

**65TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER - CEO SPEECH****Friday 14 October 2011**

Your Excellency and Mrs Scarce; the Hon Jing Lee Kim MLC; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome all - and thank you for joining us tonight on the 65th anniversary of the South Australian Oral School & Kindergarten and Cora Barclay Centre

This is indeed an auspicious occasion - our 300 plus attendance has exceeded all expectations. We are thrilled by the wide representation – which includes members of our own past and present community, our services and suppliers, philanthropic bodies, and other hearing impairment organizations such as Australian Hearing (welcome to *Gemma Cooper* and *Peng Lam*) and CanDo4Kids who are here in force (led from the front by their Chief Executive *Judy Curran* – and who have provided our 2 Auslan interpreters for the night, *Heather Loades* and *Imran Webb*). We are so pleased that you are all here. It is particularly pleasing to see former Council Presidents (*Cicely Bungey* our longest serving from 1983 - 1991, *John Rice* (SA's first Cochlear Implant Surgeon and now our Ambassador), Peter Phillips and *Naomi Higgs* as well as our current President *Sarah Carlson* and the Chairman of our Board *John Wicks* who – in 4 words “is an absolute rock”; we are also honoured by the presence of former Director/CEO *Monica Ciccocioppo*, who took over from *Cora Barclay* in 1988) as well as families and students across all generations too numerous to name.

Celebrating a "significant birthday" is an opportunity for:

- acknowledging achievements
- looking to the future
- thanking family, friends and supporters and
- having fun

Tonight I will touch, very briefly, on the first three of these - and leave the rest up to you!!

The genesis of the Cora Barclay Centre, as we now know it, was on 9 June 1940 when my aunt Elizabeth Forwood gave birth to her third child Tiffany who, as a result of rubella, was born profoundly deaf. Tiffany's 3 brothers (*James, Toby and Randell*) are all here tonight travelling respectively from Queensland, NSW and Tasmania) – a fantastic effort.

Like so many parents of a child with a disability, Elizabeth was passionate, focused, articulate and utterly determined to secure the best possible life for her child – which she saw as being inextricably bound up with Tiffany learning to speak. People such as Auntie Lib have always been a feature of this organization – no less today than in the 1940's and 50s. Many of these natural, high-achieving leaders from the Oral School and Cora Barclay Centre are here tonight and our thanks go to you all.

After several years of enquiries and investigations into teaching deaf children to speak, planning for the SA Oral Kindergarten began in earnest in late 1945 and the Kindergarten opened with 16 students on 19 February 1946 - 65 years ago - at St Cyprian's Church Hall in Melbourne Street, just down the road from where we are today. Three months later we moved to a 2 room prefab building in Kermode Street North Adelaide where we remained until September 1949 when the new Oral School & Kindergarten opened at Garnett Street in Gilberton. In 2007, after 58 years in Gilberton, we moved back to Melbourne Street where we are now happily ensconced and on the verge of a major building extension that has been generously supported by *Variety - the children's charity* to the tune of an extraordinarily generous donation of \$650,000.

Much has changed during the past 65 years in particular in regard to hearing aid technology and the advent of cochlear implants just over 20 years ago. These developments have radically improved the ability of deaf children to hear the "sounds of the speech spectrum" so that with expert training and support parents of deaf children can teach their children to listen attentively and learn to speak through hearing in much the same way as a child with normal hearing naturally acquires speech and language through hearing.

**The combination of very early diagnosis, modern technology and expert early intervention habilitation programs like ours mean that - with a lot of very hard work by the families of deaf children, and the children themselves - the majority will learn to listen and speak amazingly well. This is absolutely a "modern miracle".**

**The Cora Barclay Centre has always been at the forefront of change. Since the school days from 1946 to 1989 we have developed a multi disciplinary team of health and education professionals - including auditory verbal therapists, teachers of the deaf, early childhood educators, audiologists, speech pathologists and psychologists/family counsellors. Throughout our 65 years we have been driven by the commitment of our families to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children - and this will never change. Our families have managed the Centre, been on the staff, raised funds and worked hard to secure government funding - and we would not be here today without their untiring efforts. Such is their commitment that even today we have 4 members of current staff, including 3 in our clinical team, who have deaf and hearing impaired children.**

**The most notable contribution from an individual must surely be that of Cora Barclay after whom the Centre is now named. Cora had a profoundly deaf daughter and became a volunteer at the Oral Kindergarten in 1946 before being appointed as a teacher in 1948, training in England, and becoming Principal in 1952. In all, she was a teacher at the school for 40 years and Principal for 37 years - making an extraordinary contribution to deafness services in SA during that time. I'm sure she is with us in spirit tonight.**

**The achievements of the Cora Barclay Centre and its students are too numerous to mention. Perhaps of greatest significance are:**

- 1. establishment of the South Australian Paediatric Cochlear Implant Program in partnership with the Adelaide Children's Hospital headed by Dr John Rice**
- 2. being the first centre outside North America to receive the prestigious Alexander Graham Bell Centre of Excellence Award**

3. our published outcomes showing that most of our Early Intervention children attain age-appropriate levels of speech, language and comprehension before they go to school unless they have significant additional needs arising from other disabilities *and fourthly*
4. the regular flow of Cora Barclay students successfully completing Year 12 and going on to TAFE, University, apprenticeships and open employment. A recent survey of 40 Cora Barclay students leaving school in the past 10 years shows that, of the 22 respondents, all completed Year 12; 7 had been to Uni; 8 to TAFE; and all had jobs. Last year 4 students sat Year 12 – 2 did IB achieving Tertiary Education Scores in the mid to high 90s and both the others successfully completed their SA Certificates of Education.

As we sit here tonight at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st Century there is much to be thankful for, and the future will be even brighter.

There have been many challenges along the way but services have never been compromised. The past 10 years have been particularly difficult financially - and this has been made even more difficult by the growth in demand for our services – with EI more than trebling in number since 2006 and a 50% increase in our School Support caseload over the same period.

So may I express our sincere thanks to all who have supported the Oral School and Cora Barclay Centre on our journey - and in so many different ways. They include past Presidents, members of Council and the board; staff; our families; numerous philanthropic trusts and foundations; service clubs including *Adelaide Rotary West* and *Adelaide Rotary Kidman Park* and the *Adelaide Lion's Club*; *CALTEX* – in their first year as national sponsor for Loud Shirt Day (which is coming up next Friday 21st October) who we are delighted to have with us tonight; and, very significantly our sister service in Sydney *The Shepherd Centre* (represented tonight by their CEO Jim Hungerford – with last minute apologies from Bruce and Jenni Shepherd who *were* coming but had to cancel owing to ill health) and *Variety SA the children's charity* who combined to support us financially from 2004 to 2006 while we were working with the State Government to achieve long term sustainability. This has recently been secured with a significant increase in State Government funding for which we must acknowledge the Hon Jay Weatherill (and Jane Lomaz-Smith before him) and

key advisors to the State Government. Unfortunately, neither Jay nor Jane could come tonight but Jay will be dropping in to the *Anniversary Reunion Picnic at the Walkerville Oval on Sunday 13 November* – a free event to which you're all invited and which we hope will be attended by many, many former students and their families who we are in the process of trying to track down – with the help of CanDo, Catholic Education and the local media.

Notwithstanding extra government funding, we still have to raise \$1 million a year through our own efforts to be able to continue to provide free services to all who need them. This is a huge challenge – and one that won't ever go away - so your support and support from the community of South Australia are imperative.

Finally I would like to thank *Enzo and Amanda Libri* who are the beauty, brains and energy behind tonight's event. Without Enzo and Amanda – ably backed up by our Development Team of Louise Baida, Julie Quimby and Claire Harris - tonight's event would not have been possible. Enzo and Amanda follow in the proud tradition of families over the years who have given massive amounts of their time and energy to the benefit of all our families. In thanking the Libris I must also mention the huge cohort of family and friends they've 'recruited': - in the modern vernacular, **'yours is a truly "awesome" presence'** and we're delighted you're all here.

Thanks also to *Julio* and the *John di Fede team*, the Band, Wicks Estate and Wirra Wirra for our table wines and all those who have donated such fantastic prizes for the raffles and auctions.

Now it's over to you to enjoy the Party!!