

I am delighted to again report on the past year at SPELD Victoria, in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer.

There is indeed a 'climate of change and optimism' about achieving better outcomes for those with dyslexia and learning disabilities, both statewide and nationally. Thus, it has again been a dynamic and exciting time as SPELD Victoria continues to build on the governance and operational changes and renewal of the past three years, further establishing SPELD Victoria, as both a peak body and a key service provider in the area of learning disabilities and implementing a range of initiatives as part of the new strategic directions of SPELD Victoria.

Increasingly, as a not for profit organization, SPELD Victoria seeks to assist those across the life cycle with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, supporting professionals and the community, through the promotion of evidence based interventions and research, information, resources, innovative service delivery and collaborative partnerships.

I am excited by the strong partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood, with SPELD Victoria invited in 2013, to participate in the Disability Stakeholders Reference Group. I wish to thank Mark Tainsh, Director, Disability and Inclusion and Karen Underwood for their support and collaboration during 2012/2013.

Liaison and relationship building continues as well, with all relevant stakeholders in the education, health and community sectors to further promote the awareness of dyslexia and learning disabilities and the role of SPELD Victoria in service provision and representation.

While continuing to provide the traditional services of Diagnostic assessments, a Student Learning Centre and Professional Learning, there has been an increasing acknowledgement within SPELD Victoria and the wider community of the role that parents, caregivers and families play in the lives of those with dyslexia and learning disabilities and conversely, the often immense impact and cost of learning disabilities on the individual, family and community.

As part of SPELD Victoria's response to providing assistance, our collaboration with the Parenting Research Centre, in the capacity building SPELD Victoria/Signposts Initiative, resulted in an effective pilot parenting program conducted with parents of children with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Many thanks as well, go to the Kimberley Foundation for the generous support of this innovative initiative. SPELD Victoria looks forward to further collaboration in this area and continuing new service development to assist parents and caregivers.

SPELD Victoria also continues to build relationships with the range of dyslexia parent/caregiver support groups across Victoria, with their contact details, as well as relevant events, listed on the website where possible, for other parents to access if this is relevant to them.

As well, SPELD Victoria over the past year, have been privileged to work individually with many parents, caregivers, children, young people and adults and to hear of their individual stories and journeys. Listening to these grass root experiences both positive and negative, is important in informing and developing the strategic direction of our organization.

Increasingly, individual parents and caregivers and dyslexia parent support groups are well organized and advocate strongly for better outcomes for their children and young people with dyslexia and while SPELD Victoria does not endorse or auspice groups, we aim to provide information on evidence based information and research and low cost interventions which will best assist families and communities and guide them in informed advocacy approaches.

Further, in 2012/2013, a range of new planned initiatives were implemented. Our low cost membership platform was introduced in 2012 and has been built to allow maximum membership and participation of parents and caregivers within the organization. In this light, the SPELD Victoria Education schedule continues to provide professional learning for a range of professionals but now also low cost parent/caregiver information and education sessions based on the expressed needs of parents and caregivers who provide feedback to SPELD Victoria.

‘SPELD Victoria Explained’, a free workshop which provides an introduction to dyslexia and SPELD Victoria services was introduced in 2012 and is now run regularly, is an example of these sessions.

Collaborative workshops such as ‘Ensuring Success for the dyslexic learner’ in 2013 provided a showcase for SPELD Specialists, DEECD, government schools and agencies to inform parents, professionals and the community about effective, evidence based strategies and interventions.

An online newsletter to all members has also been introduced in 2013 and will continue to be a major communication tool to our membership.

Our new website, launched in 2012, has received positive feedback from a range of stakeholders and continues to be developed as a valuable interactive forum for distribution of evidence based information and research and linkages, into the future.

SPELD Victoria, in line with the National Volunteering Standards, introduced in 2012 a new volunteer program. Volunteers receive training and induction according to the National Standards and provide a range of assistance to SPELD Victoria. This valuable program will be extended into the future.

Negotiation from 2010 to 2013 about the relocation of SPELD Victoria due to major construction works in North Fitzroy next to the SPELD Victoria building, resulted in our relocation to Preston at the end of the financial year 2013. The move to the Preston location and refurbished building has been very successful with positive feedback from staff, consultants, clients and all our stakeholders. This effectively allows us to provide more professional service delivery and increases our capacity to conduct our present services and look to new service development into the future.

On a national level, I have been involved in a Vice President capacity with AUSPELD, which is the federal organization of the state SPELD organizations, with CEO of DSF WA, Mandy Nayton continuing in her

role as President. While all state SPELD organizations are autonomous, they are also members of AUSPELD. CEOs meet regularly via Skype with CEOs and a representative board member from each state, attending the AGM each year in a nominated state. I, along with SPELD Victoria President, Jason Henham attended the 2013 AUSPELD AGM in Sydney during May, which was a great opportunity to network and further build our collaboration across the states. AUSPELD also hosts a national speaking tour each two years.

AUSPELD has had an integral role in the Federal Government's Schools Advisory Committee over the last two years contributing to the Gonski Report, now the 'Better Schools' Reform. As well, AUSPELD was represented on the Federal Government committee developing the National Disability Scheme, now Disability Care Australia.

On an international level, AUSPELD is in the final stage of the process to become a global member and partner of the International Dyslexia Association.

Increasingly, it is important to be involved as a relevant stakeholder in representation and advocacy at all government and community levels, to continue to contribute to meaningful change.

As well, ongoing networking and collaboration with a range of organizations, sectors and individuals is essential to both widen the community awareness of dyslexia and learning disabilities and its impact on society in general, and to explore opportunities to further develop SPELD Victoria as a sustainable and effective organization into the future.

I would like to thank the Board, staff, consultants and the Professional Advisory Group for their wonderful contribution to SPELD Victoria over the past year.

I would also like to thank all members and supporters of SPELD Victoria for their continued support.

The year ahead will continue to provide many challenges for SPELD Victoria as a not for profit organization working in the area of learning disabilities, but I look forward optimistically to the implementation of further new and innovative service development across Victoria.

Michele Semmens

Chief Executive Officer

SPELD Victoria