SCHOOL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NW – BURNIE CAMPUS
Annual Report 10/11

It is with pleasure that I present to you the 2010/2011 Annual School Report outlining the growth and accomplishments across the whole school community.

‘To maintain a sense of optimism is paramount when the challenges confronting us at times are almost insurmountable’.
Certainly the limitations of no extra classroom space including the lack of teaching and learning optimal learning areas and toilet facilities are of prime importance as the fulltime and part-time student enrolments continue to grow. In the 09/10 Annual Report there were 18 full-time students and 7 dual enrolled students. In April 2011, a total of 23.2 students are full-time, dual enrolled and accessing. Another student is likely to enrol immediately after the Easter break.
Coinciding with the increase in student enrolments is the need to employ more teacher aides to intensively support students to successfully engage and interact across the whole day’s class program. All staff members remain committed to:

- providing a supportive, inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students who access programs or are enrolled full-time or part-time
- and enhancing relationships with neighbourhood schools through shared programming that is targeted to provide unique student-centred curriculum.

As all members of the School Association are aware, political campaigning to address the inequities in funding to support the individualised learning and acute healthcare needs of disabled students enrolled in Special Schools compared to regular school funding levels has not been adequately addressed and in the current political ‘climate’ of fiscal restraint the battle to recognise our students’ needs will need further energy, clarity and collaborative willpower.

Staffing
After a very successful year as the Teacher-in-Charge in 2010, Ms Cathy Bester continues in this role in 2011 to share in a supportive partnership with me as a leader and a practitioner where all staff members, parents and carers can be assured that any issues or concerns can be entrusted to us to be problem solved in a constructive manner with DoE protocols and school procedures utilised to support successful outcomes. We stand united in this quest to continually ‘look at the big picture’ with an aim to apply fairness and equity as a positive way forward whenever we focus on short term as well as long term goals involving staff and the school.

With the impending retirement of Ms Patsy Cairns who was responsible for the early childhood class the immediate need to rationalise the prospective class groupings at the commencement of the 2011 school year became imperative.

It was determined that Ms Cathy Bester would assume the responsibility for the Early Childhood class in the Gum Tree Room and she is supported by Mrs Laurie White who is now employed for 4 days per week supporting the whole class teaching and learning program by working with individual students and in a small group.
Jan Chester has been employed on a fixed term contract to share the Primary Class in the Wattle Room with Bronwyn West. Jan is an experienced special education teacher who has recently relocated from Western Australia. Mrs Wendy Bennell is responsible for the Senior Class which relocated to the Banksia Room to ensure access on scheduled days to the kitchen where practical life skill development can be undertaken.

**Goodbye to Patsy Cairns**
Patsy was employed at the Burnie campus from Feb 2008 until Dec 2010. She possessed a happy and fun loving disposition which will be sadly missed by all members of staff. She is a creative and passionate teacher who utilized a play based philosophy with the early childhood students she was responsible for. Her talents extended to familiarizing herself with the individual needs of each student within their family. Warm and trusting friendships were established between Patsy, parents, grandparents and carers allowing issues to be thoroughly problem solved through open discussion. Patsy initiated several innovative projects at both campuses. These included in particular the wheelchair accessible vegetable gardens and worm farms.

Staff members farewelled Patsy at a barbecue held at Sisters Beach on Friday, 18th February 2011. Patsy has already been back to undertake relief days and she has resumed her skills of taking care of the worm farm and given instructions to ensure that the vegetable gardens are carefully maintained.

**‘Leading for High Performance’ conversations**
Conversations continued to be held throughout 2010 with the content of the planned interview with each member of staff relating to the L4 framework. This process utilizes a question/answer format and is essentially a performance feedback process that generates information gathering and sharing. It allows each participant to give opinions that are recorded against agreed performance expectations. The process becomes a genuine exchange that focuses on shared understandings with outcomes generating reflection and further individual goal setting.

**PODD and Further Focus on Literacy**
The implementation of this aided language system within classrooms across both campuses of the School of Special Education NW is now into its fourth year. When one looks around every classroom there is an obvious presence of PODD books and visual cues outwardly displayed on schedule boards, walls and in appropriate areas for students and staff members to quickly access to ensure that communicative intent is always maximised. Teachers and support staff members are expected to utilise the PODD resources with students to aid all communicative exchanges. In particular, skilled staff members are particularly encouraged to outwardly demonstrate the use and purposes of PODD resources to newly appointed and relief staff members when conversing with students.
Parents and carers in particular have also become familiar with PODD with many students taking home PODD resources to ensure that family members can support communicative exchange within their home environments and local community. Ms Felicity Lovatt, the SOSE Speech & Language Pathologist left to commence her confinement with the birth of her daughter Sadie on 27th September, 2010 and once again took up the Speech & Language Pathologist role across both campuses for 3 days per week commencing on Monday, 28th February, 2011.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Mrs Michelle Cooney who undertook the position of Communication Facilitator whilst Felicity was on leave. Michelle openly demonstrated her commitment to this role across both campuses and worked alongside other members of the support team to facilitate confidence and further utilization of PODD resources with students across their daily programs. In particular, Michelle dutifully made and distributed a range of PODD resources available via the DoE web sharepoint that were effectively utilized by teachers, support staff, students and parents. Great work and commitment, Michelle!

The School of Special Education NW has been most fortunate in receiving a Literacy grant over the last three years to support the ongoing implementation of PODD. Each year a successful submission and a detailed data assessment has been negotiated with NW Learning Service Literacy Co-ordinator with sufficient funds being granted to employ Michelle and also Pauline Mawer at the D'port Campus on a weekly basis. This funding however, will conclude at the end of June, 2011. The continued use and implementation of the PODD aided communication system will not diminish. PODD can be described as a strategy of best practice which has become the integral foundation block towards the further development of literacy across every class at the School of Special Education NW.

**Individualised Student Focus on Learning**

Due to the increase in teacher FTE per student at the commencement of 2010, the initiative to employ Mrs Laurie White to support students on a 1 to 1 basis was agreed upon and commenced during Term 2, 2010. The emphasis is placed on Laurie negotiating with each class teacher to ascertain what conceptual understandings need to be undertaken with each identified student who is selected for extra support. Laurie prepares practical resources for each student's session followed by feedback to inform the teacher of student progress. This initiative will continue throughout 2011 due to the overall students' progress, achievement and increase in on task behaviour noted by the classroom teachers.

Mrs Laurie White is also responsible for planning the sequential support of a small group of students who meet weekly on Tuesdays from the beginning of Term 1, 2011. This group has been set up as a trial and consists of one student enrolled from Smithton Primary, one student enrolled from Burnie Primary and includes several students from the Burnie Campus Primary class. Now that this program is fully established, several other students from regular settings who were originally nominated for the 2011 Links program will be gradually included into this program. This particular group of students also receive regular intervention and program reviews from the DHHS Paediatric Physio, Mrs Pippa MacArthur.
The utilisation of Lynne Ryan, the ICT NW Learning Consultant continues from 2010-11 on a weekly basis across both campuses. Lynne supports individual staff members and individual students with trialling new software programs together with making literacy tasks through the utilisation of basis software e.g. Clicker 5. In 2011, Lynne will work in partnership with Felicity Lovatt and class teachers to trial I-Pads with individual students and an interactive whiteboard as key resources to further strengthen the focus on student learning.

Transition & Work Experience
Bronwyn West has continued to be employed one day per week to support families of students who are turning 18 years of age and will be transitioning to an adult future life plan. Bronwyn’s role involves initiating dialogue with parents and carers and supporting them in the decision making process of acquiring information about alternatives that are on offer, making contact with other agencies e.g. Gateway and meeting with other support personnel to assist families and carers to determine priorities and options. Bronwyn continues to investigate work experience options for individual students who are 14yrs 6 months and networks with class teachers to discuss timetabling of work experience, organises meetings to discuss hands-on support at the work place setting and determines skill acquisition, personal interests around job descriptors and develops written short and long term time lines. Bronwyn enjoys this role and has grown to fully appreciate the framework requirements and incremental indicators of successful transition and work experience for severely disabled students.

The 4 Blocks Way (Erickson & Koppenhaver)
During 2010, funding was made available for Felicity Lovatt to gain further information and accreditation to support best practice strategies for literacy instruction for students with complex learning needs. The methodology has now been disseminated by Felicity in a whole day workshop to all staff members at the commencement of the 2011 school year. This instructional model consists of 4 components – guided reading, working with words, self directed reading and writing. Felicity presented practical strategies within each block which integrates each student’s current communication system and all teachers are currently trialling the components on a daily basis.

The 4 Blocks Way relies on daily programming where each student’s literacy goals are identified and translated into the daily class plan. Teachers and support staff at this stage of the year are very enthusiastic and when meetings are held between staff members from both campuses, there is general sharing that details individual student progress and improvement along with resource sharing.

Links Program
This ‘user pays’ program was again offered to students enrolled in regular schools with SDR eligibility and was in great demand with Ms Cathy Bester operating the program across both campuses for 3 days per week during 2010. Due to the changes in teaching personnel, the Burnie Campus will offer one Links program to new students in 2011 commencing after Easter. Mrs Sue-Ann Beaumont has been employed to undertake this program. Kirsty Ashley, a DHHS Paediatric physio will also support the students on a weekly basis.
**Wodden Curriculum Documents**

Whilst there is some progress being made on the writing and formulation of an Australian Curriculum designed for all students, the actual availability of such documentation for us to trial is not immediate. Ted Barrance took the initiative to visit the Wodden Special School in Canberra during the September term holidays. He was very impressed with the documents written and utilised by the Wodden Special School staff and both campuses have purchased copies of relevant curriculum support materials—Literacy, Numeracy, Visual Arts and Cooking—to assist teachers to ‘map’ student performance and to guide decision making on appropriate task levels particularly when reviewing and determining short and long term goal indicators for student’s IEP’s. Further use of the Wodden Curriculum Documents is envisaged throughout 2011/12.

**Professional Learning for Staff**

Specific dates set aside on student free days continue to be negotiated with all staff from both campuses taking advantage to meet, share best practice, discuss new learning strategies and assessment procedures all undertaken within a trust and supportive spirit of team sharing. Individual staff members are also encouraged to attend other advertised professional learning workshops on topics that they believe will provide an increased level of knowledge and skill acquisition that are relevant to their current teaching and support roles. Staff members who attend such days are expected to provide detailed feedback and sharing of information at a scheduled staff meeting.

A **Professional Learning Day** was held on Monday, 19th July 2010 with both campuses of teaching and support staff members including relief staff meeting at the Devonport campus to attend the following sessions:

- ‘Focusing on programming for students with sensory behaviours in order to maximize their Learning’—led by the DHHS Occupational Therapists, Cilla Travers and Sara Croome who presented a mix of practical activity as well as theoretical information.
- Feedback about our current PODD practices and in particular early PODD visual and auditory scanning books—led by Felicity Lovatt, Speech & Language Pathologist.
- Continuing on with development of Positive Behaviour Management with teachers in class groups leading discussion with their support team to facilitate further individual student management plans.

Overall, attendees praised the content and gained further knowledge to inform their classroom practice. A second follow-up professional learning day on 18th November 2010 on Protective Behaviours was held with staff meeting in class groups to develop an individual student behaviour proforma to be utilized across both campuses.

During the week commencing Monday, 7th February, 2011, a series of workshops was organized and held at the Devonport campus. Such topics as Understanding Autism led by Mrs Rose Clarke, Manual Handling Training & Standard Precautions Awareness, ICT hands-on training, ‘One Step at a Time’ Toilet Training and 4 Blocks Literacy were presented and attended by staff members from across both campuses.
In particular, it was most impressive to note the large number of parents, carers and staff members who attended the Toileting workshop led by the Victorian Continence team. The tips and information shared in the afternoon workshop have been constructively followed up by class teachers with individual families over the past months.

**Site Improvements**

**The Library Alcove at Burnie Campus** was fully completed by Fairbrother Pty Ltd in January 2011, and the overall concept of glass paneling and shelving blends in so well with the original architectural plan. The return of our book collections from the Hellyer College library is now completed and appropriately catalogued along with all resources including games, puzzles and construction sets. Mrs Michelle Anthony, Library Technician who is employed at the Devonport Campus has ably managed the sorting and placement process with assistance from Mrs Keenie Baker, Mrs Sandra Cock and Mrs Cheryl Ransom. At last, all teachers and support staff members can easily retrieve required resources for use with students in classrooms in a few moments.

**Bowen Therapy**

It is pleasing to note the ongoing generosity of BP Australia with a donation of $5 000 in March 2011 to fund the weekly visits of Bev Chell, Bowen therapist to service 12 students who require this therapy on a regular basis. The research paper undertaken by Bev in August 2010 after an initial 8 weeks of intensive therapy for students in the target group indicated overall improvements of:

* fewer contractures
* increased performance of set exercises
* improved control over movements
* improved walking and steadiness
* improved concentration
* calmer mental state
* relaxation/enjoyment

**Other Donations**

The Burnie Campus has received a $1 000 donation from the Cam-Somerset Country Music Association in March 2011 together with the Parent Group's donation of $5 000 to subsidise the 2011 student levies. These donations are gratefully received with many thanks. A charity cinema day in June '10 organised by Chris Warriner raised $356.

**Alternative Programs**

Personal skill development, friendship building, citizenship and fun shared between students and staff across both school campuses and regular schools, continues to strengthen morale and sense of purpose when participating in the following planned events and initiatives:

- Surf Experience Day
- Burnie Show Art Awards
- Cinema excursions
• Music Therapy led by Caroline Dunn
• ‘All Stars POP’ concert
• Anzac Day Commemoration
• Autumn Picnic at Buddy School – Natone Primary
• Combined Special Olympics Days
• Hydrotherapy/ Healthglo and Learn to Swim programs
• School Holiday Program and Overnight in L’ton
• Christmas picnic held at the D’port Aquatic Centre
• Slip Stream Circus performance
• TSO Brass concert
• Combined end of term assemblies
• Crazy Hair Day
• End of Year Assembly and Presentation of Awards

In Conclusion
This year’s Annual Report contains a comprehensive overview of the highlights, initiatives and successful outcomes that have been successfully achieved during 2010/11. These achievements result from the combined efforts of all members of the school community and in particular I must acknowledge the commitment of all staff members who are employed at the Burnie campus. Your support of me as Principal is very gratifying.

In the backdrop of our school are the members of the School Association who are tireless in their support to attend meetings, listen attentively, express an opinion and to actively support new initiatives and policies. In particular, I must sincerely thank Mrs Sandra French for her genuine willingness to become politically active when required to ‘speak up’ on behalf of families and to clearly articulate the needs of students diagnosed with severe disabilities who attend the School of Special Education NW.
The fund-raising efforts of the Parent group led by Wendy Cumming has once again been utilised to support alternative programs offered to the enrolled students at the Burnie Campus during 2010/11. I thank you all for your sincerity and support.

Grace
Principal,
School of Special Education NW

April 2011