

Report on VSB Conference - Hanover Germany, July 14 – 18th 2008

XXXIV Kongress “Teilhabe Gestalten”

The conference title translates roughly into providing skills for participation and community involvement.

I attended the conference as the President of the Australian Association for Parents of the Vision Impaired and as the parent representative of ICEVI Pacific Region.

This was at the invitation of Susan LaVenture – Executive Director of NAPVI (America) and the driving force behind the creation of an International parent support body. Paul Manning of PVI NZ was also invited as and ICEVI Pacific Region representative but was not able to obtain financial support for his attendance at this conference.

I presented with Susan and Guila Seidel (Israel NAPVI children) about “The Role of Parents in their Child’s Education; What Significant Impact are Parents Associations Having Around the World.”

We presented a power point covering the formation of our respective national organizations with information about collegiate organizations from countries not in attendance such as New Zealand, Malaysia, Netherlands and Philippines.

Each representative spoke of her personal journey as parent in a family with a vision impaired or blind child. The audience appreciated the frank personal stories. These always attract the interest of medical personnel and educators as they set the scene for the importance of parent support groups.

The presentation then moved into details of the formation of the International Parent group in Malaysia at the ICEVI conference in Kuala Lumpur in 2006.

This VBS conference in Hanover also afforded the opportunity for board members to meet face-to-face and to conduct a board meeting where we worked on a 3-5 year plan of goals, objectives and budget for the development of IAPVI.

The discussions and meetings with Susan and Guila highlighted the progress of the work done by ICEVI Pacific Region. We are well advanced with our program of Education for All with strong representation from all stakeholders with the particular inclusion of parent representatives at forums, in all email contact and communication and in seeking parent opinion and perspective in planning and policy development. The other ICEVI regions have not yet reached this stage of input.

ICEVI Pacific Regional key stakeholders should be commended for their forward and inclusive thinking in recognizing that parents have a key role in the education of all children, but particularly those who are blind and vision impaired.

Gayle Skinner
President
Australian Association for Parents of the Vision Impaired.