

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

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# COVENANT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

*All knowledge through Christ*

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CRICOS Provider No: 00390C CRICOS Registered Provider: Covenant Christian School Association Limited

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

## **Re: New Enquiry into Provision of Education to Students with a Disability or Special Needs**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I respectfully would like to put this submission to the Standing Committee regarding the Provision of Education to Students with a Disability or Special Needs.

As a Christian School that seeks to partner with parents irregardless of their academic or physical ability as an outworking of our faith position, in the education of their children, we are concerned about the lack of support given to children who have significant learning difficulties in schools like ours.

Our school seeks to keep fees at a minimum so that it is accessible to as many people as possible in the community. It does not offer reductions of fees (scholarships) on the basis of particular abilities because this would need to be carried by the rest of the school community burdening them even further and by implication being seen as less valuable than other children.

There are many parents in the community who seek an education in a school provided by a school like ours for many varied reasons, and this often includes children with significant needs. Given that we are committed as a Christian Community to care for those who are needy, we express this in two ways:

1. The school offers bursaries to those parents who wish to have their children educated in a school like ours on the basis of financial need, and independent of the ability and gifting of the children.
2. We welcome children (indeed we think it is important for the healthy life of the community) who are different to others. This allows the wider school community to learn to live with diversity and indeed to value it.

As a consequence, our school, and other like ours attract significant numbers of students who do not fit well in some other places.

As a school we commit as much resources as we can to cater for the need of these children, but as your committee would be aware, catering for children like this can often take a lot of resources as they need specialist help and support. Whilst there is some support from the government, it rarely goes vary far in the delivery of services to students with significant needs.



For some parents this forces them to make enormous sacrifices on behalf of their children. For one of our families that have two young children who are both in the Autistic spectrum, one of the parents spends most of the school day working with her son to cover the time where a paid aide is unavailable. She has been doing this for the past 4 years.

For two of our young boys in Year 7 this year, we are unable to supply a teachers' aide even though these boys have significant social and learning problems. The parents have agreed to pay for a teachers' aide for then in 2010. One of the families will find this very difficult financially, but are very keen for their son to remain at our school. There are many other parents in our schools, and others like ours, that are unable to afford to do so.

Unfortunately this can mean that we are unable to cater for as many children as we would like who have significant learning disabilities, forcing them to go to the local state school where the financial resources available are much more significant. This can lead to a perception that a school does not wish to look after children like this, and to an accumulation of them in the local state school. This takes away the choice of schooling for those parents, an ideal which has bi-partisan political support.

Governments have the responsibility to manage the economy wisely and to ensure that all its citizens are dealt with justly and mercifully. I would hope that this would extend to the parents of children who wish to have their children educated in schools that are not state controlled, but, as in our case, one that is Christian parent controlled. They already make financial sacrifices to have their children educated in our school, taking a burden away from the government purse. To not afford them the specific help that they require as other tax payers who choose the much more affordable state based education that is paid for by all tax payers, is an injustice.

As you consider the issues, I hope that you will take into consideration the arguments made in this submission.

Yours sincerely



Mr W Rusin  
Principal