

Submission
No 12

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

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Date received: 11/01/2010

Submission for

Inquiry into the Provision of Education to Students with a Disability or Special Needs

I am writing my submission purely as a Grandparent with a child with Special Needs.

My submission is purely in letter form and I am available at any time to further elaborate on anything that you feel needs clarification.

My Grandson was born in August 1998 to my son and the child's mother. His mother is of South American lineage and my son is Australian born.

2000- the parents had separated. We saw our Grandchild occasionally during that time. My wife was concerned for his progress but the parents never sought advice.

2001- his mother took him to a number of kindergartens who advised her that they could not look after him. I booked him into a play group where we noticed his poor interaction and his peculiarities.

2002- we were fortunate that he attended a Harbord kindergarten, where we were advised that he had some problems. We were advised that he be assessed at Queenscliff Health Unit.

2003- he was able to go to Dalwood where they had staff trained to cope. As Grandparents we were able to be involved. He was catered for very well. On their suggestion we were very fortunate to gain admission to Vern Barnett Autistic Centre. At this time he was diagnosed as being Aspergers Syndrome.

A lot of time was spent wondering how this could have happened without working out how could we help.

Vern Barnett were very helpful to enlighten us on how to assist him.

2004- thanks to their help he was able to spend time in a satellite School at Belrose Primary. He was based at Vern Barnett but blended into a school situation.

2005- he was selected with a similar group of children to go to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Forestville with their own class. They would start at Vern Barnett then walk as a group to school. They had a buddy system with "normal" kids at O.L.G.C. They interacted with playground situations and school assemblies.

2006- he was introduced to State School, attending 2nd class one afternoon in 4th term with assistance from Vern Barnett.

2007- he attended Narraweena State Primary, he attended 3½ days a week. He had a Carer in his class and my wife and I attended ½ a day each a week to cover when Class Assistance was not covered.

2008- he attended Narraweena School 4½ days a week. We were fortunate that his teacher was able to work with him when assistants were not available.

2009- he attended Narraweena State Primary School 4½ days a week until last term when he increased to 5 days a week.

He did his N.A.P.L.A.N. as a year 5 student and achieved surprising results as he had only attended "normal" school for 3 years of his educational experience.

We realise we are one of the Lucky Ones that our Grandchild has been able to reach the level he has. It has been luck, fate that

it progressed the way it did, many children miss out. These children are often labelled as naughty or uncontrollable. His NAPLAN results show that if they are guided they can achieve.

The Dalwood Centre and Vern Barnett do remarkable work with a small few, the rest fall through the net.

Parents are lost and do not know where to go for assistance. Many families break up due to the pressure placed on the parents.

When the Assessments were made by the Counsellors for assistants the form was useless for points system as it was based against my grandson as he could go to the toilet, tie his shoes, eat his food alone, recognise his room but no category for his unusual problems.

The form that caters for Funding at the School has standard measurements with restricted Criteria.

Fortunately the School is an ideal size so that a child does not feel lost within it.

Once again we were fortunate to be made feel welcome, to assist in a classroom situation with our Grandchild, which I believe gave support to the Class Teacher.

“Aspect” from Vern Barnett spoke to our Grandson’s class mates which did encourage integration.

All the Teachers at Narraweena School have been very helpful in allowing our Grandchild to reach for the potential that he has.

We must commend the Principals, Staff, Counsellors and Class Assistants of the Narraweena School for their concern far and above what is called for.

The students have accepted our Grandchild's difference and he now sings in the School Choir, performs in the Dance Group and is Senior Drummer in the Band. These are things we never thought possible.

We now hope that we don't find the highway rocky in 2011 when he goes to High School as this will be another challenge for him and us.

In terms of the Reference of the Inquiry I would like to say that a lot of our achievements were a matter more of good luck than good guidance in all of the eight points that are shown.

I would be only too happy to speak to anyone regarding this submission.

Frank Cridland Dip. Teach. (Tech Retired)