

EDITORIAL

In this Editorial, I would urge all readers to take the time to read the report written by the President of the Australian Association of Special Education, Mary-Helen Martens. My reasons for this urging are that a close reading of this report will inform you of some of the very important events which are occurring at the national level of A.A.S.E.

Most of our subscribers would be aware that A.A.S.E. operates at three levels, viz., Nationally, at the State level in Chapters and at the Branch or local level. It is very easy, if you are a Branch member and are concerned with very local activities and efforts, to overlook the fact that what we all do at a State and National level is extremely important. I would like to comment on two of these activities.

NATIONAL LEVEL ADVOCACY

A.A.S.E. is very much concerned with the whole question of Advocacy. In the November 1979 edition of this journal I included THE POLICY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION and in my Editorial of that edition I pointed out the prime importance I, and many A.A.S.E. members, attach to our role as advocates for handicapped persons. I also mentioned that the A.A.S.E. policy had the potential to be the sort of public document we need to have as a community 'Banner' on our ideas of appropriate services for the handicapped. We do not have a Warnock Report or a PL 94-142 but we do have the A.A.S.E. policy.

Some of the Key Resolutions in that Document are Worth restating:

1.0 That the Association confirms and supports the inalienable right of all children to free, appropriate education without restrictions arising from age, geographical location, type of handicap or other circumstance.

1.1 That the Association actively supports the revision of both Commonwealth and State legislation, where necessary, to guarantee the right of all children to an education program.

4.4 That the Association recognize its duty to advocate strongly on behalf of children with special educational needs and that part of that duty involves the development and encouragement of the skills of advocacy amongst the parents and families of individuals with special needs.

These are extremely important principles and the President's Report is evidence that the national association, in particular, the National President, Mary-Helen Martens, and her executive, are committed to these aims. The National Executive have met with the Federal Minister for Education in, according to reports, a very positive atmosphere with a Minister who was well-briefed and interested. Let us hope that these discussions bear fruit.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTEREST GROUPS

The A.A.S.E. constitution provides for the creation of interest groups. At the recent National Conference and Council Meeting held in launceston in September, draft guidelines for the formation and conduct of interest groups were prepared. These are to be finalised at the February, 1986 Council Meeting.

Already we have had two groups formed and this augurs well for the future. The two groups formed are the Tertiary Special Educators and the Special Education Computing Interest Group. These groups will exchange information, work on nationally significant projects, present information at the Annual General Meeting of Council and, hopefully, give papers at the National Conference.

What the interest groups offer is the possibility of on-going advocacy, program development and/or improvement in the sharing of knowledge across the nation.

I am confident that our continued contact with Federal Ministers and policy makers, and the formation and development of interest groups will do much to realise the aims of A.A.S.E. and to effect changes essential for the continual improvement of service delivery models to our handicapped youth and adults.

Dr. JEFF BAILEY
Editor.