VIEWPOINT (Cont.....)

politics and the person in the street about getting down the street.

This conversation can be assisted by developing a better understanding of the thinking and structure in these areas, and also by articulating the 'story' of what we do. Because it is in our 'story' that the most powerful explanation of what we do comes through and it is in our 'story' that the relevance of what we do becomes clearly apparent to other areas. We need to move away from our muddled explanations and soar into the possibilities that are encapsulated within the experiences we share.

Outdoor/experiential education can no longer use the excuse of 'fledgling' status. It is time to use the wings that we have been flapping wildly over recent years and soar into the future. We cannot continue to return to the nest as we can no longer

exist in it's crowded confines. And we must be in the air to be seen flying. As those on the ground look for alternatives and directions we must provide for them a clear picture and a framework of thinking that provides a solution to the problems with which they are faced. Only with the nest empty and outdoor/experiential education merged with mainstream thought, can we ever hope to survive the rationalisation of economics, the conservatism of education and the 're-riskification' of recreation that flows as a direct outcome of the fear that abounds when people of insufficient vision and leadership confront the challenges of a changing future.

Ray has recently taken leave from the Department of Education in NSW to work in the United States as Director of the Regional Educational Alternative Learning (REAL) school in Windham, Maine.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR....

by Dr. Bertie Everard

Independent Chairman

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In response to Peter Martin's article (AJOE Vol 3 No 1, pg. 14).....

....."The article had many resonances with the UK situation, and I commend the author for making explicit the underpinning values and ideology of the different approaches to outdoor learning.

..... Competence-based standards and key skills play an increasingly important part in specifying what employers seek in their staff; they are intended to describe good practice. National Vocational Qualifications provide a way of recognising the ability to perform to these standards by applying relevant knowledge imparted by educational programmes.

There is surely a place for all three ideologies discussed in Peter Martin's paper, and outdoor learning facilitators would do well to develop the style flexibility that enables them to adopt each approach. I do not accept that vocational ideology is necessarily directed to "social reproduction and maintenance" and forces teachers into an authority role: employers demand flexibility in these days of turbulent socio-economic change, so many competence-based standards, e.g. in training and development, are about managing change. Outdoor learning and adventure education are particularly effective at engendering this competence, because they face students with the unexpected and the unforeseen in relatively unstructured situations, for which they have to develop coping skills. The socially critical orientation is especially relevant in transmitting environmental values to participants, and the liberal-progressive orientation is right for developing human potential. It is not helpful for over-zealous practitioners to defend their favourite ideology by vilifying the others. The world is big enough for all three. Therefore I do not sympathise with the objections of the CBT model on the grounds that it does not critique existing standards and

practices: why then do we make it a mandatory unit of competence to be able to improve on personal and organisational performance? The experiential learning model that most of us use, forces us to review existing practices, and continuous professional development, in which I hold a certificate of competence, does likewise. It is not my experience that "CBT serves to unthinkingly work against social and environmental critique and reform". In the UK at least, it is a requirement for outdoor NVQ assessors and verifiers to make judgements of competence against a set of defined set of value statements, which express the collective beliefs of those who work within the outdoor industry and seek to uphold its unique culture - including, of course, the importance of human/nature relationships, which is also reflected in a mandatory unit of competence, "Promote the conservation of the environment". CBT thus provides considerable scope for socially critical ideologies!

What this means in practice, is that there is an honourable place for both ORCA and AOEC, promoting both vocational and academic qualifications, and in the UK both for National Training Organisations (the statutory standards-setting bodies which have helped to establish vocational qualifications) and for higher education institutions which oversee academic qualifications. The more they can work together to build bridges between two progressive routes, the better outdoor practitioners' career aspirations will be served. In this respect, Peter Martin's hopes for the key Australian outdoor organisations converge with mine for the British.