

**Submission  
No 128**

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

**Organisation:** Hannans Road Public School

**Date received:** 17/02/2010

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## 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.
  - \*Funding scope is too narrow at present as many children with needs do not fall within the selection criteria. Many students identified by the school counsellor are marginally above current criteria for assistance and more support needs to be given to address this issue
  - \*Process for obtaining funding is cumbersome and slow and schools are left 'to carry the load' for a long time including using funding from global budget required for other purposes to make up the shortfall. When funding is received it is often inadequate - 'too little and too late'.
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.
  - \*We require that a system that is fair to all schools and students and is adequately resourced, based on a student's functioning capacity, be implemented
  - \*Higher functioning students should receive less funding obviously but the correlation to this is that a vastly increased funding pool should be available for the most needy. Both ends of the spectrum need to be resourced adequately to meet their needs.
3. The level and adequacy of current special education places within the education system.
  - \*Totally inadequate. Some students currently in mainstream require placement in Special Ed placements e.g IM, Language and Behaviour. There needs to be availability of access to such settings on an equity basis, not regional basis. Some regions have e.g specialised Reading classes but nearby regions, more accessible for students, do not have one. Funding of students seems to be 'a moveable feast' shared between the number of applicants rather than on a needs basis. Transparent funding figures should be available.
4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms.
  - \*Current model is inadequately funded. There is little support for classroom teachers and totally inadequate funding for students needing teacher's aides for both low learning assistance needs students and those with high support needs, where the problem is exacerbated.
  - \*Schools have to prioritise their funding and low support needs students miss out, even though they can't access school curriculum adequately without smaller groupings or individual support. e.g IM students in mainstream settings receive minimal support as there may be students with autism spectrum, behaviour issues or specific medical conditions (e.g Noonan's Syndrome) who have to be given priority, as safety and well-being demands over-ride educational ones.

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

\*In a mainstream setting all students are required to access the regular curriculum. NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act and NSW Disability Services Act all require that we provide services to students with disabilities. This is very difficult for a classroom teacher who may have to modify programs and keep children focussed, when any given classroom may have diverse student needs. Many students require individual support and smaller groups are often required to cater for stage-appropriate outcomes. Many students require on-going intensive support.

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

\*Totally inadequate and usually related to family's income and ability to pay private fees, which is often unrealistic in schools such as ours. Unless a family can afford this then it doesn't happen e.g. there is an 18 months wait for speech assessment currently for students attending our school who have been referred as a necessity. Any delay in accessing these services obviously seriously impacts students' educational needs.

\*There appears to be a large increase in students with expressive/receptive language difficulties

\*Many students have undiagnosed learning difficulties in areas of speech, receptive and expressive language delay, as we wait for diagnosis and adequate treatment to commence. Often students transfer before this happens and have to re-start the process in a new area.

\*There is little opportunity or time for liaison between health professionals and classroom teacher.

\*Our school counsellor is only available 3 days per month to deal with many issues

\*Some schools have educational speech pathologists on-site to deal with many of the disorders presented in their schools but have to take the necessary funds out of other budgets

\*There is an obvious need for more therapists, both speech and occupational, to work in schools to first identify students and then assist staff to meet the language and other health needs of students.

\*There is often an overlap between ESL and STL in regard to language difficulties. Many students are neither proficient in their home language nor English. This causes much delay in their assessment. The identification of needs for such children requires much clearer guidelines and more timely support and resourcing.

\*Children with language difficulties have on-going problems. Even if a child is lucky to receive some funding support and gain some improvement, the funding is often withdrawn before the need is fully met and the child again falls behind only for the process of seeking support to start again. Support for such children needs to be ongoing and not cease as another child takes priority..

\*Language demands increase as students get older and move into higher stages and yet support usually lessens due to funding issues

\*There needs to be a better system for tracking students with learning issues. As children change schools there can often be little communication between schools about interventions etc. Very often, children from low-socio-economic groups have the highest needs in this area and have the least ability to communicate this to the new school. This problem is compounded for those who are also NESB.

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

\* Inadequate courses for ongoing professional training

\* Courses are available at a cost and many schools will decide not to send personnel due to other demands on the budget

\* The new on-line training course for the newly proposed STL role is inadequate

\* There should be greater support in-class by specialised teachers (STL's) and consultants to assist with learning and social needs and help in developing programs instead of the proposal to lessen this support.

**8. Any other related matters.**

\*Mental health issues in schools are a growing concern as there seems to be a greater incidence of this, yet minimal support in dealing with it.

\* Many families have a multiplicity of issues which impact on and have major ramifications for relevant students and personnel in the school, who have to deal with this, both in regards to time taken from their regular roles and lack of training in dealing with potentially volatile situations e.g father of current students, threatening suicide, meant extensive teacher time was required to support students at school and set up outside services

\*Money is an issue. An increasing number of students, with mental health, behaviour and other issues are enrolling in mainstream but the funding isn't adequate to look after them. The total amount of money is nowhere near enough to address the needs. Distribution of funding is perceived as inequitable. Parents demand that their children be taught in mainstream, but their needs often dictate higher teacher to student ratios than we are funded for.

\*Schools such as ours have many students who enrol with high learning needs. These students require much more teacher time for planning classwork and making and purchasing suitable resources. Schools with high rates of transience have these issues further exacerbated.

\*Consultancy time and release time are often needed but not available.

\*Screening of children prior to school entry by trained health professionals would take an enormous burden from the shoulders of teachers, who don't have the expertise for diagnosis. This would help streamline the procedures necessary to access support for medical, language and mental health issues.

Name:Hannans Road Public School

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(Please tick)

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher
<input checked="" 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.***

Organisation:

Authorised by:

**Send your submission to:**

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Online: [www.nswtfrg.au](http://www.nswtfrg.au) and click on  
Special Education Inquiry