

Submission
No 252

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

Name: Ms Susan Newman-Lever and Mr Nigel Lever

Date received: 19/02/2010

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

SUBMISSION

1. The nature, level and adequacy of funding for the education of children with a disability.

My daughter suffers from ADHD and ODD. She also has significant learning difficulties resulting from these disorders. She is in year 9 now at Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design. She is a very bright girl who will no doubt make a wonderful contribution to society if she can continue to receive the quality of teaching and care she receives at her high school

If the method of delivery of funding and support is changed in favour of "prevalence-based funding" as opposed to "needs-based" I fear that she will not be able to reach her full potential. At the moment the funding she receives is barely adequate and is only because I go to the school regularly to help, like many other parents that we manage to survive on the meagre amount we are given by the government.

She is lucky enough to have at her school the most dedicated, professional and caring teachers and support staff that I have ever met and I have met many of them over my daughter's 10 years in the public school system. She would be devastated if she lost these people that she knows and trusts because of a change to a "generalist support teacher system". This would be a crazy and completely damaging system to introduce. I beg you for my daughter's and other students' sake not to allow this system to be introduced.

Could you please maintain the system in use at the moment and improve on it in the following ways:

- Stop requiring that "labels" such as ADHD and Aspergers Syndrome etc be forced on children in order for them to receive funding. Simply give the funding if the student is persistently displaying the behaviours of special needs students. I was forced to label my child as having ADHD to receive the funding. I have no doubt that she has this condition, but over the years, I have been told regularly that is we could only label her with Aspergers as well we would receive extra funding. She does not have this syndrome, but sometimes I am sorely tempted to ask a doctor to do this for me so that we can the further funding that she requires.
- I am sure that several parents have in desperation asked doctors to label their children because the government will not give them the special needs funding that their child requires to have an equal chance at education that their peers have.
- Please stop this need to label our kids with an incorrect lifetime diagnoses by giving funding based on "behaviours" not "syndromes. You may find that the prevalence of ADHD in the community will reduce.

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.

3. The level and adequacy of current special education places within the education system.

4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms.

5. The provision of a suitable curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students.

6. Student and family access to professional support and services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and school counsellors.

7. The provision of adequate teaching training, both in terms of pre-service and ongoing professional training.

My daughter can behave in an oppositional manner when confronted by a hostile teacher. She appears to be behaving badly, in reality because of her conditions, she is behaving out of fear. So many teachers do not understand this because of their lack of training in handling students with special needs.

We believe that student aggression in the classroom and playground, including violence towards teachers, would reduce significantly if teachers were better trained in handling students like my daughter. She had, in the past been labelled as a bully and a difficult student because her behaviours have been misunderstood and mishandled.

Please spend some money on professional development for ALL TEACHERS! – especially some of those who have been teaching for a long time and think they know everything about handling children..THEY DO NOT! Which is why there is an increase in violence and aggression towards teacher. Teachers need to learn not to back students into corners. The bullying by teachers needs to stop.

Please consider the introduction of the practices of "Restorative Justice" in all of our schools.

8. Any other related matters.

I (Susie) am also a teacher in the public system. I have for many years worked at Rozelle Public School, where restorative justice practices have underpinned everything we do. It is a happy harmonious place where children are relaxed and learn well, especially our students with special needs. All of our staff is extremely well trained in handling special needs students, including the teaching staff, special needs staff and our office staff. I would be happy to come and speak to the committee about how our school works and also about my views about the delivery of support and funding for disabled and special needs students in our schools. Thank you for this opportunity and plead with you to:

KEEP THE SYSTEM WE HAVE WHERE SPECIALIST TEACHERS REMAIN IN SCHOOLS AND WHERE STUDENTS RECEIVE "NEEDS BASED" FUNDING – JUST IMPROVE ON IT BY INCREASING FUNDING AND TAKE AWAY THE NECESSITY TO LABEL STUDENTS.

Thank you

Susie Newman and Nigel Lever

Telephone

Date: 18th February, 2010

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Principal	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, please indicate who has authorised it, for example, the executive committee, president or chairperson.

Send your submission to:

The Director
General Purpose Standing
Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Fax: (02) 9230 3416

Email:
gpscno2@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Organisation: Authorised by:

Online: www.nswtf.org.au and click on
Special Education Inquiry

Submission
No 543

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 26/02/2010

Partially Confidential

NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS

SUBMISSION

The Inquiry is requesting submissions from the public that address some or all of the following terms of reference. You are invited to detail your views, examples and recommendations for improvement in the spaces provided (*copy additional forms if more space is required*).

Please indicate if you would like your submission kept confidential.

NB: Not all terms of reference need be addressed.

1. The nature, level and adequacy of funding for the education of children with a disability.
My son is in Year 12 in a Support Unit. It is Week 5/Term 1 and he is unable to commence/resume his work experience programme because the funding applications only close this week. Why isn't this completed early in Term 4 and processed ready to go at the commencement of the new school year? Generally Support Units have clear outlines of their programs, you would think Year 12 students would have some priority to ensure continuity of their programs to assist them with their transition from High School to post school choices. I am very dissatisfied with this poorly implemented funding process and I hope the Support Unit receives sufficient funding to ensure it runs for the entire year! It didn't last year.

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.

No two people, with the same disability/diagnosis are identical. Abilities should be considered within some type of generic framework for specific disabilities. Why can't the Federal Government have a process whereby at diagnosis a child can be signed off (with future reviews if not a manifest disability) and a central computerised system/link be established whereby all relevant medical, allied health, educational and any other pertinent information, is progressively and continually submitted and accumulated throughout a person with a disability's life, so that current and future needs can be mapped/planned in advance, instead of when a child "pops up" in the system. This could/would streamline a lot of repetition or falling through the cracks. It would also help greatly if a child relocates to a new area or state.

3. The level and adequacy of current special education places within the education system.
Why doesn't IM placements start from Kindergarten? A child can attend/enrol in an Early Intervention pre-school program within DET, specifically geared for IM pre-school students in the hope they will be able to integrate into a mainstream setting for primary school (K-6). In the event this changes and isn't

in the child's best interest, there is no alternative placement because IM classes are from the age of 8 years or Year 3.

4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms.

ALL School Learning Support Officers (Teacher's Aides) should have some formal training* at their entry point of employment. A parent from the school community or a family member of someone on the school's staff is not realistically able to provide "professional" support to a student with special needs or a class teacher. I carefully choose professional people for services needed by my son, if they don't meet his needs we change professionals. An SLSO can make or break a placement, as can teachers. I firmly believe every class that has a student or students with a disability/special needs, should have an SLSO full-time – the student is there all day, not just part-time.

* Teacher's Aide Special, Certificate III

Allied Health Professionals such as Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, etc. should be involved if and as required throughout the schooling life of a child with special needs. They are costly and some students seem to miss out because of the cost factor alone.

5. The provision of a suitable curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students. Please show me a curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students! Why haven't they been developed? My son had very little, if any, curriculum modification during his integration in a mainstream setting from K-6. WHY??? Teachers don't have the time (as explained to me by the school Principal, when my son was in Kindergarten), they may not have to know-how or some don't have the interest to attempt it - bottom line, I believe the DET should really instigate and utilise all specialised professionals, organisations, peak bodies, in unison with teachers to establish a suitable and realistic curriculum. I have purchased books and programs that I hope will help my son, but I can't teach him everything that I thought he may have learnt at school.

6. Student and family access to professional support and services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and school counsellors.

Our son had private Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy until Year 6. We made that choice to give our son his best chance to reach his best potential within the school setting and his broader life. Not every parent will make that choice unfortunately. It is costly – can the DET afford to ensure every child accesses these services? I don't believe so. School Counsellors are not at one school all day, every day, and problems or situations don't wait for the day or time a Counsellor is available. This can be frustrating.

7. The provision of adequate teaching training, both in terms of pre-service and ongoing professional training.

DET should establish links with major organisations, peak bodies, professionals, etc. to set up training programs/packages for as many disabilities/diagnosis as possible – put them on-line if possible. Realistically teachers have a full class of students with varying degrees of abilities and disabilities, they need easy to access information at their disposal whenever the need arises. It needs to be up- to – date !

8. Any other related matters.

The Federal Governments education revolution with computers is great! My son's Support Unit is the only section of the school without access to the internet. This is a State Government issue. The new Smart Board is great but it would be better with the Internet. I feel very disappointed for my son and his fellow class mates. Visual learning via the smart board works a treat – please make sure ALL SCHOOLS can access the internet.

Name: Mandy Sheppard

(Please tick)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Principal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) SLISO

If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, please indicate who has authorised it, for example, the executive committee, president or chairperson.

Organisation:

Authorised by:

Send your submission to:

The Director
General Purpose Standing
Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Fax: (02) 9230 3416

Email: gpscno2@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Online: www.nswtf.org.au and click on
Special Education Inquiry