

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Bella Irlicht AM, is Principal of Port Phillip Specialist School. Throughout her career she has gained the reputation as an innovative teacher, excellent counsellor and an outstanding educator. In 1989 she was appointed principal at South Melbourne Special Developmental School and in 1997 helped transform the school into what is now known as Port Phillip Specialist School. Through her leadership the school has gained the reputation as being one of Australia's leading schools catering for students with special needs.

Bella has been the recipient of numerous awards for outstanding achievement and contribution to the profession, including, Order of Australia (2003) Paul Harris Fellow awarded by Rotary International (2000), Professor John Miller Medal (2000) and Churchill Fellow (1996). An important outcome of the Churchill Fellowship was the opportunity to study full service schools in the United States and Britain and subsequently establish Port Phillip as Australia's first full serviced school. This provides a coordinated approach to the delivery of services by bringing together health, education and welfare services on the one school site. This ensures that the daily needs of disadvantaged children and their families are met as well as opening up their access to learning.

As principal she has been responsible for many achievements. In particular she has established important partnerships with business groups and tertiary institutions to help support and resource the school. Most recently, to meet the diverse range of students' needs, Bella and her team have developed a 'world first' innovative fully integrated Visual & Performing Arts Curriculum.

In November 2005, Bella was the very grateful recipient of the national 2005 Equity Trustees Not For Profit CEO of the Year Award. Apart from the public accolade Bella received from this award, she also received very important funding to conduct a two-phase international study tour to promote the schools' Visual & Performing Arts Curriculum to the rest of the world and, to connect with the latest research and innovative practice in Arts Education.

In March 2006, Bella undertook the first phase of her Equity Trustees study tour and attended the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in Lisbon, Portugal. Bella saw her attendance at this conference as not just an opportunity to present, but more an opportunity to really affect change in the field of special education. Before leaving Melbourne, Bella drew together a highly qualified team of people to plan the *Inaugural International Symposium: Re-imagining Special Education through Arts Education and Arts Therapy* to be hosted by Port Phillip Specialist School in Melbourne, July 2008.

The planning committee comprises:

Bella Irlicht AM	Principal - Port Phillip Specialist School
Robert Newall	Assistant Principal (Curriculum) – Port Phillip Specialist School
Ian Claridge	Senior Manager- Student Wellbeing (Special Education), Department of Education & Training
Professor John O'Toole	Professor of Arts Education, Melbourne University
Susie Pascoe	Head of Catholic Education (Australian Chair of UNESCO)
Anna Bennett	Consultant, Centre for Strategic Education (representing Independent Schools)
Pam Russell	Independent Educational Consultant
Susan Cooper	Managing Director – Paragon United Artists (Marketing, Events and Business Consultant)
Professor Brian Caldwell	Managing Directory, Educational Transformations (former Dean of Education, Melbourne University)
Dr Martin Comte	Former Dean, Creative Arts Faculty, Victoria University

The Lisbon conference provided a wonderful platform to promote the Symposium, to gain support from delegates and to scope potential speakers. Phase Two of Bella's Equity Trustees Award included a research and study tour of Creative Arts Therapy practices in the USA and Canada conducted in August 2006.

For further information contact:

Bella Irlicht AM, Principal, Port Phillip Specialist School
T: 03 9646 0855 F: 03 9646 0704 E: Irlicht.bella.b@edumail.vic.gov.au