



State Shadow Education Minister, Martin Dixon, centre, at the Bass Coast Specialist School. He is pictured with school principal, Sue Campbell, and Bass MLA Ken Smith.

'State must act' on special school

THE State Government must resolve complaints against Wonthaggi's Bass Coast Specialist School, the Shadow Education Minister said last week.

Martin Dixon was speaking at the facility, which he toured with Ken Smith, the Bass MLA.

They were responding to serious complaints from many parents of inadequate facilities at the centre, which opened late last year.

That includes a lack of outside shade and playing equipment.

Most of all, transport for the centre's 20 students is inferior.

The issue was initially raised by Cr John Duscher, at a recent shire council meeting.

Mr Smith was also contacted by parents, over the same issues.

Visitors were guided around the by Sue Campbell, its principal.

A regional education director, Don Paproth, was also present.

Mr Paproth, however, declined to comment

By Richard Schmeiszl

publicly on the controversy.

"It's hard to believe that the government would build a \$5 million school, then neglect it . . . simply walk away," Mr Dixon said.

"The required equipment must be provided immediately.

"These students should not be treated as inferior citizens.

"They face enough obstacles, without attending a school that badly lacks adequate equipment and transport."

Mr Smith concurred, stressing that many local students bypass the new centre, to attend similar schools in Leongatha and even Warragul.

He pointed out that although the core building was superb, it needed to be "properly stocked".

"This school won't attract the necessary funding, un-

less it has more students," Mr Smith added.

"And it won't have more students, unless it provides worthwhile facilities.

"It's a cruel merry-go-round that the government must fix.

"I have the highest admiration for Sue Campbell and her staff.

"They do a terrific job, under very tough conditions. "Have a look at the library.

"It has no books.

"Can you imagine that happening at any other school, conventional or specialist?"

"It's a disgrace."

Mr Smith will raise the issue in Parliament next week.

He will demand the school receive the needed upgrades.

Ms Campbell, although reluctant to comment, has emphasised that the new centre must be given time to "settle in".