

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS IN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION (transcript page 40)

Request for information about schools with 'too much funding'.

ANSWER

No NSW public school receives too much funding.

The way government schools are funded has changed significantly since 2012 with the introduction of Local Schools, Local Decisions. The department provides support to schools according to the needs-based Resource Allocation Model (RAM) methodology, which has been progressively implemented since 2014.

Principals have responsibility for determining how their total school budget is used to best meet the needs of all the students in their school.

In 2017 more than \$9.3 million has been allocated through seven* RAM loadings to the 37 schools in the Southern Tablelands for principals to use flexibly to support the learning needs of all students in their schools.

*Socio-economic background loading; Aboriginal background loading; English language proficiency loading; Low level adjustment for disability; location; professional learning; per capita.

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QUESTION (transcript page 45)

Is there some merit in having some sort of external review above what is there at the moment [in relation to management of allegations of suspected staff misconduct]?

ANSWER

There may be merit in giving consideration to increasing the range of matters that undergo external review.

The NSW Ombudsman currently has an oversight role in relation to the work of the Department of Education and its schools in a range of areas. This includes specific functions and powers in relation to the handling of allegations against staff of a child protection nature.

The department is in discussion with the NSW Ombudsman about staff-related child protection matters under these existing functions and powers, and the potential for expanding the range of matters that are referred to the Ombudsman where students with disability are indicated.

Careful consideration would need to be given to the relative benefits of such action with regard to the impact and outcomes for students and the department as well as administrative workload for principals.

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QUESTION (transcript page 46)

How might the system be improved with regards to children with disabilities, in regards to parents [with concerns about support for their child] and in regards to taking pressure off principals?

ANSWER

The release earlier this year of the department's new complaints handling policy provides opportunity for achieving improvements for both parents and principals.

The new complaints policy and related processes that may be utilised by parents with concerns about services provided for their child through NSW public schools, has a focus on early, local resolution of complaint matters wherever possible, through a transparent process. This new policy is based on best practice in complaints handling, as defined by the NSW Ombudsman, and has potential to resolve concerns quickly and to maintain open communication between parents and school staff through the complaints process.

The department is progressively developing materials for a complaints handling tool kit, providing better guidance for principals and other department staff on aspects of the complaints process. Further work on the toolkit is planned in the context of the broader whole-of-government project on complaints handling, referred to in the NSW Government submission to this inquiry.