

Submission
No 212

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO
STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

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**CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE,
SYDNEY**

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FORWARD

The Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney system of schools is committed to providing quality inclusive education for all students, including students with a disability and special needs. As the largest Catholic system within New South Wales, CEO Sydney has 147 schools within its three regions, providing quality education for 64,191 students from Kindergarten to Year 12.

The ethos of Catholic schooling acknowledges the inherent dignity of each child. No matter the need, each child has the right to equal access to the best education possible. This is true for students with disabilities and special needs as well as those without.

The education of students with disabilities and special needs is the responsibility of the entire community, not only schooling systems. A comprehensive approach must be adopted to ensure that every student, irrespective of the education system, has the best quality education and service provision to which they are entitled. The report which follows outlines excellent practice and the current situation of the enrolment of students with disabilities and special needs within Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney, but also highlights the deficits within the community, including the education, State and Commonwealth government arenas, which impact on the quality of provision for students with disabilities and special needs.

School systems and families simply cannot cope with the ever-increasing demands on them with piecemeal and incremental support from governments and charities. The time must come when the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments must recognise that these young people deserve a 'fair go' that is a comprehensive entitlement package encompassing:

- education in an appropriate, properly - resourced setting;
- financial assistance to families to access respite care;
- assurance that these young people will be cared for when families cannot.

INTRODUCTION

ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS IN SYDNEY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- a) Students with disabilities and special needs enrolled in the CEO, Sydney schools are educated within the mainstream setting. CEO, Sydney is committed to a collaborative approach to determine the most appropriate adjustments and programs to meet the individual needs of these students. The range of contexts in which support is provided and the combination of different strategies used, will depend on the resources available to each school. The inclusion of students with disabilities and special needs in the school community requires a 'whole school approach', with support and guidance from the school executive, classroom teachers, support staff and specialist personnel. It is to this purpose that the CEO, Sydney strives to work collaboratively with schools, pastors, parents, carers, students and the wider community to ensure appropriate adjustments are in place so that there are ongoing and improved outcomes for the learning and wellbeing of students with special needs. Such needs may have a minimal to profound impact on their learning. Following appropriate identification processes some students may be eligible for additional Commonwealth and State government or system funding.

- b) There has been a steady increase of enrolled students with disabilities and special needs in CEO, Sydney schools over time. Figures from the last eighteen years are shown below:

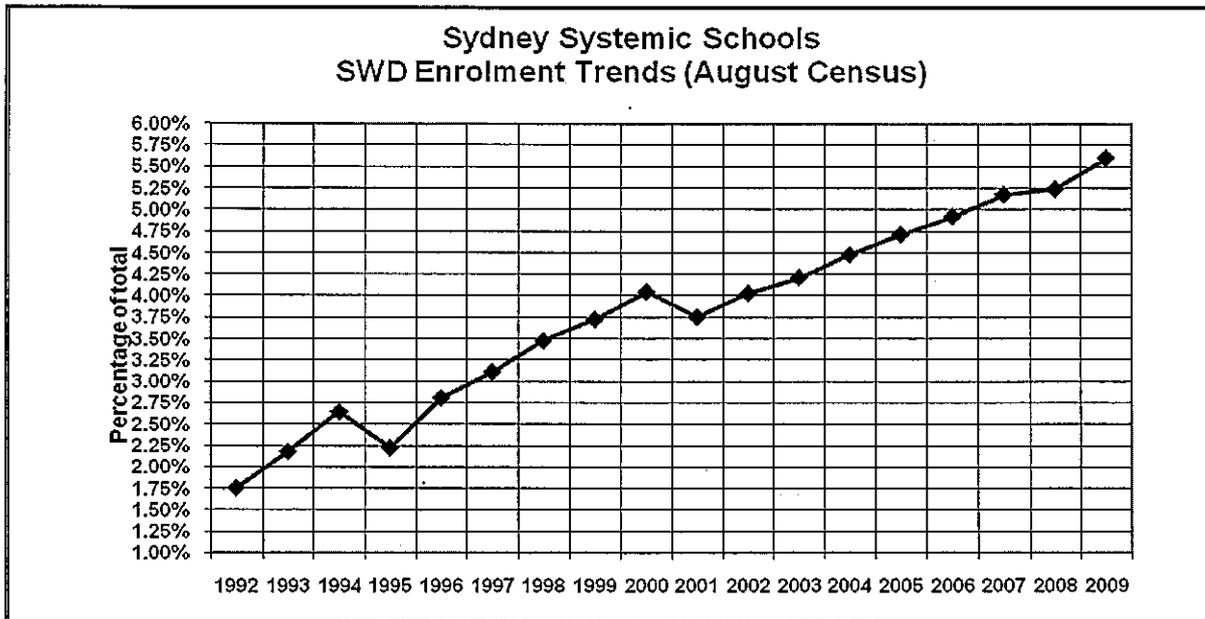


Figure 1: Students with Disabilities Enrolment Trends (1992 – 2009)

	SWD Total	Total Students	
1992	1110	63049	1.76%
1993	1359	62236	2.18%
1994	1630	61497	2.65%
1995	1364	61247	2.23%
1996	1714	60861	2.82%
1997	1895	60772	3.12%
1998	2115	60755	3.48%
1999	2278	61080	3.73%
2000	2486	61388	4.05%
2001	2320	61734	3.76%
2002	2499	61919	4.04%
2003	2614	61968	4.22%
2004	2796	62361	4.48%
2005	2958	62695	4.72%
2006	3085	62610	4.93%
2007	3257	62813	5.19%
2008	3285	62614	5.25%
2009	3546	63227	5.61%

Table 1: Total Number and Percentage of Students with Disabilities (1992 – 2009)

- c) Services and staffing to support schools and students have also increased during this time. CEO, Sydney hosts and partially funds, seven Autism Australia (Aspect) Satellite units (i.e. fourteen classes) on school sites, providing specific intervention for students with Autism. Students in these classes are not included in the system's enrolment statistics and hence do not attract Commonwealth and State government funding to the system. CEO, Sydney also supports students with challenging and extreme behaviours in the mainstream setting through the provision of early and specific intervention in nine schools.
- d) The increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities and special needs has resulted in a substantial increase in system funding and staffing to regions and schools.

Year	Combined Government Funding (approx)	System Funding (approx) \$	Staffing FTE
2004	2.3m	6.0m	151.4
2005	2.4m	9.0m	173.0
2006	2.2m	10.0m	172.6
2007	2.4m	10.0m	177.8
2008	2.7m	12.0m	197.13
2009	3.7m	12.5m	203.85

Table 2: Available Funding for Students with Disabilities

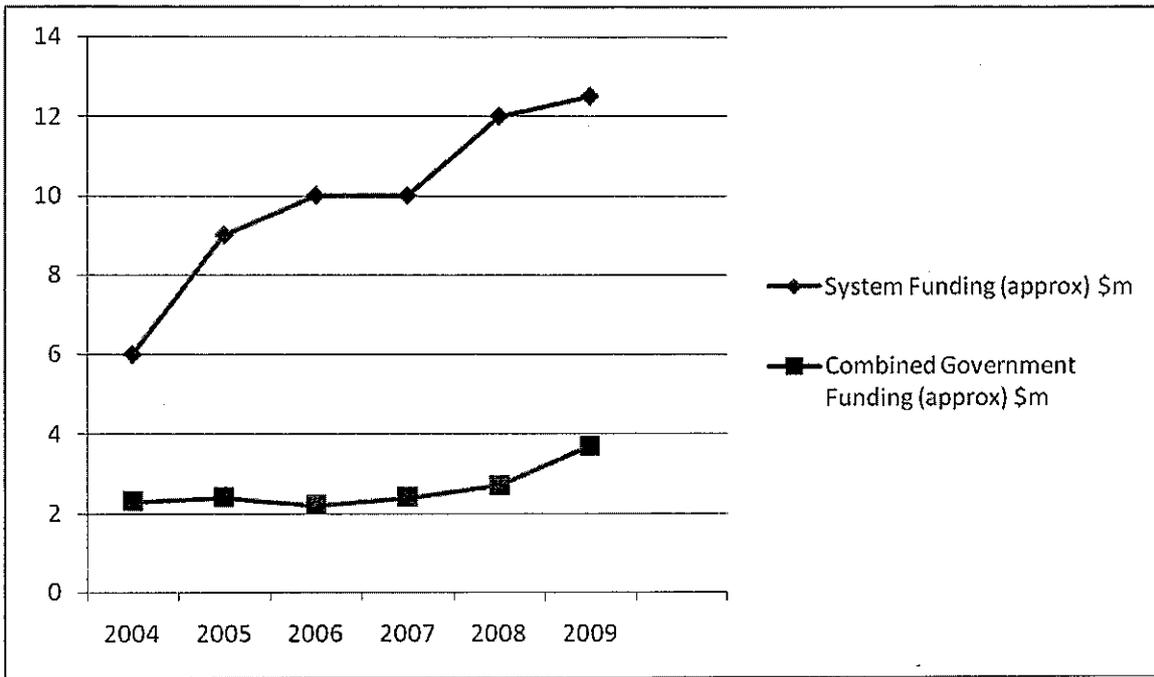


Figure 2: Funding available for Students with Disabilities and Special Needs

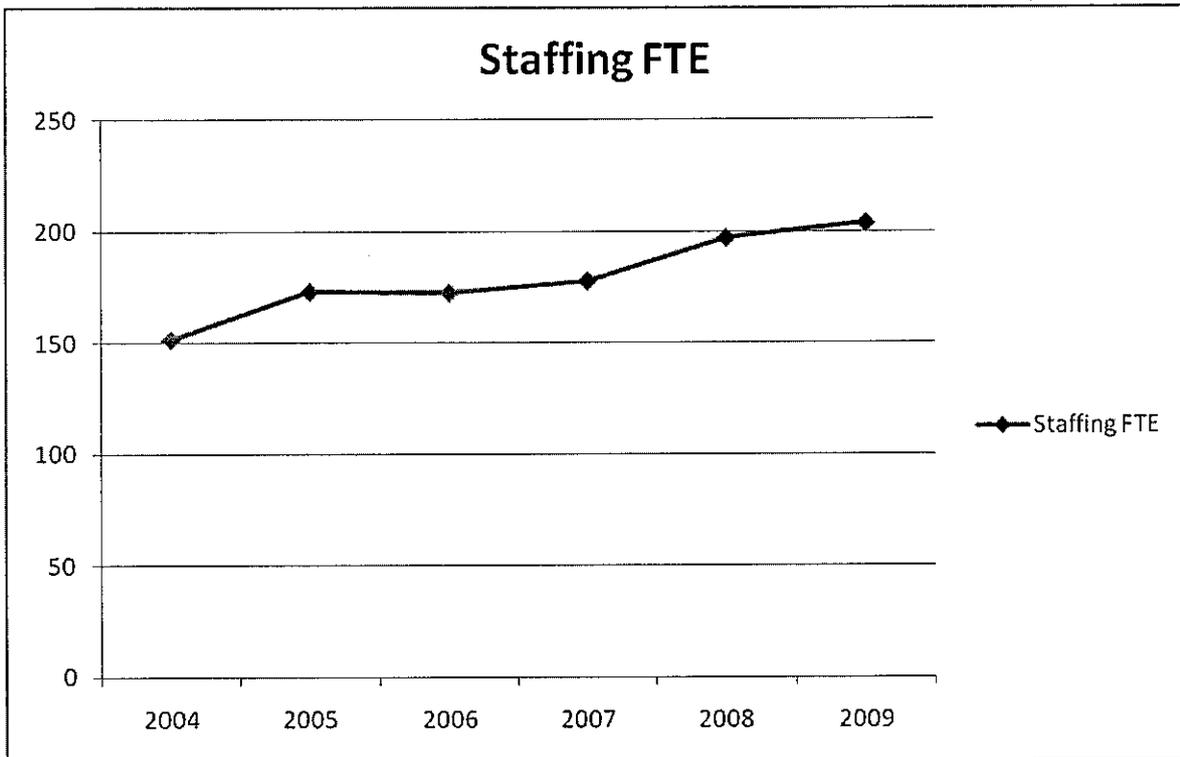


Figure 3: Staffing for Students with Disabilities and Special Needs

1. THE NATURE, LEVEL AND ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

1.1. The Catholic Education Office, Sydney recognises, in its provision of support services for students with disabilities and special needs, the definition of disability according to the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* and Guidance Notes. This definition is:

- “total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or
- total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunctions; or
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that result in disturbed behaviour.”

(Disability Standards for Education 2005, Part 1, 1.4)

1.2. Government funding (both State and Commonwealth) however, is provided using a different criteria and definition; one which does not encompass all students identified under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. Therefore there is considerable shortfall of government funding available to CEO, Sydney for all students with an identified disability according to the above definition as can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 2.

1.3. The nature and level of complexity of student disability has definitely increased during the last six years. The table below shows the number of students enrolled in CEO, Sydney schools who have multiple disabilities and needs.

YEAR	NUMBERS OF STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES
2004	296
2005	383
2006	429
2007	496

2008	572
2009	652

Table 3: Number of Students with Multiple Disabilities (2004 – 2009)

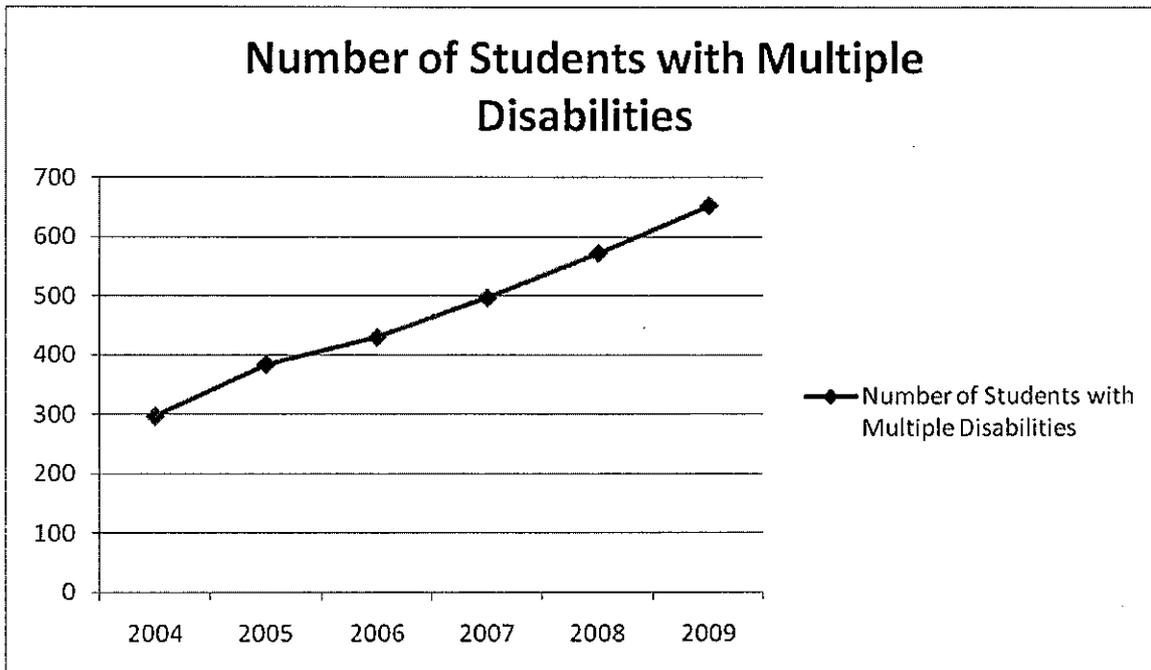


Figure 4: Number of Students with Multiple Disabilities (2004 – 2009)

1.4. The increase in numbers of students with disabilities enrolled in CEO, Sydney schools, (see Figure 1 and Table 1) does not include students who have a disability according to definition in *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, but according to Commonwealth funding guidelines. Using the definition of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, students diagnosed with conditions such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia, behaviour disorders, and medical conditions such as anaphylaxis, diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions all need adjustments to their school program, and in many cases individual plans, in order to be appropriately supported within the school setting. However, these students are not financially supported by either Commonwealth or State government funding. CEO, Sydney support these students using system funds. At the end of 2009 there were over 1900 of such students enrolled in our schools.

- 1.5. The challenges that have arisen in our system of schools due to the increase in the behaviour disorders and mental health issues of our young people have had significant funding issues for CEO, Sydney. These students do not necessarily attract Commonwealth or State government funding for many reasons, including lack of services for diagnosis or lack of understanding of need for specialist support. Since 2002 CEO, Sydney has provided some support structures for these students and school personnel, yet there is continued drain on these available funds.

YEAR	FUNDING FOR STUDENTS WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS
	FTE
2004	4.5
2005	9.0
2006	9.0
2007	9.0
2008	14.0
2009	14.0

Table 4: Funding for Students with Challenging Behaviours (2004 – 2009)

1.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.6.1 That Commonwealth and State government funding criteria be extended to include students with disabilities as defined by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*
- 1.6.2 That the State Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to ensure that students with disabilities and special needs have equal access, and corresponding funding, to the best educational provision Australia-wide, irrespective of education system.

2. BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES IN DETERMINING THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING TO CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY, PARTICULARLY WHETHER ALLOCATION SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON A STUDENT'S FUNCTIONING CAPACITY RATHER THAN THEIR DISABILITY

2.1. The legal obligations made explicit in the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* are embedded in CEO, Sydney's commitment to provide reasonable adjustments to assist students with disabilities and special needs to participate in the educational setting on the same basis as students without a disability.

2.2. Allocation of funding to students with disabilities and special needs occurs in two ways within Catholic Education Office, Sydney.

2.2.1 Funds provided by Commonwealth and State Government and the system are allocated to schools through the numbers of students with disabilities within each school. This funding is provided to schools for specialist teachers who will support class teachers in meeting the needs of the students. Schools have the ability to distribute the staffing according to the particular needs of the students within the school.

2.2.2 In addition, the system provides limited funds to students, via the school, according to the functional level of individual students. These students usually have high support needs and the level of funding is determined through collaboration between the regional adviser and school personnel. This local knowledge of students is invaluable in the funding process and provides very specific support to each student according to their level of need.

2.3. The Catholic Education Office, Sydney also provides limited funds to those students who have special needs and fall into the definition of disability as described by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, but who are not eligible for Commonwealth and State Government funding. In many instances, this group of students require more support than those with recognised disabilities and draws on many sources of school funding to provide appropriate intervention.

2.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.4.1 Best practice approaches to funding should incorporate many facets, namely, overall funding to the school to support students with disabilities and special needs as well as additional funding to students with higher support needs, as determined by school and specialist personnel.

2.4.2 Commonwealth and State Government funding to be increased in order to include an allocation for students with disabilities as defined by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

3. THE LEVEL AND ADEQUACY OF CURRENT SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACES WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- 3.1 During the last few years there has been an increase in expectations from parents for mainstream settings and classes, particularly since the introduction of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. Parents are increasingly seeking enrolment in CEO, Sydney schools for students who, in the past, would have been enrolled in specialised settings. Parents are well supported by advocacy groups who inform parents of what they should expect when their child commences school and what the advocacy groups consider are the best schooling options for the child. Many times this is in conflict to what other specialists have advised or what is possible in a mainstream setting with large class sizes.
- 3.2 There is increased pressure on classroom teachers to provide appropriately for students with high needs in large classes and increased pressure on schools as a whole. Many classes in CEO, Sydney schools have class sizes in excess of 31 students, especially in the South Western suburbs of the Archdiocese
- 3.3 CEO, Sydney strives to work collaboratively with schools, pastors, parents, carers, students and the wider community to ensure appropriate adjustments are in place so that there are ongoing and improved outcomes for students with disabilities and special needs. Through this collaborative process, it is sometimes established that a mainstream setting is not the most appropriate placement and, working with parents, a more suitable educational setting is sought, usually in a specialised setting.
- 3.4 At this time, students enrolled in CEO, Sydney schools have limited options in finding suitable places in specialised education settings. There are limited settings within the Catholic sector, and the location and distance of the settings are usually prohibitive for our students.
- 3.5 It is almost impossible for Catholic students to access State Education specialised settings, including specialised behaviour classes. Demand for these settings greatly exceeds the places available. It seems that the general practice of the Department of Education (DET) is that in order for students to access these settings, they must be enrolled in a DET school. Therefore, students enrolled in CEO, Sydney schools, must leave their school, enrol in a DET school and then, if waiting lists and failed performance allows, the student gains access to the specialised setting. Obviously this is not an ideal situation, given that the student has already encountered difficulties in the Catholic mainstream setting. This situation has great emotional and social disadvantages for students and their families. The earlier the intervention, the

better the long term outcomes – however, the places are virtually unavailable for students with this high level of need.

3.6 As System resources are finite, it is not possible for CEO, Sydney to set up the required long term specialised settings for students with varying disabilities and complex high needs. This is particularly true for students who need specialised behaviour settings.

3.7 Despite upskilling generalist classroom teachers through various system-funded professional development programs, a number of students displaying behaviour disorders and mental ill-health, require specialised support to meet their educational and emotional needs. CEO, Sydney has provided short-term intervention for students who have challenging behaviours with very positive outcomes. However, there is an increasing need in both the primary and secondary years, for access to specialised behaviour settings for our students. Increasingly, while waiting for placement in a specialised setting, students are becoming disengaged with school. This consequently has negative impact on their long-term success within the settings.

3.8 CEO, Sydney has entered into partnership with Autism Australia (Aspect) and together provides fourteen classes (seven units) for students on the Autism Spectrum. As these units are governed by Aspect, provision for CEO, Sydney students is not automatic and therefore many students cannot access these units and seek special placements elsewhere.

3.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.9.1 Maintain current specialised settings and increase available places.

3.9.2 Flexible attendance arrangements across educational systems dependent on student need e.g. time at a special school then integrated in mainstream for social aspects in the afternoon.

3.9.3 Improved access to places in specialised settings for students from education systems other than DET

3.9.4 Improved sharing of information across education systems.

3.9.5 Additional satellite classes to address the variety of student needs so that students can maintain contact with their home school.

4. THE ADEQUACY OF INTEGRATED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY IN MAINSTREAM SETTINGS, SUCH AS SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

4.1. Provision of therapy services to school aged children often involves the school dealing with a variety of different services (i.e. private, State and Commonwealth funded). Within the current model there are no formal standard / mandated structures in place or resources available to facilitate collaboration between therapists, family and school personnel. This is an essential component to meeting the needs of any student with a disability or special needs.

4.2. The current model prohibits the provision of a fully integrated service. Students in mainstream classes who have high or complex needs are particularly disadvantaged with the current model.

4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.3.1 A school therapy model that gives equal access to all families. This would provide an authentic partnership and allow for the sharing of resources and skills across disciplines.

5. THE PROVISION OF A SUITABLE CURRICULUM FOR INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED AND CONDUCT DISORDERED STUDENTS

- 5.1. The provision of suitable curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students involves careful preparation and implementation of Individual Plans which outline specific adjustments to allow access to curriculum. Collaborative planning takes place between student, family, school personnel and specialists to individualise access to all areas of curriculum. The plan includes physical access and the use of assistive technology.
- 5.2. Networks with health and mental health care providers, where available, are used to provide specific information to school personnel and the development of individual plans, to allow for appropriate curriculum adjustments and management.
- 5.3. CEO, Sydney schools have strong commitment to work collaboratively with families so that students will be able to successfully access the broad curriculum.
- 5.4. Effective individualised support measures are put in place to maximise social and academic development of all students and updating schools to allow them to broaden the scope of subjects available to students with disabilities or special needs. Curriculum adjustments may also provide alternative programs and support from Special Education Teachers and specialist aides.
- 5.5. Various Literacy and Numeracy programs across the Archdiocese have been devised and implemented to support students, including those with an intellectual disability or with disordered conduct. Progress of students on these programs are tracked and carefully monitored to ensure the best possible outcomes for students.
- 5.6. Ongoing professional development of staff in the ever increasing range and complexity of disabilities to be able to appropriately adapt the curriculum to meet individual students' needs continues to be a challenge. Curriculum advice, support and planning are provided at the region and Archdiocesan level, but the challenge continues to be the increasing enrolment of students with disabilities and special needs and the development of individual plans.
- 5.7. Sharing of curriculum resources to support students with intellectual disability and conduct disorder are provided through various teacher networks, including on line sharing across the Archdiocese.

- 5.8. Additional funds are allocated to students with high support needs to ensure success within the mainstream environment.
- 5.9. Learning Centres have been set up to provide short-term early intervention for students with challenging and extreme behaviours. The academic outcomes of these students are significantly affected by their behaviour. Success of these centres depends on a small student/teacher ratio and high levels of funding. Many of the students in these centres have a disability in accord with the definition outlined in the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* yet do not attract State or Commonwealth funding under current definitions. The curriculum for these students focuses not only on the Key Learning Areas but also on social and emotional skills and positive behaviours.
- 5.10. CEO, Sydney has over 450 students who are eligible for support by three Transition Officers. Together with school personnel, the Transition Officers work collaboratively to develop Individual Transition Plans to allow intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students to access suitable curriculum.
- 5.11. Students in transition also have access to work experience and vocational work placement (with support where required), as well as appropriate vocational education courses via school and outside agencies e.g. TAFE and Trade Training Centres such as the newly established Southern Cross Vocational College. These provisions allow greater and more appropriate choice for students with intellectual disability or disordered conduct. However, these students are charged individually for support on an hourly basis for TAFE Vocational Courses (TVET), impacting on the limited system funds. In 2009 the total cost of this support for students was \$25,748.
- 5.12. Transition to post-school agencies both Government and non-government is supported by the Transition Officers.
- 5.13. The aim for students in transition is independence. Students need specific curriculum to develop the personality, talents and creativity, mental and physical abilities to work towards:
- Travel training and access to the community
 - Peer mentoring
 - Social skills programs
 - Access to all extra curricular activities
- 5.14. Schools provide a variety of opportunities to support this independence such as camps, retreats, musicals, sports carnivals. Access to experiences outside school

settings e.g. work experience, voluntary work, leisure activities, sports and dance groups with support when required, are also provided to students.

5.15 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.15.1 Equity of participation by schools, as well as families, in therapeutic processes.
- 5.15.2 Provision of release time for planning and adjusting curriculum.
- 5.15.3 Class size allocation based on the understanding of the mix of mainstream students and students with significant special needs.
- 5.15.4 More targeted support to help students reach benchmarks.
- 5.15.5 Review of mandatory curriculum areas e.g. LOTE Stage 4.
- 5.15.6 Professional development focussed on School Certificate differentiation based on practical and realistic strategies.
- 5.15.7 Increased funding support for TVET courses.
- 5.15.8 Using Work Education in Stage 5 to allow access to work experience.
- 5.15.9 Greater variety of subjects offered in Stage 6 with a range of choices that have no exams for students with disabilities or special needs.

6. STUDENT AND FAMILY ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES, SUCH AS SPEECH THERAPY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, PHYSIOTHERAPY AND SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

- 6.1. Current Medicare funded Care Plans (Speech, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists) provide only reasonable access to certain families (i.e. middle income, stable families without complex issues) and with adequate English proficiency. However, the current system does not facilitate access for families who may be at high risk through social and/or linguistic disadvantage.
- 6.2. DET school counsellors, as registered psychologists, are able to conduct psychometric testing to determine intellectual potential and the learning style of students with special needs or a disability. CEO, Sydney does not employ psychologists for assessment purposes. Psychometric assessments are outsourced to external agencies, the cost of which is shared by both the system and individual families. This reduces access to families who may be disadvantaged based on language or cultural background, socioeconomic status and education. The cost of psychometric testing is not covered under any of the current Health Care Plans.
- 6.3. The National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000, p.xii) found that “fourteen percent of children and adolescents in Australia have mental health problems”. However, “only one out of every four young people with mental health problems receives professional help”. One of the factors for this is the scarcity of mental health services focused on children and adolescents.
- 6.4. Access to counselling services within CEO, Sydney schools is not funded by either Commonwealth or State Governments, but rather is funded by the CEO and outsourced to Catholic Care, who provides services to students within our system. Alternatively these services are funded by individual schools from their own budgets or through donations from community organisations. In some cases, families pay for such services.
- 6.5. The level of funding available within the system is significantly inadequate in allowing for timely and targeted intervention to take place before students’ needs become chronic or reach crisis point. Additional funding and access for families at this point would prevent the need for more intensive support with greater financial cost to the community in the future.

6.6. Family's access to therapy support is still only as good as that family's own resources in terms of:

- Organising appointments
- Understanding complex diagnosis and treatment plans
- Coordinating childcare
- Family emotional, psychological and financial support
- Using public transport
- Follow through with program recommendations
- Liaising with a range of professionals and communicating key information to medical and educational professionals
- Ability to speak understand and be literate in English
- Often having the funds for professionals to attend school planning meetings
- Affordability of out of pocket expenses i.e. gap between private session costs and Medicare rebate

6.7. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.7.1 That the State Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to ensure that students with disabilities and their families have access to a comprehensive entitlement package encompassing:

- education in an appropriate, properly - resourced setting;
- financial assistance to families to access respite care;
- assurance that these young people will be cared for when families cannot.

6.7.2 An increase in and equal access to the available assessment services.

6.7.3 An increase in and equal access to available professional services for children and adolescents with mental health problems.

6.7.4 An increase in the number of Medicare rebated sessions.

6.7.5 Additional funding and access for families to early intervention services.

6.7.6 Easier access for families to engage with therapeutic services and co-ordination of multiple intervention services.

7. THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE TEACHING TRAINING, BOTH IN TERMS OF PRE-SERVICE AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- 7.1. Pre-service training offers limited opportunities to engage students in the needs of students with special learning needs. The Professional Teaching Standards at the Graduate level, mandate that courses be provided that explore knowledge of strategies that address student needs. However, the number of courses or topics within a course is left to the discretion of the university.
- 7.2. Pre-service training also has limited opportunities for students to learn about the legislative components e.g. *Disability Standards for Education 2005, N.S.W. Education Act.*
- 7.3. There are limited opportunities for practicums focused on teaching students with disabilities and special needs and developing individualised programs.
- 7.4. Training in Key Learning Areas units of study needs to embrace and embed practices which cater for the diverse needs – not just ‘content driven’ teaching but differentiated pedagogy.
- 7.5. Pre-service training provides limited training in basic classroom management practices or positive behaviour strategies, an aspect that young teachers find overwhelming. Again, the Professional Teaching Standards at the Graduate level, mandate that courses be provided that explore knowledge of strategies that address student needs. However, the number of courses or topics within a course is left to the discretion of the university.
- 7.6. CEO, Sydney provides partial financial sponsorship into Post-Graduate courses in behaviour, Inclusive Education, TESOL, Gifted, Special Education and for some teacher aide training. However, numbers of teachers able to take advantage of this opportunity is impacted by budgetary constraints.
- 7.7. CEO, Sydney provides a good level of system professional development to specialist teachers through its advisory system structures. eLearning opportunities through the web portal are also provided to teachers, particularly Special Education teachers, using online materials and resources.
- 7.8. CEO, Sydney encourages and provides financial support for middle managers and school executive personnel to attend Australia wide conferences.

7.9. Succession planning in specialised areas is a challenge – many teachers in this field are approaching retirement age in the next five years and younger teachers are reluctant to financially support the move into specialised fields of education.

7.10. Engagement with external agencies such as Aspect, Vision Australia, Royal Institute Deaf and Blind Centre, Australian Hearing, Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre, Guide Dogs, psychologists, speech therapists provide ongoing professional learning of teachers. These services are accessed for consultation on programs and provisions required for our students with special needs at a cost either to the system, schools or parents.

7.11. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.11.1 More access to training in the use of specialised equipment particularly for students with high and complex needs.

7.11.2 Opening up and broadening of cross sector professional development opportunities e.g. using Autism Positive Partnerships program as a model

7.11.3 On-line training developed by cross-sector representatives and open to all teachers regardless of the education system – more cross-sector networks established or in some areas extended.

7.11.4 Preservice and ongoing training needs to encompass the elements of:

- The nature of the learner with special needs
- Collaborative practices
- Whole school approaches
- Principles of inclusion
- Differentiation / personalised learning
- Inclusive pedagogies and practices
- Effective / targeted use of teacher aides
- Implementing adjustments
- Understandings around children not being defined by their disabilities; building optimism in teachers; not teaching from a 'deficit' model
- Social skills, independence.

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. That Commonwealth and State government funding criteria be extended to include students with disabilities as defined by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.
- 8.2. That the State Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to ensure that students with disabilities and special needs have equal access, and corresponding funding, to the best educational provision Australia-wide, irrespective of education system.
- 8.3. Best practice approaches to funding should incorporate many facets, namely, overall funding to the school to support students with disabilities and special needs as well as additional funding to students with higher support needs, as determined by school and specialist personnel.
- 8.4. Commonwealth and State Government funding to be increased in order to include an allocation for students with disabilities as defined by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.
- 8.5. Maintain current specialised settings and increase available places.
- 8.6. Flexible attendance arrangements across educational systems dependent on student need e.g. time at a special school then integrated in mainstream for social aspects in the afternoon.
- 8.7. Improved access to places in specialised settings for students from education systems other than DET.
- 8.8. Improved sharing of information across education systems.
- 8.9. Additional satellite classes to address the variety of student needs so that students can maintain contact with their home school.
- 8.10. A school therapy model that gives equal access to all families. This would provide an authentic partnership and allow for the sharing of resources and skills across disciplines.
- 8.11. Equity of participation by schools, as well as families, in therapeutic processes.
- 8.12. Provision of release time for planning and adjusting curriculum.

- 8.13. Class size allocation based on the understanding of the mix of mainstream students and students with significant special needs.
- 8.14. More targeted support to help students reach benchmarks.
- 8.15. Review of mandatory curriculum areas e.g. LOTE Stage 4.
- 8.16. Professional development focussed on School Certificate differentiation based on practical and realistic strategies.
- 8.17. Increased funding support for TVET courses.
- 8.18. Using Work Education in Stage 5 to allow access to work experience.
- 8.19. Greater variety of subjects offered in Stage 6 with a range of choices that have no exams for students with disabilities or special needs.
- 8.20. That the State Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to ensure that students with disabilities and their families have access to a comprehensive entitlement package encompassing:
- education in an appropriate, properly - resourced setting;
 - financial assistance to families to access respite care;
 - assurance that these young people will be cared for when families cannot.
- 8.21. An increase in and equal access to the available assessment services.
- 8.22. An increase in and equal access to available professional services for children and adolescents with mental health problems.
- 8.23. An increase in the number of Medicare rebated sessions.
- 8.24. Additional funding and access for families to early intervention services.
- 8.25. Easier access for families to engage with therapeutic services and co-ordination of multiple intervention services.
- 8.26. More access to training in the use of specialised equipment particularly for students with high and complex needs.

- 8.27. Opening up and broadening of cross sector professional development opportunities e.g. using Autism Positive Partnerships program as a model.
- 8.28. On-line training developed by cross-sector representatives and open to all teachers regardless of the education system – more cross-sector networks established or in some areas extended.
- 8.29. Preservice and ongoing training needs to encompass the elements of:
- The nature of the learner with special needs
 - Collaborative practices
 - Whole school approaches
 - Principles of inclusion
 - Differentiation / personalised learning
 - Inclusive pedagogies and practices
 - Effective / targeted use of teacher aides
 - Implementing adjustments
 - Understandings around children not being defined by their disabilities; building optimism in teachers; not teaching from a ‘deficit’ model
 - Social skills, independence.