As we reach the end of 2010, I sadly (and somewhat reluctantly!) come to the end of the maximum six year term serving on The Board. I have witnessed tremendous growth in St. Andrew’s over that time – something that is paramount both to the school’s educational and personal philosophy. Programmes have been put in place and committees have been formed, targets have been set and goals have been achieved. Buildings and grounds have been improved and resources have been upgraded. Staff have come..............but they don’t seem to want to go............they do however get married and have babies! A joy for us all to share. There is however one thing that has remained constant and that is the connection that we are reminded to make every day – of living our life in the ways of Jesus. It is this that forms the foundation of Catholic Education and what makes us – however minute in the universe – significantly contribute to making the world a better place.

‘A man walked along a beach one morning. The night before a horrendous storm had churned the waters and thousands of stranded starfish lined the vast stretch of sand. With every step the man took, he picked up a starfish and threw it back into the waters, hoping to offer it a second chance of life. A couple walked past and said, “What on earth are you doing ?” “I'm making a difference,” answered the man. “What do you mean, you’re making a difference ? There are thousands of starfish on the beach - you can’t possibly make a difference to all of them ?” “No”, said the man as he continued to return the sea creatures to their home, “But I just made a difference to that one......and to that one......and to that one”.

We may not be able to change the whole world over night, but making small changes in the world eventually add up to something bigger in the life of another. No effort is a wasted effort – no good deed a wasted good deed – no smile a wasted smile.

I would like to start by acknowledging and thanking all my fellow team members on The Board, for the difference that they have made in 2010. Eileen, Father Andrew, Judith, Michelle, Vicki, Theresa, Renee, Mark, Ray, Reti and Kevin you are all such special people who offer unique qualities to our meetings - thank you deeply. Special thanks go to Ray Mackie and Reti Wisnesky who also leave us this year – your efforts and contributions have been outstanding. Reti our prayers and good wishes go with you as you return to family in New Zealand.

It is wonderful to see our Community Hall taking such fine shape and all the other improvements around the school such as the walkway and toilets in the new kindy room. Another outstanding addition to our grounds this year has been the Reflection Garden. If you haven’t visited this beautiful area yet, I advise you to. I sat there one morning with a sad daughter and a racing pulse! The peace that filtered through us was quite remarkable.

To the P & F, we are thrilled to congratulate you on your final payment for the school’s air conditioning!! It is you we have to thank for those gloriously cool classrooms on recent hot days and I think we would all agree that it was money extremely well raised and spent! We look forward to a ‘different’ way of supporting the needs of our school next year through the new levy system. As a community we hope to embrace the change with open minds and enthusiasm.

As a board member, I have been delighted to attend certain events throughout the year such as ‘The School Board Conference’ and the ‘First Birthday Celebration’ of the opening of St.Mary’s Cathedral in Perth. These occasions are not only an opportunity to reacquaint with familiar faces met over the years, but also to unite the members of catholic schools as part of the same cause. There was great gratitude expressed to all members of school communities who contribute in some way to the
fellowship of our schools and I pass this on with pleasure (there goes the starfish again !) Speakers were motivational and inspiring and I am grateful for the opportunity to experience such events.

This year, more than any, I have been exposed to the vastly differing ‘cultures’ that a school can posses and the effect that it can have on the people who enter that environment each day. The culture of a school is set down by the values and beliefs of its Principal and staff, practised passionately by them and unknowingly absorbed by its students, quite simply because it is part of their everyday life – it is what is ‘normal’ to them. It is what determines whether a child feels happy and safe at school, whether they have a desire to learn and whether or not they are able to communicate and interact with the rest of the world in a positive and peaceful way.

I feel confident in speaking on behalf of the Board by saying that the culture we have through the leadership of Mrs. Climo at St Andrews Catholic Primary School, is second to none. As Chair of the Board and parent of four, the environment inspires me and motivates me – it gives me unending belief and hope. It is the type of education that I would wish for all of our society’s children, it is the one that I choose for my children and the one that I am proud to be a part of.

One of the things that I was warned about six years ago when I joined the Board was to be prepared for parents to approach me asking for me to try to change things within the school. Well I can honestly say that this has never happened........ until this week. One of the mums asked me quite demandingly “Can’t you do anything Michelle ? – You’re the Chair for heaven’s sake ! – can’t you make St. Andrew’s go to year 12 ???” I had to sympathise with her desire – and said that I’d put it to Mrs. Climo at the AGM !

I wish all the Board members and the newly appointed Chair every joy and success in the coming year – may we continue to grow like the lupins in my paddock !

Thank you sincerely for having me for six years, I wouldn’t have missed it for the world.

Merry Christmas to you all and may God bless you with happiness and peace always.

Kindest Regards

Michelle Varley
Board Chair
St. Andrew’s Catholic Primary School