

It is with great sadness that I report the passing away of a very good friend and an esteemed colleague and a member of the Review Board at DHH, Dr. Alastair McLauchlan. Alastair passed away peacefully on May 30, 2014 aged 62. He bravely battled with cancer little realising that it had progressed to his brain. I have had the privilege of knowing Alastair since we moved to New Zealand in 2001. His love for languages and undying enthusiasm to promote teaching and learning of foreign languages at schools was inspirational. He spoke French fluently, Japanese very well and had a sound grasp of Te Reo Maori. His concern for drop in uptake of foreign languages at schools led him to design a longitudinal study which he used to great effect to demonstrate the point. He tirelessly argued a case for policy change to enable more students study a foreign language early and to improve retention rate across all school years.

Alastair was ahead of others, we would often discuss language as it relate to other human processes from cultural development to health, and developed a number of proposals. Being a visionary does not always pay off in terms of being successful in raising research funds; to many people new ideas appear foreign and thus may be reluctant to provide financial support. In other words, 'better the devil we know' as the current culture of decision making meant that he self-funded as much research as was possible to do by one researcher. But he cleverly managed to rope in a number of us as his voluntary support network!

Alastair was instrumental in the establishment of a very successful Christchurch Polytechnic Japanese degree programme, which was well recognised and respected by other local, national and international institutions and employers.

He has written a number of books and papers: he has published three of his books along with number of journal papers. One of his latest collaboratory works is in press and due out soon and another is near completion. His latest project was on perceptions of language difficulty and connections with health and social outcomes.

He was a well respected academic member of Te Wananga which he joined ten years ago to support their academic research programmes.

He was an accomplished guitar player and played in a band during 70s and 80s.

He is greatly missed by family, friends, and academia.

Said Shahtahmasebi & Mark Ealey.