

Submission
No 632

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

Organisation: New South Wales Teachers Federation
Name: Mr John Irving
Position: General Secretary
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NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION

23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 (Telephone : 02 9217 2100)

SUBMISSION TO

THE NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Authorised by

John Irving
General Secretary
26 February 2010

INTRODUCTION

Governments have underestimated the resources and funding required to ensure quality education for all students in the public education system. In Federation forums teachers continue to expose the gap between increased expectations for the education of all students including those with a disability or special needs and their capacity to provide for the needs of the increasing number of students presenting with learning difficulties, disabilities and behaviour disorders across the education continuum.

Federation recognises and supports students with a disability or special needs having the same human right to a quality education as non-disabled students. The challenge for governments is to provide the funding and resources to ensure their legislated human rights commitments can be met. Despite governments increasing funding for students with a disability or special needs, teachers, parents and other stakeholder groups continue to work hard to secure the deserved funding whilst governments consider new ways to control funding increases. Teacher morale suffers and stress increases when teachers do not have the funding, staffing and adequate training to do the job governments are making them increasingly accountable for. The increased number of students diagnosed with autism and mental health disorders and presenting with multiple disorders in recent years has changed the nature of our classrooms and made teaching substantially more complex and challenging.

In 1980 when the Department of Education and Training (DET) adopted a policy of inclusion whereby students with disabilities secured the right to attend their local school where "possible, practicable and in their best interests"¹ the majority of students benefitting from the change in policy had mild intellectual and/or physical disabilities or clearly defined sensory disabilities. The curriculum was more prescriptive; students left school earlier; the pressures of state wide standardised testing regimes and media league tables were nonexistent. The overall number of students was relatively small.

In 2010 the situation is changed with greater expectations and pressures on teachers. Diagnosis of disability and special need is now more refined. With developments in neurobiology, more categories of mental health disability have been established and an increased prevalence identified, particularly of autism. Teachers are teaching more students with more severe disabilities, multiple disabilities, more complex needs including autism and mental health disorders at a time of curriculum change. Changes in pedagogy place greater emphasis on addressing the needs of individual students in achieving the highest standards regardless of circumstance. Whilst class sizes have been reduced K-2 and all special education classes now have a School Learning Support Officer attached, primary school and junior secondary teachers in regular schools can still be teaching 30 or more students. In any one mainstream class, teachers can be faced with meeting the needs of a variety of different disabilities and special needs in addition to the usual range of abilities and interests in any class. This is a major challenge and change in the work of experienced teachers, let alone early career teachers or casual or temporary teachers relieving for the regular class teacher.

Since 2010 students are required to stay at school until age 17 unless in training or employment. Teachers report lack of appropriate curricula for some students with disabilities

and special needs for whom mere differentiation of the curriculum does not meet student need. Teachers are stressed at not being able to satisfy the educational needs of all the students in their class. It is a major reason for early career teachers leaving the profession.

Government policies are inconsistent. With state and federal governments supporting increasingly high stakes national testing programs in literacy and numeracy, school aggregate results being reported on the My School website and the media manipulating the information to name and shame school communities, schools that enrol students with disabilities and special needs risk becoming residualised.

Teachers and students are better protected in the workplace through Occupational, Health and Safety legislation. Federation has gained some improvements through prosecutions under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, e.g. students with a history of violence are now required to have a risk assessment/management plan before completion of enrolment. This has provided resources to enable those students to experience success and has afforded a measure of safety for staff and students.

CHANGES IN ENROLMENT PATTERNS

Professor Tony Vinson in his 2002 *Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW* remarked on “a remarkable increase in the number of students with disabilities in mainstream classes” and foreshadowed “a very substantial increase” in the numbers of integrated students in the secondary school.

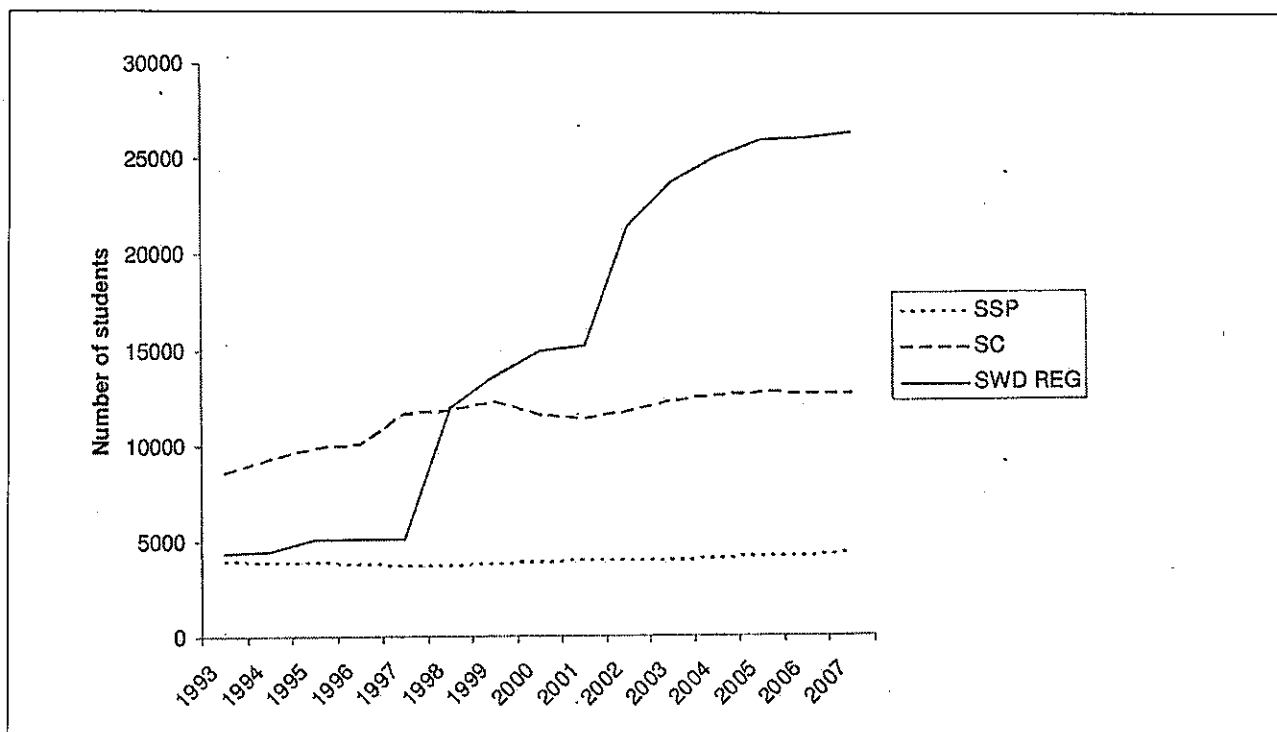
He identified a shift in enrolment patterns

- A “significant increase” in the number of moderate and high support needs students previously educated in SSPs and support classes now in mainstream classes as a consequence of integration funding
- Students in SSPs having higher support needs including very high support needs.²

The updated figures from Graham & Sweller’s research confirm these trends and reveal further dramatic changes in the five years post Vinson particularly in the increased identification of autism and mental health disorders. (Appendices 1 & 2)

In the ten years 1997 – 2007, the percentage of students with a diagnosis of disability eligible for additional support across the continuum of provision in New South Wales government schools more than doubled, rising from 2.7. to 6.7% of total enrolments.³

The increase in student numbers was most dramatic for students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Approximately 26,154 students⁴ were receiving support in regular or mainstream classes in 2007 compared to approximately 5000 in 1997 – a 523% increase.



Number of students enrolled in Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs), Support Classes (SCs) and the number of students with disabilities in regular classes (SWD REG) from 1993 to 2007.⁵

In SSPs there was an increase of 254 per cent in the number of students with behaviour disorders.⁶

In primary school support classes there was an increase of:

- 139 per cent in the number of students with a diagnosis of emotional disturbance including a 61 per cent increase in the number of children enrolled under the autism category
- 41 per cent in the number of students with moderate intellectual disability.⁷

In secondary school support classes there was an increase of:

- 23 per cent in the number of students with a moderate intellectual disability
- 280 per cent in the number of students with autism
- 348 per cent in students with emotional disturbance
- 585 per cent in the number of students with a behaviour disorder.⁸

The Auditor General identified in primary schools over the five year period 2001 to 2006:

- around a 50 per cent increase (from 6,885 to 10,275) in the number of primary school students confirmed as having moderate or severe levels of disability⁹
- a 15 per cent increase in the number of students in special classes “much of this due to the rising number of students with autism and mental health problems”¹⁰

The increases in the number of students with disabilities and special needs in mainstream classes, the massive increases in the diagnosis of autism and mental health disorders and the increased severity of the disability of students in SSPs and support classes constitutes the most dramatic change in the classrooms in public education in New South Wales in the last ten years.

Providing proper support increases students' chances of success at school. More on task behaviour contributes to greater academic success, better social interaction, fewer suspensions and critical incidents. Teacher morale can be enhanced.

Federation recognises that state governments have increased funding for students with a disability or special needs. The format of recent state government Budget Papers, however, makes it difficult to monitor special education funding. In addition the DET has changed the descriptors for students with a disability. Graham & Sweller's analysis concludes that expenditure has increased by 218 per cent to cater for the 2.7 to 6.7 per cent increase in funded student provision in NSW public schools.¹¹

This increased expenditure falls short of the exponential growth in diagnosis, expectations of state and federal governments and human rights requirements. Funding has not kept pace with the changing nature of that demand:

- increased incidence of moderate and severe disability
- increased prevalence of autism and mental health disorders
- training of teachers to meet the challenges
- coordination of support.

PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

The exclusivity and fee structure of private schools means they enrol a greater proportion of students from higher socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds with lower support needs. As a consequence students who have moderate and severe disabilities, multiple disabilities, complex needs such as autism and mental health disorders constitute a greater proportion of public school enrolments. Government schools are estimated to enrol 80% of students with a disability.¹²

Any discussion of expenditure needs to be placed in the context of public/ private school funding arrangements. (Appendix 3) Public schools have the majority of students with a disability. Yet both state and federal funding mechanisms transfer the higher average costs of educating a child in the public education system to non-government schools who educate far fewer students with a disability.

Describing the situation in 2001, Vinson wrote :

*4.2% of students in government schools in New South Wales have disabilities, but only 2.6% of students in non-government schools. The New South Wales Government has significantly increased funding to students with disabilities in recent years. This means that the average per capita expenditure for students in government schools has risen, and this causes the 25% figure for students in non-government schools to rise as if the numbers of students with disabilities were equivalent in the two kinds of schools.*¹³

Vinson calculated that in the period 1996 – 2001 public schools received a 27.4% increase in combined federal and state funding while private schools received a 45.1% increase¹⁴ (Appendix 4).

The Rudd Government has said it will review federal funding arrangements. Both state and federal governments have to make choices on priorities. Fully funding the education of students with a disability or special needs justifies a higher priority than funding the luxurious expansion of private schools. Currently approximately 60 per cent of private schools are receiving more funds than they are entitled to under the current federal SES funding arrangements. Yet some students with a disability or special need are missing out because of the level of demand on existing services. Having proper support for a student with a mental health disorder in a classroom can make a real difference to that student's life chances – it could keep the student out of gaol. Disability human rights legislation requires different funding arrangements.

Federation's 2009 Annual Conference called on the state and federal governments to implement a new National Partnership on Special Education to provide additional funding and targeted support for students with learning difficulties and special needs. This would inject increased funds and allow for national consistency in disability definitions. Such a partnership would complement current National Partnerships on Literacy and Numeracy, Low SES School Communities and Quality Teaching.

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

The level of funding to the DET is not adequate to ensure:

- access to proper diagnosis of disability and special need.
- provision of services by other government agencies and/or other service providers
- the most appropriate placement for each student in the full range of SSP, support class and mainstream classroom.
- access to the full and broad curriculum particularly in SSPs due to lack of provision of secondary specialist staffing
- proper rather than tokenistic support and long term intervention strategies
- specialist teacher support for those students with demanding mental health disorders and moderate and severe disabilities in mainstream classes.
- appropriate training particularly in autism and mental health disorders for regular class teachers and specialist education teachers.
- curriculum development and planning to allow special needs to be met within existing curricula.
- coordination of agency support, School Learning Support Officers, parent and carers and other teachers.
- compliance with Occupational Health & Safety legislation, including the provision of all protective clothing and equipment particularly for students with high physical and personal care needs.

Students with a disability or special needs are found in:

- Mainstream classes in regular schools
- Special education classes in regular schools
- Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)
- Tutorial centres for students with behavioural problems.

Professor Vinson in his 2002 Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW identified:

- students in rural and isolated areas lacked access to the broad spectrum of educational placements with a greater provision of SSPs and support classes in metropolitan areas.
- students could miss out on placement and funding because of lack of access to experts to make a diagnosis.
- students could miss out because they did not meet the DET disability criteria, despite appearing to have significant disabilities. This included children with multiple mild disabilities that together constitute a significant impediment to learning.
- staffing levels had not kept up with the increased severity of disability in the SSP population.
- support units (special education classes) did not always have "the level of equipment and resources seen in some SSPs".¹⁵

- a need to increase the number of Support Teacher Learning Difficulties and school counsellors.
- tokenistic support for students integrated into mainstream classes.
- workload in preparing submissions for limited funding.

These are still matters to be properly addressed.

Governments have tried to control the rate of increased demand and expenditure by:

- increasing the expectations of what it means to be a teacher to include the management of more complex behaviours and development of more differentiated curriculums and personal learning plans with no or inadequate support.
- funding School Learning Support Officer (teachers aide) positions.
- proposing cost neutral solutions that address one problem by exacerbating another such as special education classes having a School Learning Support Officer attached at the expense of increased class size
- closing and relocating schools and classes so there is no viable alternative to placement in the mainstream classroom
- census based allocation of funding rather than diagnosed disability or needs based funding as in the current proposal for generic School Learning Support Teachers
- online learning or train the trainer models
- schools alone being required to perform functions formerly undertaken with the support of regional support staff such as student reviews.

Teachers need additional release time to develop programs for students with disabilities and liaise with support personnel. Teachers need time to manage critical incidents and recover from the stresses and strains that come from teaching the increasing number of students diagnosed with autism, mental health issues and disruptive behaviour disorders.

Members of school learning support teams need release from class to coordinate appropriate support for students.

Mainstream classes with integrated students are the same size as classes without such students. This has implications for students with or without disabilities.

The transition between preschool and primary school

With Kindergarten teachers identifying the learning needs of their students through the Best Start program introduced in 2008 and the Australian Education Development Index (AEDI), governments have established expectations that something be done to further support students with disabilities and special needs including better liaison with pre schools. Currently teachers K-2 raise the inadequacy of early intervention given its importance for success in subsequent years. Failure to intervene in the early years of a child's development exacerbates learning difficulties and behaviour disorders in schooling and home life.

Other transition points

There is a need to enhance funding provision to facilitate successful transition from special settings back to regular class settings. Similarly the transition from primary to secondary schools and from school to post school options must also be adequately funded.

Given increasing demands and compliance requirements arising from decisions made at the federal level, Federation calls on the state and federal governments to implement a new National Partnership on Special Education to provide the necessary additional funding and targeted support to address the issues identified above and elsewhere in the Federation's submission.

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.

Changing the funding model will not remove the imperative for increased funding.

A combination of formal diagnosis and functional assessment will maximise the funding going to those in need provided that:

- diagnostic services and/or functional assessment are available to all
- multiple disabilities and co-morbid conditions are recognised
- funding is uncapped.

An example of this combined approach was the "trial" of Resource Based Staffing (Comino Review 2000). Unfortunately, it was unilaterally abandoned by the DET.

In the way that class size formulae represent a minimum government guarantee of teacher allocation and class size limits to schools, the use of a diagnosis and/or functional assessment model should provide a guarantee of an appropriate level of funding.

While the current general staffing formula and global budget are inadequate, the global budget allocation and staffing formula for students in special education classes in SSPs and regular schools nonetheless provides a basic resource guarantee for students, parents and teachers. The Federation rejects any so called flexible staffing/ devolution trials as undermining this resource guarantee.

Federation rejects notions that teachers manipulate assessments to gain additional funding. The medical profession is continually refining diagnoses, early intervention programs are more widespread, teachers have had better training in the identification of learning difficulties and changes in pedagogy require teachers to recognise individual learning differences in their programming.

Support Teacher Learning Assistance Program

Refer to 2009 Teachers Federation Annual Conference decision (**Appendix 5**)

Federation supports the maintenance and expansion of the current Support Teacher Learning Assistance program to support low needs students in mainstream classes in regular schools. Given unmet need, the program should be expanded by an additional 600 positions – a 50 per cent increase.

Federation rejects census based models where funding is only provided on the basis of incidence in the general population. They can be fundamentally flawed on equity grounds. Federation opposes current DET proposals to change the basis of allocation of funds for learning support and autism and mental health disorders (for students receiving \$6000 per annum or less) from identified disability to statistical incidence. Changes proposed by the DET may have the effect of “capping” the funding support budget for these students.

Federation is also opposed to the loss of specialist expertise in a range of disabilities, learning difficulties and behaviour disorders explicit in the DET’s current School Learning Support Proposal 2010.

Census based models may save on administrative costs but students may miss out in schools where there are concentrations of a particular disability or special need above arbitrary prevalence ratios in the community. Such models can therefore deny needy students of support. The encouragement of parental choice through the dezoning of public schools and a range of specialist high schools means that some schools have concentrations of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and behaviour disorders well above norms.

The law requires that all students should have equal access to diagnostic services for identification of disability. Moreover all students are entitled to support from properly trained and/or experienced teachers. All schools need additional school counsellor support to access proper diagnosis. Ultimately census models allow government to abrogate responsibility to all schools. The school must then decide priorities for the allocation of inadequate funds. There is no substitute for government increasing the funding for the provision of special education in public schools. It is their legislative responsibility.

Integration Funding Support Program

Federation has strongly opposed changes proposed by the Department of Education to remove \$26.7 million from the Integration Funding Support program.

Students with an identified moderate or severe disability, who are integrated into mainstream classes in regular schools, are funded through the Integration Funding Support program. Under this program funding is provided to schools through identification of the primary disability as a consequence of a clinical diagnosis or psychometric testing. Funding is provided according to the primary disability. There is no transparency in the determination of the level of actual funding.

The attempt by the DET to describe students with autism or mental health disorders currently receiving less than \$6000 per annum as “low support needs” is rejected.

The funding for “low support needs students” is capped. This means that with the increased diagnosis of students, students who would have gained funding in previous years are missing out or receiving tokenistic funding support. The funding needs to be uncapped.

Vinson recommended an increase in the fixed element of the Funding Support Budget.¹⁶

Vinson identified the problems of capped funding:

- 95% of Funding Support was spent on teachers aides (special), this “left virtually no funds for teachers to be given time to plan instructional programs, or for the employment of more specialised staff” when “the majority of students with disabilities also need specialist teaching to help them learn.”¹⁷
- less funding for individual students as more students were diagnosed. This placed “extreme” pressures on funding and uncapped segments (80% in 2002) of Funding Support for moderate and high support needs.¹⁸

Funding should continue to be based on disability and educational need supported by diagnosis and/or evidence of functioning capacity within the classroom. The model needs to recognise multiple disabilities and through recognition of functioning capacity be able to recognise degree of disability.

Federation supports changes to allow access based on functional criteria rather than on medical models alone. Students in isolated, rural and disadvantaged communities or from families who do not speak English can suffer disadvantage in gaining access to school counsellor and diagnostic services. Parents may be reluctant to seek a diagnosis and so the student’s learning needs are not properly addressed. Submission based funding should not however be an onerous activity.

Given the dramatic increase in the incidence of autism and mental health disorders, Federation supports the maintenance and expansion of Outreach Teacher Services for identified students in mainstream classes. These include Outreach: Autism, Emotional Disturbance and Special Education. Consistent with Federation’s support for diagnostic/functional assessment models, establishment of additional Outreach positions should be based on actual numbers of students identified in discrete geographical areas.

The funding should continue to be a tied payment to the school. Federation rejects any voucher-based funding model, where payments are paid to parents or carers. The disadvantages of a voucher based funding scheme were identified by all stakeholders in all education systems in a 2007 study conducted by Monash University. Such schemes would make it even more difficult for the DET and schools to plan with any degree of certainty and consistency across schools and for groups of students rather than just individual students. Further too much responsibility for difficult education decisions could be imposed on parents.¹⁹

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

Federation continues to support the full continuum of schooling options for students with disabilities or other special needs. This includes the maintenance of special schools (SSPs) and special classes in regular schools. This support does not imply that existing resource levels or particular modes of delivery are adequate or in need of enhancement.

Among the enhancements required are:

- the provision of secondary staffing for secondary aged students in all special schools. This to include the provision of secondary staffing specialist positions where appropriate
- the restoration of special education classes to pre-2005 levels with no reduction in the number of placement positions and the maintenance of School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) positions
- in-built relief staffing for SSPs and Special Education Units in recognition of the difficulties experienced in attracting appropriate casual relief.

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

See above sections 1 and 2.

Teachers may have students with quite different disabilities requiring quite different learning plans in a class of 30 students in a primary school or junior secondary class. Other students in the class may be adversely affected. Vinson suggested the benefits of:

- limiting the number of students on integration support in any one class
- better professional development
- class size reductions
- specialist curriculum material being developed so that each teacher does not have to devise special lessons for each student.²⁰

The Auditor General recognised the benefit of reducing the number of students in a Kindergarten class where a student with Down syndrome was to be enrolled. This was “to ensure the child and other classmates gained sufficient teacher access.”²¹ Given the prevalence of students with disabilities and special needs, current class size formulae are outdated. The increase in integration of students with a disability and special needs justifies further class size reductions.

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

The stated aim of the publication of national test data and school league tables is to increase the pressure on schools to improve the academic results of all students including those with disabilities and special needs.

Federation has repeatedly raised the problems that arise from the Board of Studies being isolated from the operational realities of NSW public schools. There are only support documents to assist teachers in programming for students with special needs in four of the six primary key learning areas. Four of the documents are over ten years old and so predate the dramatic increase in students with autism and mental health disorders.

2009 legislation to increase the school leaving age means that more students with a disability or special needs will be staying at public schools for longer. The demanding nature of HSC courses can reinforce failure in students with a mild intellectual disability or special need. Current Life Skills courses may be too basic for some students with mild intellectual disabilities. There must be an expansion in the range and type of courses for the full range of student ability in both school and TAFE including VET (SVET) and TAFE delivered (TVET).

Discussions on the national curriculum suggest that it will be up to the states to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate the needs of students with a disability or special need.

Schools currently are not resourced to provide the full range of special exam provisions allowed under HSC exam procedures.

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

Federation calls for increased access to public pre-schooling, medical and psychiatric assessment and treatment and more effective coordination of services across all relevant government agencies.

Vinson commented that the DET employs no speech therapists as do most other State education departments. This has meant that affluent parents who can pay for testing from private speech pathologists are able to access funding ahead of less affluent counterparts. In lower socio-economic areas where a publicly funded or school funded speech pathologist is available, there have been large increases in the number of students found to have speech difficulties.²²

There is a widespread lack of access to the full range of therapy services but this is more evident in low socioeconomic communities and isolated rural communities. This requires a whole of government approach to provide adequate therapy services to all students with identified therapy needs.

Limited school counsellor time means case management and coordination of outside agencies is difficult for schools. The need for significant increases in the number of school counsellors available to schools including SSPs has been well documented. Federation has continually called on both the government and DET to meet their responsibilities in relation to the provision of qualified school counsellors in all schools. The failure of the government

and DET to meet these requirements continues to jeopardise the educational outcomes for all students including those with disabilities.

Vinson recommended a standard of one counsellor to every five hundred students to ensure the delivery of quality counselling services to NSW public school students. Currently, there is one for every 1,000 students.

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

Teachers continue to report the need for more teacher training both pre service and in-service. Vinson wrote in 2002:

*Over and over again, the Inquiry heard complaints from teachers and parents about the lack of funding provided for training in general, and for training and ongoing support for teachers, counsellors, STLDs, school executives and others working with students with special needs, in particular.*²³

The situation has not changed despite even greater need. The Auditor General (2006) concluded "teachers needed to be better trained and equipped to deal with students with mental health problems." ²⁴

8. Any other related matters

The Occupational Health and Safety of all staff and students in special classes and schools is an ongoing and serious concern, especially in relation to the management of challenging behaviour. The establishment of discrete autism and discrete conduct disordered classes and units which provide a safe and secure environment for staff and students is a priority.

There is a need to provide particular assistance in the identification of NESB students who have disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

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Appendix 1
Graham & Sweller, p.5

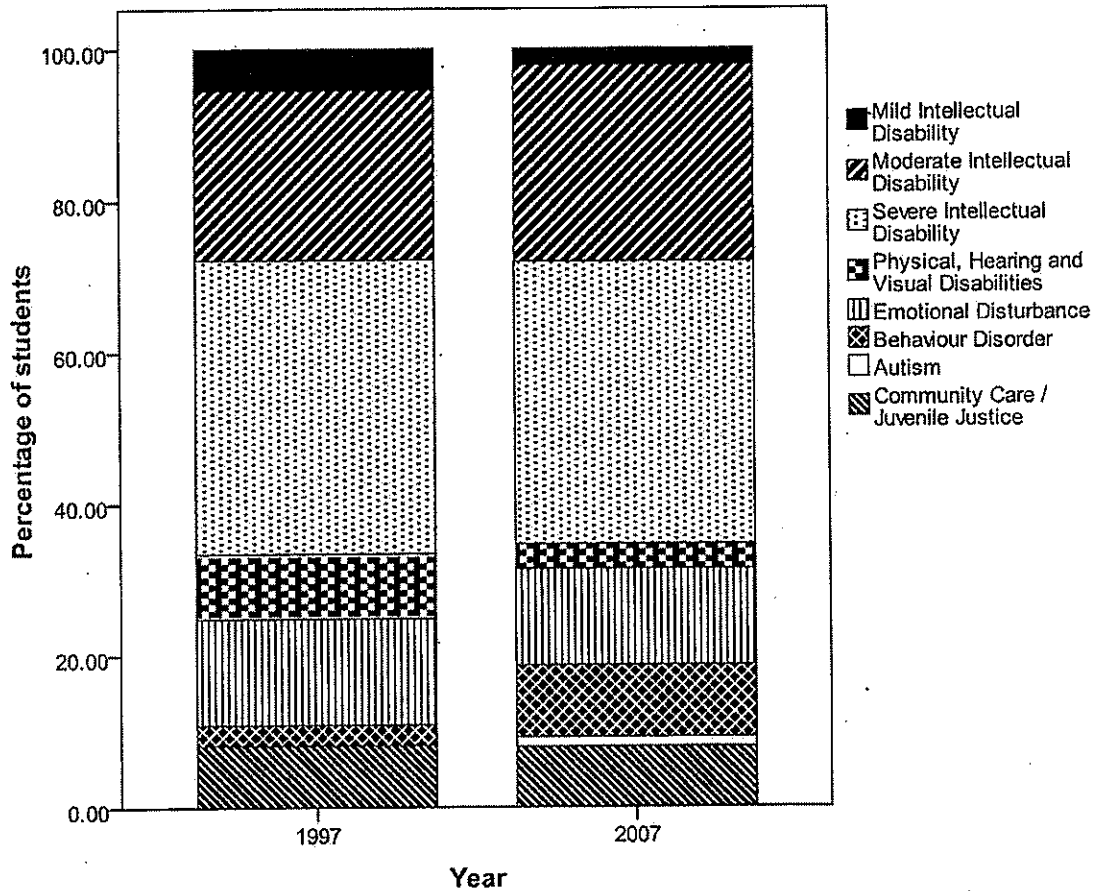


Figure 1. Percentage of students in Schools for Specific Purposes by disability category in 1997 and 2007.

Appendix 2
Graham & Sweller, p.8

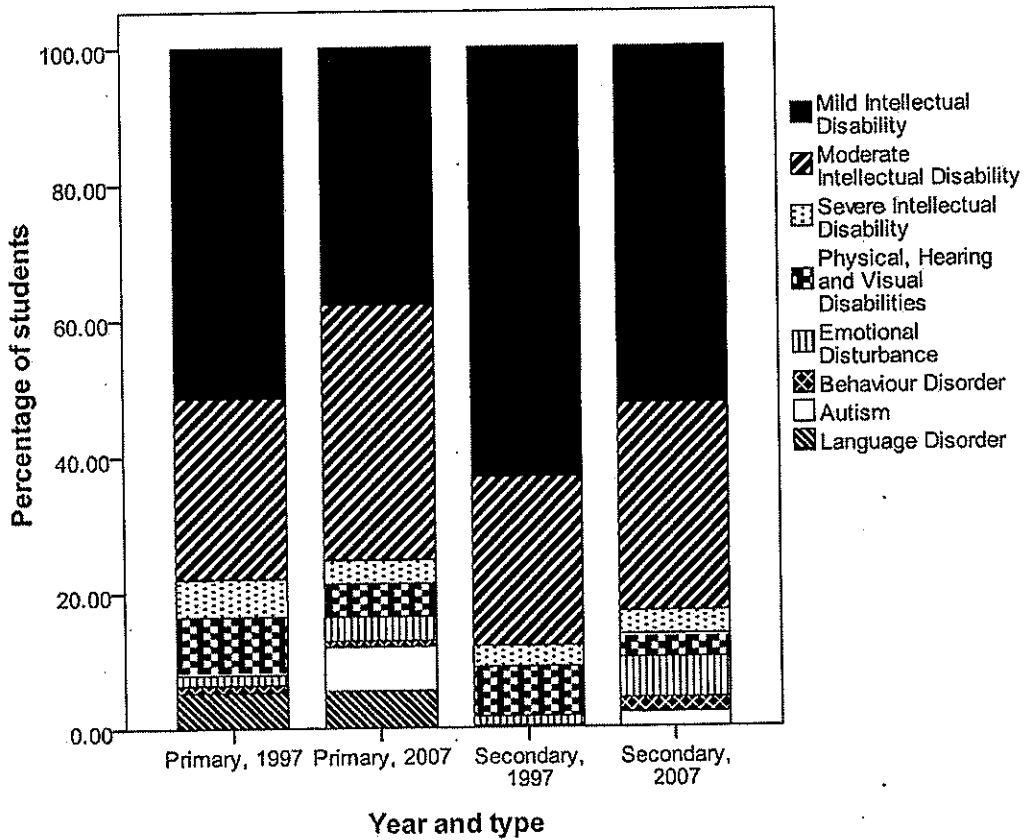
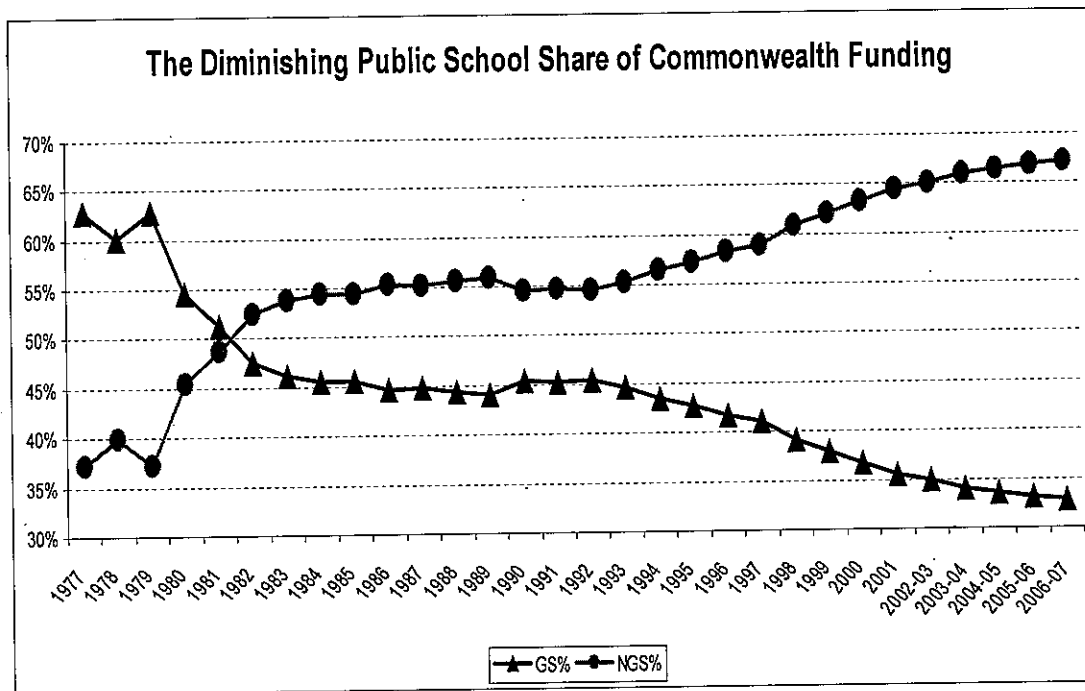
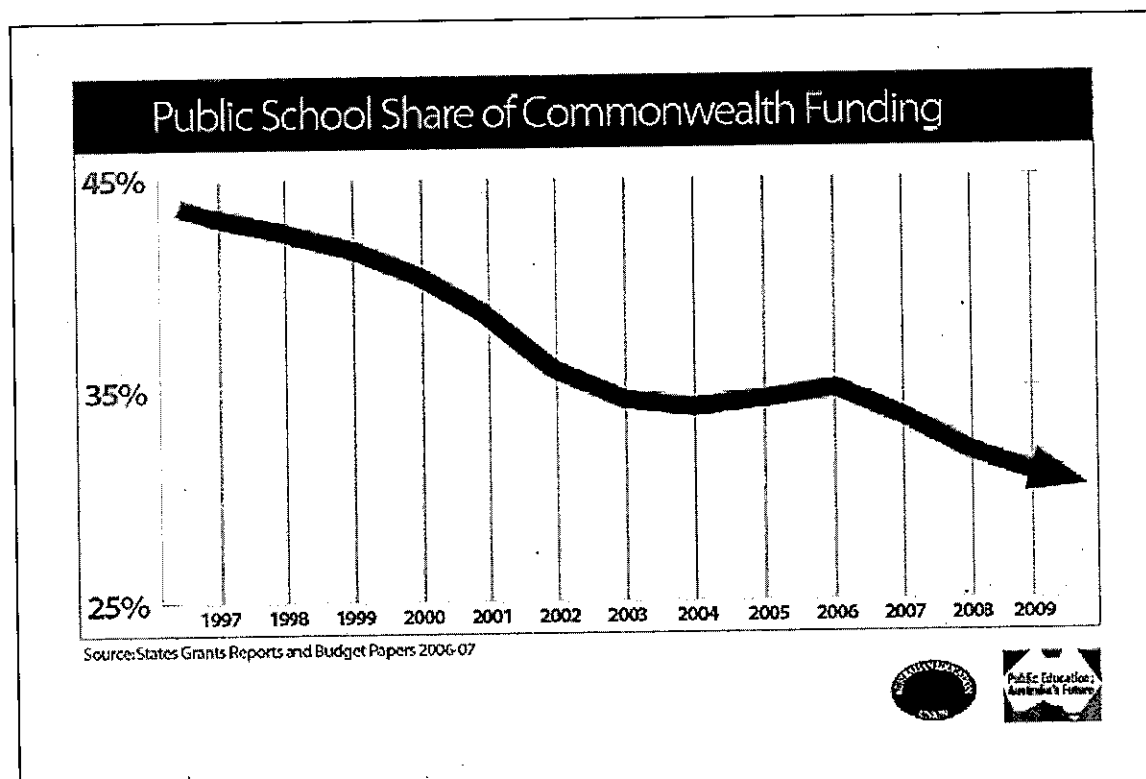


Figure 3. Percentage of students in primary and secondary Support Classes by type of disability in 1997 and 2007.

Appendix 3



Source: 1977-2004 : Reports on States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 1992; 2005-06 to 2006-07 Federal Budget Papers



Source: States Grants Reports and Budget Papers 2006-07



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Appendix 4

Vinson, T., p.363

	GS Actual (\$m)	3307.2
	NGS Actual (\$m)	962.5
	GS enrolments	760,078
1996-97	NGS enrolments	305269
	GS \$ per student	4,351
	NGS \$ per student	3,153
	GS Actual (\$m)	4210.20
	NGS Actual (\$m)	1531.58
	GS enrolments	759,623
2000-01	NGS enrolments	334,693
	GS \$ per student	5,542
	NGS \$ per student	4,576
Comparison	\$ Per student increase GS	1,191
	\$ Per student increase NGS	1,423
	% Per student increase GS	27.4%
	% Per student increase NGS	45.1%

Total expenditure (Commonwealth and State) on Government and non-government schools
after taking account of enrolment changes (NSW, 1996-97 and 2000-01)

Appendix 5

NSW Teachers Federation 2009 Annual Conference Decision on SPECIAL EDUCATION

Despite the Federation's repeated requests and campaigning for additional funding and resources, successive governments have failed to meet the needs of many students with learning difficulties, disabilities and behaviour disorders across the education continuum.

Governments also have failed to provide adequate early intervention programs. Failure to intervene in the early years of a child's development exacerbates learning difficulties and behaviour disorders in schooling and home life.

The Federation will pursue the following priority objectives for resource provision for students with learning difficulties, disabilities and behaviour disorders.

Mainstream Classes – Regular Schools

- Increase Integration Support Funding for students with identified disabilities. Such funding must provide all students with levels of funding at least equal to that of their peers in Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs).
- Oppose changes proposed by the DET to remove \$25 million from the Integration Funding Support Program and change the basis of allocation of funds for Autism and Mental Health Disorders (for students receiving \$6,000 per annum or less), from identified disability to statistical incidence.
- Pursue changes to access based on functional criteria rather than medical models and recognition of dual diagnosis.
- Pursue changes to access to the Integration Funding Support Program, to remove disadvantages for students in isolated, rural and other disadvantaged communities, in gaining access to diagnostic services. The DET and government must adopt procedures which make access equitable for all.
- Support the maintenance and expansion of Outreach Teacher Services for identified students in mainstream classes. These include Outreach: Autism, Emotional Disturbance and Special Education. Establishment of additional Outreach positions should be based on numbers of students identified in discrete geographical areas.
- Support the maintenance and expansion of the Support Teacher Learning Assistance Program. This program should be expanded by an additional 600 positions (50% increase).
- Increase funding support to schools under the Learning Assistance Program by 50%.

- Oppose the DET proposal to abolish most classifications of Support Teacher and replace them with one classification of School Learning Support Coordinator, or similar title.
- Support an extended period of time of at least twelve months, for evaluation, review and consultation in relation to any proposal to abolish / change existing support programs.
- Increase access to public pre-schooling, medical and psychiatric assessment and subsequent treatment, and more effective coordination across all relevant government agencies.
- Pursue increased funding to identify and assist NESB students who have learning difficulties.

Special Schools and Special Education Classes in regular schools

- The provision of secondary staffing for secondary aged students in all Special Schools. This to include the provision of secondary specialist positions where appropriate.
- The restoration of special education class sizes to pre-2005 levels with no reduction in the number of placement positions and the maintenance of School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) positions.
- In-built relief staffing for SSPs and Special Education Units in recognition of the difficulties experienced in attracting appropriate casual relief.
- Evaluation, review and consultation of the range and provision of current support programs structures and personnel to form the basis of any proposed changes to improve their provision.
- Pursue changes to access based on functional criteria rather than medical models and recognition of dual diagnosis.
- That funding to SSPs be allocated based on their enrolment entitlement as per their school classification that takes into account their disability needs factor.

Funding to Achieve Priority Improvements for Special Education

Action:

1. The Federation calls on the state and federal governments to implement a new National Partnership on Special Education, to provide additional funding and targeted support for students with learning difficulties, disabilities and behaviour disorders.

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2. The Federation will liaise with the Australian Education Union, with the aim of developing a national campaign to achieve the special education priority objectives through the AEU and state affiliates.
3. The Federation will seek the support of other public education stakeholder groups, to maximise the strength of state and national campaigning.
4. A campaign package will be developed for schools and Associations to assist with lobbying State and Federal Members of Parliament.
5. The Federation will campaign to ensure that there will be no losses of special education and language classes in NSW.
6. If the DET attempts to decrease face-to-face teaching positions for students with special needs the Executive of the NSW Teachers Federation is to direct members to take immediate industrial action.
7. The Federation demands immediate consultation and negotiation with the DET to ensure the adequate provision of school counsellors to all areas of NSW and especially for hard to staff areas of NSW. This provision is to meet the Vinson report standard of 1 counsellor to every 500 students, therefore ensuring the continued delivery of a quality school counselling service to all NSW public school students.
8. Federation will continue to work closely with current support teachers and school learning support coordinators to keep them informed and supported. This communication should include fax, email and face to face meetings.
9. In the lead up to the 2010 state budget and the 2011 state election, the Federation will coordinate a statewide campaign for increased funding and support for special education, particularly in the area of public pre-schooling, early intervention programs and more effective interagency support.
10. Schools adversely affected by any change to the provision of special education are authorised to take industrial/political/media action in consultation with their organiser. August Council will consider a statewide program of industrial/political/media action.

Footnotes :

- ¹ New South Wales. Audit Office. *Performance Audit : Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities : Department of Education and Training*. 2006, p.2.
- ² Vinson,T. (2002). *Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*. Sydney : Pluto Press, p.258.
- ³ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N. (in press). *The Inclusion Lottery: who's in and who's out? Tracking inclusion and exclusion in New South Wales government schools*, International Journal of Inclusive Education, p.11.
- ⁴ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.17.
- ⁵ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.10.
- ⁶ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.6.
- ⁷ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.8.
- ⁸ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.9.
- ⁹ New South Wales. Audit Office. *Performance Audit : Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities : Department of Education and Training*. 2006, p.16.
- ¹⁰ New South Wales. Audit Office. *Performance Audit : Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities : Department of Education and Training*. 2006, p.21.
- ¹¹ Graham, L.J. & Sweller, N., p.11.
- ¹² Graham, L.J. & Jahnukainen, M., (2009) *Analysing the Current State and Change of Inclusive Education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland*. Paper presented in Division L : International Policy & Politics in Education, American Educational Research Association, San Diego, April 13-17, p.3 citing Bonnor, C. & Caro, J. *The Stupid Country*. Sydney : 2007.
- ¹³ Vinson,T., p.358.
- ¹⁴ Vinson,T., p.363.
- ¹⁵ Vinson,T., p.262-263.
- ¹⁶ Vinson,T., p.275.
- ¹⁷ Vinson,T., p.271.
- ¹⁸ Vinson,T., p.272.
- ¹⁹ Faculty of Education, Monash University, *Investigating the Feasibility of Portable Funding for Students with Disabilities, Final Report*, June 2007, p.38.
- ²⁰ Vinson,T., p.269.
- ²¹ New South Wales. Audit Office. *Performance Audit : Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities : Department of Education and Training*. 2006, p.20.
- ²² Vinson,T., p.275.
- ²³ Vinson,T., p.253.
- ²⁴ New South Wales. Audit Office. *Performance Audit : Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities : Department of Education and Training*. 2006, p.34.