

NSW PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY EXAMINING THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEED

Cheryl McBride OAM & Bitia Christos



Question on notice by Mr David Shoebridge:

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We have heard repeatedly from other witnesses about the inequitable funding particularly for the high school component of special needs schools, but we have not heard the double whammy. Not only do you not get the additional resources for release and for head teachers and physical education [PE] teachers but you also do not get the quality teaching successful students [QTSS] funding for the proportion of your students that are in high school. What is the dollar figure we are talking about here that you are missing out on?

Funding for the high school QTSS could be calculated in the following way. At Holroyd SSP there are 17 highschool classes averaging 7 students in each class. To cater for the lower number of stuents the Department multiplies classes by 3.
Number of students: $17 \times 7 \times 3 = 357$ students
Approximate amount of QTSS money missing from SSP is \$92,000 (This figure was calculated in proportion to the QTSS funds received at Smithfield PS)
Below is another example.

EXAMPLES CHANGES TO STAFFING FORMULAS for SSPs

Secondary staffing for secondary students (yr7 – not 13+)

Number of SSP secondary classes	Number of teachers on primary formula (1.084)	Number of teachers on secondary formula (1.4)	Variance
17	18.428	23.8	5.372
10	10.84	14	3.16
8	8.672	11.2	2.528
5	5.42	7	1.58
2	2.168	2.8	0.632

If this variance could be allocated as money, schools could use it as they wished (teachers, instructional leaders, SLSOs, allied health, specialist PL) to support quality teaching and workload

issues across the school, in conjunction with the QTSS allocation.

Question on notice by Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones:

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I am happy for you to take this on notice. Could you put forward recommendations how the system could be streamlined and where improvements can be made, apart from the IT one, which has been raised?

Ms McBRIDE: Obviously it would be great to have a bank of people who were readily available for families to access. That would be ideal. Having seen the community provision of a lot of therapy services, currently and in the past, when you establish those services you then have the problem of the consistent movement within that system as well. So the speech therapist that a child might see in January is not the same person they see in February, June, et cetera. You have to make sure you have guarantees around the quality of that provision and the consistency of the provision as well.

Improvements can be made by the Department having an area health team for a hub of schools where health professionals and therapists could be readily accessed by schools. Paediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists could be employed by the Department and support a network of schools. This would alleviate the long wait parents have, when trying to see a paediatrician, particularly through community health to get a diagnosis for their child or for therapy services/advice. Parents need a diagnosis to access support classes. Therapist reports are also needed to access specialised equipment for children with physical disabilities. Waiting for community health delays the early support and intervention children need.

Question on notice by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile:

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I am very concerned about something you say in your submission in relation to the last inquiry in 2010. You stated in your submission that you do not believe the New South Wales Government increased funding for students with disabilities and special needs as a result of that inquiry and its recommendations. The problem is we will have to get specific recommendations from you about the funding formula so the Government cannot see a gap to go through so that nothing happens, and they say, "Yes, we will increase funding", in some vague way. You need to pin them down specifically as to what increases should be in the various categories, whether it is transport, staffing and so on so that the bureaucrats will actually—

Ms McBRIDE: I would be fairly confident that the special principals would have provided something like that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: —get a recommendation from us that is more detailed so they cannot sidestep it somehow—

Ms McBRIDE: I understand.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: —which I think the bureaucrats do. They have and they will unless we can pin them down and we have a checklist to say, "We have recommended this. Has this been done?"

Ms McBRIDE: Yes. Thank you for that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I ask that question on notice for you to work on that after you leave the inquiry.

Ms McBRIDE: We can certainly work on that with the special school principals I know who put that together on behalf of the special schools. Certainly on behalf of the mainstream schools there has been some

Additional SLSO for every classroom

Funding equivalent to an additional SLSO for every class – to be used flexibly as above

Number of classes	Current Number of SLSOs	Additional Flexible funding based on extra SLSO per class
30	30	\$1,770,000 (30 x \$59,000)
17	17	\$1,003,000
10	10	\$590,000
5	5	\$295,000

Change to Factor of need

Example

Current FON	No of Students per class	New FON	Number of students per class
Mod 1.111	9	1.428	7
Mod with Pervasive developmental characteristic) 1.428	7	1.666	6
Mod (very complex, pointy end) 1.428	7	3.333	3
Severe 1.666	6	2.0	5
Severe (Complex behaviour, health, physical, sensory imp) 1.666	6	3.333	3

This would have implications with the number of students /classes in a school. If the variance was

paid as funding, schools could organise classes as they see fit using additional resources.

Example of 17 classes in an IO/IS school applying the current and then the proposed factors of need

Actual Number of students/classes	Current state		New state		Variance
	Number of students x FON	Numbers	Number of students x new FON	Numbers	
17 classes 109 students	Sev = 89 x 1.666	148.274	S=67 x 2.00	134	59.052
			Sev/Comp = 22 x 3.333	73.326	
	Mod PDC 14x1.428	19.992	Mod PDC 13x1.666	21.658	4.999
			Mod (Complex/pointy) 1x 3.333	3.333	
	Mod 6x1.111	6.666	Mod=6x1.428	8.568	1.902
		Total FON		Total FON	Total variance of FON
		174.932		240.885	65.953

SASS Formula (SAM & SAO)

Examples

Enrolment	SAM	SAO
High School (101-150)	1 (level 3)	3.282
Primary (101-50)	1 (level 2)	0.406
SSP 5 classes (Notional 150)	0.976 (level 2)	0
High School (251-300)	1 (level 3)	4.082
Primary (251-300)	1 (Level 3)	1.122
SSP 10 classes (Notional 300)	1 (level 3)	0.422
High School (451-500)	1 (level 3)	5.682
Primary (451-500)	1 (level 3)	1.782
SSP 16 classes (Notional 480)	1 (level 3)	1.282
High School (851-900)	1 (level 3)	8.882

Primary (851-900)	1 (level 3)	3.172
SSP 24+ classes (30 classes -Notional 851-900)	1 (level 3)	1.872

Counsellor Allocation

Increase school counselling time to recognise the increased demand of a large support unit. An additional 0.4 of counselling time is required for a support unit consisting of 3 classes. A 0.6 allocation of counselling time is needed for a support unit consisting of 5 classes. A 0.8 allocation of counselling time is needed for a support unit consisting of 7 classes. This needs to be in addition to the allocation of mainstream counselling time.

0.4 = \$44,000

0.6 = \$66,000

0.8 = \$88,000

Deputy Principal Special Education

Enable the Deputy Principal Special Education to be class free so that all responsibilities can be met. The Deputy Principal Special education has many responsibilities. For example at Smithfield there are 8 teachers and 8 School Learning Support Officers (SLSO's) to supervise. There are over 70 children in the Support unit that need additional supervision and administrative requirements ongoing throughout the year. Being on class fulltime and only having 2 hours of release the same as a classroom teacher makes this position extremely difficult and impossible to effectively meet all the demands of the job. Across NSW there are approximately 20 Deputy Principals.

Cost = \$144,000

Administration Allocation for Support Classes

Provide some administration allocation to support the demands of the families and children in the support unit.

0.5 school administration officer

0.2 General Assistant

Learning and Support Program

Increase the learning and Support program to cater for the many learning challenges in the mainstream at Smithfield Public School and as identified by the National Consistent Collection of Data on students with a Disability.

Cost \$55,000

Formulae for Students in Support Classes

Factor of need for support classes are fixed as follows:-	
Moderate Intellectual Disability (IO)	1.0
Severe Intellectual Disability (S)	1.66
Multicategorical (MC)	1.42
Autism / Moderate Intellectual Disability (Au/IO)	1.42
Autism (Au)	1.0

Recognise that some students with disabilities/special needs require more support than the above formulae dictates. Provide adequate levels of funding in a timely manner. This requires some cost analysis combined with a more flexible set of formulae that recognises the multiple disabilities that some children suffer. For example, a student currently enrolled in _____ at Smithfield Public School also has a diagnosed moderate intellectual disability, physical disability, severe epilepsy and severe expressive and receptive language delays is currently counted as 1.0 under the factor of need. This student presents with multiple complexities related to his disability and need close one on one supervisor these are not reflected in his factor of need.

Professional Learning for School Learning Support Officers

Provide funding for the professional learning of School Learning Support Officers who support children with a disability/special needs at Smithfield Public School.

Cost = \$1000 per permanent School Learning Support Officer

Professional Learning for Special education teachers

Funding specific for professional learning of special education teachers.

Specialist skills such as Key Word Sign, strategies for teaching children with Autism, physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities, the use of individualised programs and resources.

Provision of courses = \$1.5million

Early Intervention Unit

Provide resources to ensure that the Early Intervention Unit complied with the National standards established for all Early Childhood facilities.

An additional \$9 million is required across NSW.

For all Early Intervention Units to go through the assessment and rating process to meet national guidelines.

Library Allocation

All Support Classes to be included in the library allocation of schools so that children with special needs can access the library and a librarian on the basis as students in mainstream.

Cost = \$2million across NSW

Curriculum for students in support classes

Update and create high quality curriculum support and continuum documents for special education teachers. NESA has a responsibility to collate and expand current programs to ensure all students in support classes can be provided with a quality curriculum.