

Submission
No 18

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

Name: Ms Carolyn Smith

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I am a legal decision maker for adults with disabilities and was previously a classroom teacher then a vocational trainer for people with disabilities.

Teaching children with special needs is most successful when you have the support of their families or carers and when teachers are provided with support or aids in the classroom.

*Support from families is often compromised by the high rate of divorce experienced by parents who have a disabled child. Social workers or counsellors attached to schools is valuable so the classroom teacher can make appropriate referrals.

*Support in the classroom from teachers aids allows teachers to get on with teaching and not have to focus on behavioural issues. Such aids also contribute to alleviating OH&S issues that often arise when teaching kids with special needs.

People with disabilities cannot always be 'boxed' into one category. Often there is dual diagnosis or a mix of disabilities that make learning difficult. I have a friend who has a daughter with CHARGE. The forms that her mother had to fill out in order to gain support in the classroom were not only arduous, but rendered her daughter at a higher level of functioning than she was due to the category system. This little girl is deaf in one ear, has limited sight and mobility issues (amongst other things). On the form, because she was only deaf in one ear, she was considered low level requirements. Because she had some sight, she was considered to have low level requirements. The system had trouble combining all of her deficits and applying them as a whole. This needs to be reviewed. This little girl should not have had to fight so hard to get appropriate support in the classroom.

A strong transition program for kids leaving school to enter work or programs in the community could alleviate many of the social stress experienced once school is completed. Linking people with disabilities with appropriate health care services and social services can ensure they have appropriate supports in place to give them security and independence.

Thanks for your consideration of my comments.

Carolyn Smith