

INQUIRY INTO TRANSITION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL OR COMPLEX NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Organisation: NSW Network of National Disability Coordination Officers

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Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues

Submission to the Inquiry to Examine Transitional Support Offered to Students and Their Families

Introduction

This brief submission is on behalf of the NSW Network of National Disability Coordination Officers (NDCOs). We are providing this in dot point only due to time constraints, but would be happy to provide any further information on this submission in writing or in person to the Enquiry if and when necessary.

The NDCO Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to assist people with a disability to access further education, training and employment. NDCOs work to build links between education, training and employment sectors, and to provide information, coordination and referral services so that people with disabilities have assistance at all levels. The ten NDCOs in NSW have formed a collaborative network to ensure that not only regional but statewide issues and opportunities are identified and shared to improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

In their coordination role, NDCOs have the opportunity to identify the many transition issues for people with disabilities, and for this reason, our NSW team would like to share the following brief points with this Inquiry.

The adequacy and accessibility of appropriate support for children and their families

- In Community Participation/Transition To Work (CP/TTW) Programs, especially in regional areas, there are no choices of provider and people can't travel to other centres. These distance issues are particularly distressing to parents/carers.
- Restrictions of funding guidelines and the assessment process means that those who should be offered a package are not eligible.
- Many private and independent schools are not as well-prepared or as well-equipped as government schools to assess for the CP/TTW packages, which means that some students miss out.
- Many students fall through the gap and are not eligible for TTW/CP but have additional needs.

- Packages are predominantly offered to people with intellectual disabilities while there is a growing need for students with Asperger's, mental health issues and other additional needs to be provided with support.
- The middle range of complex needs does not have approved service provision from the NSW government.
- The approved service providers need to develop programs to engage and extend their clients, and therefore there should be more monitoring in terms of service quality.
- Service providers should liaise with TAFE Teacher Consultants before enrolling students at TAFE to ensure that students receive the necessary support in their courses.
- Department of Education and Communities (DEC): Some districts have adequate levels of Support Teacher Transition (STT) support while others have insufficient support for student numbers, especially in regional areas.

Best practice approaches to ensure seamless and streamlined assistance during transitions

- In the Hunter region ADHC works with service providers to ensure that TAFE enrolments receive the support of TAFE TCs.
- The STT model in NSW is a crucial support for students with disabilities but they are under-resourced. In regional areas, they have the additional issue of distance and travel.
- The devolution of disability support in DEC means that there is insufficient professional development and other support for disability staff.

Any other related matters

- There needs to be closer collaboration between State and Federal services to ensure that students with a disability have a more cohesive service.
- A model where the service provider focuses on specific disabilities works really well because they can target specific needs – eg in Illawarra students with Asperger's are in the same group as those with physical disabilities and this works well. In many areas, there are services that target job seekers with mental health issues.

For any further information or follow-up on this submission, please contact Gwen Johnson, NDCO, or Debi Toman, NDCO,