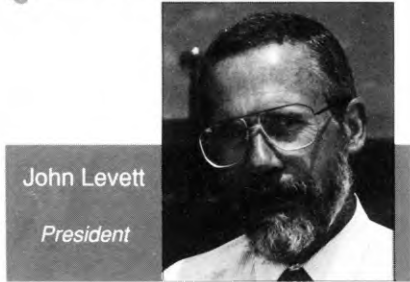


# Front Line



John Levett  
President

## Regional Groups and remote members

Late last year, as an un-blooded vice-president, I accepted an invitation to go and speak to a Regional Group. It doesn't matter which one; I suspect they all share the same characteristics.

Tenacity and professionalism, coupled, paradoxically, perhaps with a sense of isolation from the mainstream and a feeling that the Association, either as a whole, or through the State Branch, doesn't care too much about them. I got a thorough hiding for what the members of that Group saw as my complacency, and I haven't forgotten it.

This lesson in geography has been underlined recently by the proposal from the North Queensland Regional Group for it to be granted Branch status, a proposal which has generated some correspondence to *inCite* — and there will probably be more by the time this Front Line appears.

*What sort of lateral thinking do we need to conquer 'the demon of distance'?*

One recent writer thought it was about time we put a bit of lateral thinking into the issue; I couldn't agree more. There is no doubt that the Association's constitution, embedded as it is in the protocols of a Royal Charter, is less flexible than it might be. The several versions of by-laws under which the Association and its officers currently operate are diabolically complex and frustrating, and, in my view are hampering the Association rather than assisting it to achieve its objectives.

What sort of lateral thinking do we

need to conquer 'the demon of distance' as another correspondent put it? I think we've made a good start by putting the question on the agenda; a meeting of representatives from all regional groups, to be funded centrally might be another way of exchanging views and illuminating the issues. I would also like to see a regular column in this journal devoted to the concerns of Regional Groups and remote members. It would enable the rest of us who live and work in or near a major centre of population, to begin to appreciate the problems which our colleagues face.

I don't share the view that the wholesale creation of branches, either proposed or feared, is necessarily the answer, although I can see how attractive it is as an interim solution; ALIA can't afford to get into yet another tier of government, nor is it yet clear that it is necessary that we should do so. But what we have to do is make more effort to look at the way we work, to see whether that mode is still the most effective, and to improve, where possible, the set-up we've got. Much tolerance and good will is going to be required, and the Regional Groups have certainly got that; what the centre must do is find ways to encourage and support them, and those even remoter members who lie outside their compass.

I look forward to the discussion.

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Aldis Pty. Ltd. (ACN 006 426 679)  
Private Bag 16, PORT MELBOURNE VIC 3207  
Telephone: (03) 647 9724 Facsimile: (03) 647 9799