

Inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings

(Portfolio Committee 3)

Department of Communities and Justice

Post-hearing responses

Hearing: Tuesday 23 April 2024

**Answers due to Committee Office: 1pm
Tuesday 7 May 2024**

Question taken on notice: Data on suspensions for young people with disabilities (page 45)

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You mentioned suspension. The data that you have, the number of young people being suspended from each school—is that broken down by how many are identified as having a disability?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes, it is.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And do you have that also by young people in out-of-home care?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We don't have it for out-of-home care, but that's maintained by DCJ.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But you share that data now.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When it comes to DCJ and that data, is that then broken down to identify those young people who are in out-of-home care?

MATTHEW BARDEN: I would have to take that on notice, I'm sorry. I'm not really across the detail of the child protection part of the system, but I'm happy to get an answer for you.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What data is provided to DCJ around suspensions for young people with disabilities?

MATTHEW BARDEN: I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

I am advised:

There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Department of Education (DoE) to share data in relation to school enrolments and attendance for school-aged children and young people under the parental responsibility of the Minister enrolled in NSW government schools.

This includes monthly data exchange regarding enrolment status for this cohort since 2020. In 2023, the MOU was amended for DoE to share attendance rates with DCJ. DCJ received attendance data for the 2023 school year in mid-February 2024 and findings will be available by June 2024. There is no exchange of suspension data.

Question taken on notice: Supports for young people caring for someone with a disability (page 51)

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Around young carers and students who are caring for siblings—it came up this morning with Siblings Australia—what support and programs are available within the schools to support that young person who may be also acting as carer for their sibling, whether that sibling is in the school or elsewhere?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I think it is one of those issues that would come under the general care that schools have—an understanding of their students. Ms Summerhayes might have many examples of how that practically works in school.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes. Depending on the school that you attend, we don't have a systems approach to that piece, Ms Maclaren-Jones, but what we do have is individual schools that will respond to particular family needs or particular student needs when identified. As you would be aware, we also have children that care for adults with disability at home when they go home or in the morning. Schools are very conscientious about understanding the needs of their students in that space, and support both with school and out-of-school programs in different areas across New South Wales.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: This is a question for DCJ: What role does DCJ have to ensure that those young people are being supported if they're caring for someone with a disability?

MATTHEW BARDEN: That is a good question. Sorry, I'm not across the carers responsibilities in DCJ either.

Answer:

I am advised:

- Case planning for children in out-of-home care with disability is designed to ensure the child with disability has sufficient care from the carer and/or external professionals, so that siblings do not have to take on care responsibilities.
- Out-of-home care case plans outline how a child with disability needs are met during their time in care, including their health needs and any disability support.
- Out-of-home care case plans for a sibling of a child with a disability should assess any potential impact on any siblings.
- A child's first out-of-home care case plan should be developed within 30 days of entering out-of-home care and should be reviewed regularly, including home visiting.
- DCJ caseworkers work holistically with children in out-of-home care and their carers to understand family dynamics and build a child's support network, including but not limited to:
 - extended family support
 - respite care
 - DCJ Psychological Services support
 - referral to specialist services, and
 - NDIS planning.
- Carers are also paid a fortnightly allowance based on a child's needs, and are eligible for additional payments where a child has more complex needs.

- DCJ also funds and supports Carers NSW that has a range of information, programs and services available for (and to support) young carers 25 years or younger:
 - the Young Carer Awareness Training to help professionals to support young carers in an appropriate and sensitive way to help them achieve their highest potential.
 - the Young Carer Inclusion Network also brings together service providers and professionals engaging with young people. The Network aims to improve the identification and support for young carers through identifying gaps, building sector capacity, and streamlining access to support for young carers in mainstream service settings.
 - a range of resources available on the Carers NSW website, including the YC young carer podcast, the Young Carer Identification Guide, the Young Carer Policy Statement, Supporting Student Carers and findings of a recent Young Carer Research Project, as well as skills training programs information for further education.