

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

Summary of roundtable discussion – Newcastle – Wednesday 24 April 2024

Members present:

- Abigail Boyd, *Chair*
- Sarah Mitchell, *Deputy Chair*
- Anthony D'Adam

Participants

- A, aged 14 years, their younger sibling B, and their mum
- C, aged 12 years; D, aged 14 years, who is non-verbal; E, aged 16 years; with their mum and sibling and support worker
- F, aged 12 years, who is non-verbal; with their mum
- G, aged over 18 years; with their support worker.

Each group spent some time talking about their experiences. The following themes emerged:

- Teachers and schools are not meeting the individual needs of students with disability.
- School culture is important and comes from the top: the principal and school executive.
- Students had negative experiences in their schooling, including bullying.
- Students and staff are not well educated about students with disability and their needs generally, or the needs of specific individuals with disability.
- Individual education plans (IEPs) are not properly implemented or are ignored.
- Some teachers do not know how to cope with behaviours arising from disability; teachers do not get enough training in special education as part of their university degree.
- Students in support units are not always well integrated into the culture and practices of the mainstream school they are part of.
- Parents have to continuously advocate for their children with disability.
- Age based progression through the schooling years can be problematic.
- Communication between the school and families is sometimes poor, or insensitive.
- Siblings are also impacted by the negative school experiences of their sibling with disability.