

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This journal has been edited by Dr. Keri Wilton of the University of Auckland, New Zealand, at my invitation. I am delighted that we have been able to prepare a Special New Zealand Edition of the *Australian Journal of Special Education*. This edition shares some very interesting New Zealand Special Education perspectives with Australian Special Educators and cements the bond which has existed between our two countries. My hope is that this Special Education bond will strengthen even further in the years to come. May I express my thanks to our Guest Editor, Keri Wilton, and my compliments to all the contributors.

Jeff Bailey.

EDITORIAL: "REKINDLING THE SPIRIT OF ANZAC"

The current issue of the Journal commemorates an important occasion on the eastern side of the Tasman — the establishment (earlier this year) of the New Zealand Special Education Association (Auckland). This body shares the aims and objectives of Australian State and Territory Special Educational Associations and if an appropriate arrangement can be worked out with AASE, it could well adopt the Journal as its official publication. It is to be hoped that joint participation of the Australian and New Zealand Special Education Associations in the Journal will both eventuate and mark the beginning of a new era of trans-Tasman co-operation and involvement in special education — an era in which the interchange of ideas and interaction between special educationalists on both sides of the Tasman, will increase substantially. The articles in the present issue (with one exception) deal with several aspects of New Zealand special education. Hopefully, they will convey some of the flavour of current special educational problems and concerns in New Zealand. Beyond this, it is hoped that they will set something of a precedent and that contributions by New Zealand special educationalists will become a regular feature of future issues. We have much to offer each other. Let us hope we can all take full advantage of this — on both sides of the Tasman.

We live in troubled times. The notion of the sleepy South Pacific, if it ever was apt, is now clearly far from reality, as we struggle to cope with the major economic and social realities of life in this part of the world (& elsewhere) in the 1980's. It is in this context that special education has to operate — a context in which social problems appear to be increasing (or at least our awareness of them is) and already tight educational budgets and employment opportunities, are growing conspicuously tighter. Such conditions may not appear auspicious for the strengthening of trans-Tasman links, but Australia and New Zealand have pulled together well in times past — perhaps never more strongly than during the two World Wars. We need to become aware that a type of "war" is still being fought on both sides of the Tasman (indeed throughout the rest of the world). It is not a war involving military hardware and uniforms, but battle-losses can be very devastating nonetheless. The adversaries in this encounter are those who strive on behalf of the handicapped for truly appropriate and effective special educational provisions as well as truly adequate social and employment opportunities — and those who actively or passively hamper the realization of these objectives. The "war" is being fought in schools, in administrative offices, in the work-place, and in society at large, and there are worrying signs that "the good fight" is becoming more difficult, as school budgets and job-opportunities continue to shrink.

In these times, it is imperative that concerned special educationalists try to exert greater influence on public special educational and employment policy than they have in the past, and it is crucial that the "facts of special education" underpin this influence. In other words, there is an urgent need for those of us who are involved in special education to secure accurate data on the type and extent of the educational, social, and employment problems that we are attempting to prevent, treat, or help the handicapped cope with — and that we take the initiative to find out the extent to which established policies and provisions are accommodating the problems with which we and the handicapped are concerned. Such information should be useful in at least two ways. Where extant policies and provisions appear to be effective, the information should help us to defend the line against any cuts in provisions and services which advocates of further fiscal pruning might contemplate. Secondly, if shortcomings are indicated, the information should enable us to argue strongly for additional resources and services where these are required, and where necessary to set our houses in better order before less sympathetic and more narrowly focussed scrutiny of the situation is undertaken — and acted upon. One thing seems clear. The road ahead will not be easy — on either side of the Tasman.

*Keri Wilton,
GUEST EDITOR.*