, strategic planning, finances and operational structures. Today we award Life Membership of AATE to Susan Dennett, paying tribute to a woman whose leadership and management skills have been of enormous value to the English teaching community in Australia.

In 1995, Susan co-ordinated the AATE's first strategic plan and subsequently led the annual strategic planning process until the end of her term as the Treasurer of AATE. Her relentless focus on strengthening the financial position of AATE secured the basis for an expanded range of services and support for members, including a diverse publications list and significant research and strategic partnerships. As a result, such important projects as STELLA (Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy) and MyRead were made possible, and the internationally acclaimed *Interface* series of publications has remained a financially viable proposition. Susan's vision and energy enabled her to identify and secure new sources of income for the association, capitalising on the commercial opportunities available to it through its Adelaide office and staff. The project management work now undertaken on a contract basis by AATE staff has secured a healthy income stream for the association. Susan's exemplary leadership of the recruitment process has meant AATE has been well served by the General Managers it has employed, and changes in personnel have been managed in a most efficient manner. Susan brought greater efficiency, focus and professionalism to the work and management of AATE by introducing role statements for council, delegates and staff. These provided individuals with a clearer sense of the demands and accountabilities of their respective roles.

Prior to becoming the AATE Treasurer, Susan had honed her management and financial skills in a previous 'association' life as VATE Treasurer and State Conference Convenor. She continued to exercise these skills for a time as a member of the Committee of Management of the Joint Council of Subject Associations of Victoria (JCSAV). Susan's professional association work has always been informed by a passionate belief in the importance of the teaching profession expressing its voice on matters of curriculum and professional learning through efficiently administered organisations, structures and processes.

Susan was a rare educational bureaucrat who never forgot her professional association roots. At the same time she was scrupulously punctilious about the different expectations each role demanded of her. She saw the education community as a broad church in which contending voices- the teaching profession, tertiary educators, the bureaucracy, government, the wider community - ideally sought consensus but sometimes realistically had to settle for compromise. At all times her goal was to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students.

It is in recognition of this contribution and of her services to the Association that AATE proudly awards this life membership.