

EDITORIAL

The Role of the Australian Association of Special Education (A.A.S.E.) in the Education of Exceptional Children in Australia

In this edition we have an A.A.S.E. policy statement which is worthy of close consideration by every person interested in the education of exceptional children. The Association is in its fifth year of operation; this journal, the official publication of the A.A.S.E., is in its third year of operation.

If I were to sum up the role of the A.A.S.E. in Australian Special Education I would say it in one word: **ADVOCACY**. The Association was formed so that we could have a national body concerned with acting as advocates for exceptional children. By this I mean that the Association's major objectives are to ensure the provision of appropriate educational services to exceptional children. Read the policy statements so capably prepared by John Burge and I believe you will have a set of statements with which you would wholeheartedly agree.

Australian Special Education needs a national voice. We do not have a Public Law 94-142 or a Warnock Report in this country. We have had a series of reports which, I believe, are forerunners to a major inquiry into a report on Australian Special Education. These reports include the landmark Karmel Report of 1973, various Schools Commission reports, the 1971 Wedgewood Report and more recently, the report of the Select Parliamentary Committee Inquiring into Learning Difficulties (1976).

None of them mandates the wide range of provisions that PL94-142 does, nor with the same clear delineation of government responsibility for free, appropriate educational provisions for the handicapped. For too long our governments have shirked their full responsibilities to provide appropriately for **all** handicapped children. As in the United States, our parents of exceptional children have had to be the advocates and have had to bear an almost overwhelming responsibility.

I am proud that the Australian Association of Special Education has adopted a set of policies which makes its several thousand members a concerted and concerned advocacy association for handicapped children and their parents.

As our numbers grow and as our policies are promulgated to the public and the various governmental decision makers, our aims will, we hope, be realised.

JEFF BAILEY
Editor

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PROFILE

JOHN A. BURGE, President, Australian Association of Special Education

Graduated from Kedron Park Teachers College, Brisbane in December, 1964. Taught in primary schools in metropolitan (Wavell Heights) and country (Kadanga) areas before moving into special education in 1969. Worked as a teacher in a special school for m.i.h. children. Seconded 1971 to Guidance duties with Guidance Branch. Completed requirements for B.Ed. at University of Queensland in 1971. Has been steadily plodding since leaving College as evening and external student.

In 1973 returned to the special school situation as principal at Petrie. In 1974 appointed principal at the State School for Spastic Children in Brisbane.

Awarded 12 months study leave in 1977 to undertake study towards Master's degree at Schonell Educational Research Centre, and work on a major research study concerning spina bifida children in Queensland. In 1977 was fortunate enough to be awarded a few weeks as assistant to George Berkeley, who chaired the Schools Commission's Advisory Group in Special Education and assisted in the preparation and compilation of that Group's report to the Schools Commission which recommended a survey of special education in Australia.

In the second half of 1978 was again fortunate to be seconded to the Schonell Centre, University of Queensland, to act as consultant to the National Survey of Special Education which the Schools Commission had asked the Schonell Centre to undertake.

January 1979 – appointed Inspector of Schools (Special Education), one of two such positions in the special education area in the Queensland Department of Education.

Has attended all meetings of A.A.S.E. Council since 1976 as either observer or councillor. Unfortunately, was vitally interested, but unable to be involved in the inaugural meeting in late 1975. Has held executive positions at branch levels in the Queensland Special Education Association.

Has held a number of executive positions at branch level in the Queensland Teachers' Union and has been the special education representative on a number of union standing committees. Interested in all areas of special education, but, because of personal experience, keenly interested in overall service delivery patterns, and in more specialist areas – intellectual handicap, neurological and motor disorders, and severely and profoundly handicapped children.