

Submission
No 42

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

Name: Mr Jim Bond
Date received: 8/02/2010

**Inquiry into the provision of education to students
with a disability or special needs**

**Submission by Mr Jim Bond transcribed by the Committee Secretariat
2 February 2010**

My name is Jim Bond and I have suffered throughout my life with dyslexia. I left school at the age of 14 and unable to read took on labouring jobs. However, after a back injury I was now unable to work. I have become an active lobbyist for my rights and others with dyslexia and learning difficulties. I had significant involvement in the passage in December 2008 of an amendment to the NSW Education Act 1990 which made children with significant learning difficulties legislatively recognised for the first time as a group entitled to special help in schools.

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

- Federal funding is currently allocated to the states for them to distribute. This funding should be tied to the students with dyslexia not the states.
- The former Legislative Council Member the Hon Arthur Chesterfield-Evans stated in a speech on the subject of the Department of Education & Training dyslexic students funding:

For the 2003 school year more than \$72 million has been allocated to fund the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classes; it is known as the Funding Support Program. To qualify for funding a student must have a recognised intellectual, sensory or physical disability. Children with learning difficulties such as dyslexia do not qualify for funding support. The Department of Education and Training disability criteria do not recognise dyslexia. Instead, dyslexics have access to assistance via learning support teams, which oversee the planning and support for all students.¹

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

- Rather than their disability, once a child is identified with a disability or a significant learning difficulty, that child should receive funding regardless of their disability and based on their particular level of need. I would personally like to see the disability criteria abolished within the NSW education system and for everyone to be treated as equal.
- The Hon John Aquilina MP's speech for the Education Amendment (Educational Support for Children with Significant Learning Difficulties) Bill 2008 stated:

Again it was the Carr Government—also during my term as Minister—that introduced into our schools the concept of making the money follow the child with a disability. That had not been done before. Under that concept, funds that are available to help children with disabilities are allocated after the needs of children with disabilities have been assessed at each individual school. The resources are sent to follow the children with those particular needs and help them overcome specific issues. That meant the allocation of teachers aides and special support personnel for the schools, and that led to a major program of deinstitutionalising children with specific disabilities and putting them into mainstream schooling—a major initiative. Again it was controversial at the time, because many people had academic opinions and ideas as to why certain things should or should not be done. But

¹ The Hon Arthur Chesterfield-Evans MLC, 28 October 2003, Hansard, p4194

it was a much-needed program, and it was a great move forward, as history has shown.²

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

- The number of special education places within the education system should be based on the need of students not an allocation of a specific number across the state.

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

- The report to the Hon Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, from the Dyslexia Working Party, which I am a member on, entitled Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, provides a total of 19 recommendations that should be implemented at a state level in NSW to address the issues raised in the inquiry. This report is provided as an appendix to this submission.
- Included in the report are recommendations relating to:

Recommendation 6 – Evidence-Based Teaching

- It should be ensured that appropriate teaching strategies, shown through rigorous, evidence-based research to be effective in developing strong literacy skills, are used in all Australian Junior Primary classrooms. This will assist in reducing the impact of dyslexia significantly.
- All schools should ensure that the three Waves of literacy provision are in place, are of a high quality, and are well-coordinated. In order to achieve this, schools should have access to the expertise of teachers with specialist skills in addressing dyslexic difficulties
- Provision should be made for close monitoring of students 'at risk' of dyslexia as well as those diagnosed with dyslexia
- Learning Support should be provided for those diagnosed with dyslexia through a written Support Plan that incorporates individual literacy teaching, resilience teaching, and classroom accommodations.³

Recommendation 10 – Special considerations for people with dyslexia.

A diagnosis of dyslexia should entitle a student or adult to use a computer or laptop, with appropriate assistive technology programs installed, in class, in exams and in the workplace; and should also entitle students to additional time in exams, or to the use of a reader or scribe.⁴

- In 1998 the Hon Bryan Vaughan MLC made a speech about the positive impact assistive technology can have on students with dyslexia:

I have been shown a solution for those who are dyslexic or have a visual impairment. That solution is computer technology known as the Omni3000, which I believe should be available in all schools and libraries throughout the State. Mr J. J. Bond of the central coast, who has the zeal of a crusader, made me aware of word blindness, which is a crippling burden on those who suffer from it. Mr Bond has become highly qualified in his chosen calling by exercising a phenomenal memory. A phenomenal memory is the only way people with dyslexia can compensate for their blindness. Omni3000 is a computer software package that enables people to read; it reads text for people. Mr Bond launched his crusade against

² The Hon John Aquilina MP, Member for Riverstone, 4 December 2008, p12641

³ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p9

⁴ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p10

dyslexic discrimination in job applications, especially in public service employment procedures. He is a member of the council at Mater Dei College, Tuggerah, which is the only school in Australia that has purchased this to adopt this technology. It has been praised extensively in the central coast press. The Gosford *Central Coast Express Advocate* wrote: Visually impaired and special learning needs students who attend Mater Dei College now have a winning edge.

The use by Mater Dei college of this computer technology illustrates what all State schools and community libraries should possess to ensure that a comprehensive service and adequate education is provided to those who suffer, for example, a visual impairment, not only dyslexia. The Omni3000 reads pages of text to the user, enabling the user to more readily recognise and spell words. It scans and displays pages from any book or document, whether it is print or electronic form.

The problem is that the hardware costs \$5,000 and the software program costs \$3,000. I do not have enough time on this occasion to outline the advantages of this program, but bearing in mind that the Premier announced in a media release on 15 September that the Labor Government has implemented a \$2 million literacy strategy, it seems that this technology ought to be adopted. I agree that it cannot be purchased by every school or library, but surely it is up to this State, our Government, and the education system to provide this technology to regional schools and libraries.⁵

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

- Again this issue relates to teacher training and this issue is highlighted throughout the report Helping people with dyslexia and a number of the various recommendations encompass this issue:

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (formerly the National Curriculum Board) is drawing up a national curriculum for English which includes a specific focus on teaching reading and reading-related abilities in the early years of schooling...

The ACARA recommendations re initial teaching of reading, if implemented right down to individual classroom level, will be of great benefit to many Australian children who would otherwise have struggled to learn to read. Improved curricula delivered in a structured, sequential and explicit way, along with intensive intervention for those children struggling to keep up with their peers, will address the needs of the vast majority of students. But there will still remain a residue – perhaps as many as 5-10% of all children - who will still struggle to learn to read even if exposed in the classroom to best-practice evidence-based methods of teaching reading.⁶

- The Reverend the Hon Gordon Moyes MLC made a speech on reading curriculum and related research:

Major advances have been made in recent years in educators' understanding of reading and how it is learnt. The importance of basic sounding-out skills is now widely accepted. However, skilled reading also involves being able to recognise words by sight, especially words that cannot be sounded out easily. Not enough is known about how children learn to recognise words by sight and what might help them to do this better. In a project funded this year by the Australian Research Council, researchers are looking at how children's knowledge of the meanings of words influences them. They are also examining whether words are learnt more easily if they are presented in meaningful contexts.

⁵ The Hon Bryan Vaughan MLC, 17 September 1998, p7603

⁶ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p5

Another interesting project is trying to identify in advance which children will need help with reading so that early intervention can be undertaken. The current research focuses on the fact that one in four of all children, not only those with learning difficulties, leave primary school with inadequate reading skills. Most of them could have been assisted with appropriate group intervention. However, some will need far more intensive, individual instruction to succeed. A great deal of time, resources and emotional distress would be saved if we knew who these children were before they failed. This research aims to develop a method to identify the dyslexic children before they actually fail. Then, if those slow readers fail to respond to group intervention, they will receive intensive individual intervention. This will help channel the limited resources for helping dyslexics more effectively. The findings from this research project will enable educators to determine the most appropriate programs of instruction for individual readers. I congratulate Professor Max Coltheart and his team on training public school teachers in the new methodology.⁷

- The 2003 report of the Standing Committee on Social Issues into Early Intervention for Children with Learning Difficulties also refers to this issue. However, little has been done by the department since this report.

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

- Dyslexic people do not have access to these at this point in time, financially and educationally, and this is why it needs to be attended to.
- The Helping people with dyslexia report recommends that learning support should be provided for those diagnosed with dyslexia through a written support plan that incorporates individual literacy teaching, resilience teaching, and classroom accommodations.⁸

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

- The Helping people with dyslexia report makes a number of recommendations in regard to the need for adequate teacher training including pre-service (Recommendation 5), in-service training (Recommendation 7) and specialist training (Recommendation 8):

Recommendation 5 - Pre-service training

All teacher-training syllabi should include:

- Training in evidence-based reading instruction, shown through rigorous research to minimise the impact of dyslexia;
- Training in early screening / identification of students at risk of long term literacy problems, including dyslexia; and,
- Training in effective, research-based strategies that support students with dyslexia including: resilience development, use of non-print mediums, and presence of whole school dyslexia policies.⁹

Recommendation 7 – In-Service Training

- Professional development programs should to be developed for all practising classroom teachers to assist them to identify and support students at risk of dyslexia.
- Existing in-service training courses provided by approved organizations should be officially recognized and funded.¹⁰

⁷ The Reverend the Hon Gordon Moyes MLC, 2 September 2009, p17113

⁸ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p9

⁹ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p9

¹⁰ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p9

Recommendation 8 – Specialist Training

Funding should be provided to universities and other approved organisations for the establishment of specialist accredited training courses to train practising teachers to identify and teach students at risk of dyslexia, such as those courses provided by Dyslexia Action UK.¹¹

8. Any other related matters

- I would like to appear before the Committee as a witness and provide further detail on the points in my submission.
- Nationally implementing the recent amendment to the NSW *Education Act 1990*, section 20 (a1) and (4) to incorporate children with significant learning difficulties as eligible for additional assistance. However, state department heads are negative about this change. This is something I am hoping the inquiry may be able to sort out.
- The NSW legislation is the first in the world compared to other countries that have only put policies in place as opposed to legislation.
- At this point in time the Federal Government is drawing up exactly the same legislation as NSW has adopted (see above dot point) to ask other states to come in line with NSW. I have been dealing with other education departments in other states on this issue.
- A case study model is outlined in the attached article that demonstrates the use and great benefit of assistive technology for students with dyslexia at the Entrance Public School. This model should be adopted by all schools across NSW.
- A package of \$9 million was to be spent on training 80 new full-time special education teachers to work with students with autism, mental health problems and dyslexia. However, this has not happened so where is the funding for teachers training going?

Concluding comments

- I would like to see our politicians take the lead on demanding the rights of people with a disability or significant learning difficulty to receive appropriate care within our education system. And this is why we employ politicians to take the lead when departments will not move forward.
- The Federal Education President, Unions NSW and Teachers Federation all support the recommendations in the Helping people with dyslexia report. It is about educating teachers to educate the upcoming population.

Appendix:

1. Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda: Report to the Hon Bill Shorten from the Dyslexia Working Party, January 2010
2. Article: Unscrambling dyslexia and making a life long difference to local kids, *Mingara Life*, October/November 2009, pp4-5
3. Mind & its potential conference flyer
4. *Falling between the cracks: How the system fails dyslexics*, James Justice Bond JP, 1999

¹¹ Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda, p9

Appendix 1

Helping people with dyslexia: a national action agenda

Report to the Hon Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and
Children's Services, from the Dyslexia Working Party:

Jim Bond
Max Coltheart [Chair]
Tim Connell
Nola Firth
Margaret Hardy
Mandy Nayton
Jenny Shaw
Angela Weeks

Submitted January 10 2010

Introduction

During 2008 the Hon Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, met with representatives from dyslexia interest groups who expressed concern that dyslexia is not recognized as a specific disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and that the education and employment systems do not recognize or support people with dyslexia.

Following these meetings the Parliamentary Secretary requested the FaHCSIA convene a roundtable Forum to discuss these issues.

This Dyslexia Stakeholder Forum was held at Parliament House Canberra on 16 June 2009. The Forum consisted of 24 people who were scientists in the areas of reading or learning disabilities, technologists, people with dyslexia, clinicians and practitioners, or representatives from DEEWR and FaHCSIA. It was decided that a representative Working Party of 8 Forum members should be formed, charged with the task of writing a report proposing a national agenda for action to assist people with dyslexia.

The Working Party consulted widely and in particular benefited from comments on a draft report that were received from the following authorities (all of whom have expressed very strong support for the recommendations we have made):

- AUSPELD (The Australian Federation of Specific Learning Difficulty Associations)
- LDA (Learning Difficulties Australia)
- ALDA (The Australian Learning Disability Association)
- Speech Pathology Australia
- The DDOLL (Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy) network, which was established with funding from the Australian Research Council.
- Sir James Rose, author of the Rose Report on Dyslexia commissioned by the UK Government.

A draft report was also distributed for comment to members of the Forum on December 7 2009.

The draft report was revised in the light of these comments and the final version of the report (the present document) was submitted to the Parliamentary Secretary on January 10 2010.

In this document we put dyslexia into context by first making some remarks about general levels of literacy in Australia and why they are currently a cause for concern. We then explain the difference between dyslexia and other forms of difficulty in learning to read, and point out the serious social, economic and personal consequences of dyslexia. We then provide 19 recommendations, each of which if implemented would reduce these social, economic and personal costs of dyslexia in Australia.

Is there a literacy problem in Australia?

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) believes so. Its report entitled “National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development: Baseline performance report for 2008”, dated 30 September 2009, made the following points:

- Relatively high proportions of working age Australians have literacy and numeracy skills below the minimum level COAG considers is required to meet the complex demands of work and life in modern economies—43.5 per cent for literacy and 49.8 per cent for numeracy.

- The proportion of the working age population with low literacy and numeracy skills decreases as socio-economic status improves. At a national level, 60.0 per cent of working age people in the most disadvantaged socio-economic areas have low literacy skills compared with 29.3 per cent in the least disadvantaged areas. The figures for numeracy are 66.2 per cent and 35.3 per cent respectively. The pattern is similar across all States and Territories.

These conclusions are based on data from a national survey of literacy standards carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2006. The ABS report of that survey specifically noted that 52% of Australians aged 15-19 had a literacy level that “was insufficient to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work”. Comparisons of the results of the 2006 ABS survey with the results of the immediately preceding survey (1996) revealed that literacy levels were lower in 2006 than in 1996.

There is independent evidence that literacy standards are currently declining in Australia. Reading ability of Australian children was measured in the OECD’s International Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessment rounds in 2000 and most recently in 2006. Between 2000 and 2006 Australia dropped 4 places in the international ranking of literacy levels, being overtaken by New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong and South Korea (reported by the chair of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Professor Barry McGaw, in his keynote address at the seminar *Effective Reading for All: National and International Perspectives* conducted by Learning Difficulties Australia (LDA) in Melbourne on 23 September 2009).

Why is there a literacy problem in Australia?

In 2004 the then Federal Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, commissioned a National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL)ⁱ which reported to him in December 2005. Amongst the findings of this report were the following:

- 50% of the 34 teacher training programs in Australia devoted less than 5% of the curriculum to teaching about reading.
- 60% of senior teachers considered the majority of beginning teachers were not equipped to teach children to read.

- The majority of beginning teachers reported that they were not confident about their ability to teach reading.
- Many beginning teachers themselves had limited literacy skills, and also lacked the metalinguistic skills needed for the teaching of reading.

The NITL Report made 20 recommendations aimed at improving the teaching of literacy. Unfortunately none of these was implemented. The Education portfolio was taken over by a new Minister. The recommendations of the report were put out to tender, which was won by the Curriculum Corporation, which produced materials that were distributed to schools. The Chair of the NITL, the late Dr Ken Rowe of the Australian Council for Educational Research, publicly repudiated these materials, pointing out that they did not incorporate a single one of his committee's 20 recommendations.

However, all is not lost. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (formerly the National Curriculum Board) is drawing up a national curriculum for English which includes a specific focus on teaching reading and reading-related abilities in the early years of schooling. Current drafts of this curriculum document show that it is highly compatible with the recommendations of the NITL. For example, recommendation 2 of the NITL was:

The Committee recommends that teachers provide systematic, direct and explicit phonics instruction so that children master the essential alphabetic code-breaking skills required for foundational reading proficiency. Equally, that teachers provide an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies.

Consistent with this, the May 2009 ACARA document "Shape of the Australian Curriculum" states (p. 7) "Many students when learning to read need systematic attention to fundamentals like phonological and phonemic awareness, and sound-letter correspondences as well as the development of skills in using semantic and syntactic clues to make meaning". And at his keynote address at the LDA seminar (referred to above) the Chair of ACARA indicated that the National Curriculum would emphasize the teaching of phonological awareness, phonics and the alphabet in kindergarten and Grade 1, just as recommended by the NITL

State Departments of Education are also beginning to take actions that are consistent with the NITL recommendations. For example, NITL Recommendation 16 included the following:

The Committee recommends that a national program of literacy action be established to produce a series of evidence-based guides for effective teaching practice, the first of which should be on reading.

The NSW Department of Education has this year produced exactly these

kinds of guides to the teaching of literacyⁱⁱ.

The ACARA recommendations re initial teaching of reading, if implemented right down to individual classroom level, will be of great benefit to many Australian children who would otherwise have struggled to learn to read. Improved curricula delivered in a structured, sequential and explicit way, along with intensive intervention for those children struggling to keep up with their peers, will address the needs of the vast majority of students. But there will still remain a residue – perhaps as many as 5-10% of all children – who will still struggle to learn to read even if exposed in the classroom to best-practice evidence-based methods of teaching reading. The remit of our Working Party is to make recommendations about how best to help such children as well as the adults who were once such children.

The difference between “instructional casualties” and “people with dyslexia”.

A great deal of recent research has focussed on what happens when a school that has been using methods for teaching reading based on ideology rather than research evidence of efficacy switches over to adopting evidence-based methods. Many studies have documented rapidly-achieved and large increases in the reading competence of poor readers in such schools; these children soon achieve reading abilities commensurate with their grades. It follows that the reason why such children were reading poorly prior to the adoption of the new teaching methods in their classrooms was not something to do with the children themselves, but was because of the kind of reading instruction they had been receiving (the *California State Taskforce* (1999)ⁱⁱⁱ reported that “a significant number of children labelled learning disabled or dyslexic could have become successful readers had they received systematic and explicit instruction and intervention far earlier in their educational careers”; That is why the term “instructional casualties” has been used to describe these children.

But these studies have also shown consistently that a small but significant proportion of children do not catch up in reading no matter how sound and well-supported by evidence the teaching methods being used in their classrooms are. Although these students are likely to make some progress, they tend to improve at a much slower rate than their peers, and must work very hard even to achieve this. So these children are not instructional casualties, and therefore a different term to describe them is needed. It is these children whom we will term “children with dyslexia”.

Identification of dyslexia via this approach is referred to as the *Response to Intervention Model* (RTI). It has become widely accepted practice in the UK, the USA, and Canada:

“A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds, or has responded, to well founded intervention” (Rose, 2009).^{iv}

The model requires a three tiered approach to literacy teaching, intervention and assessment (see figure 1).

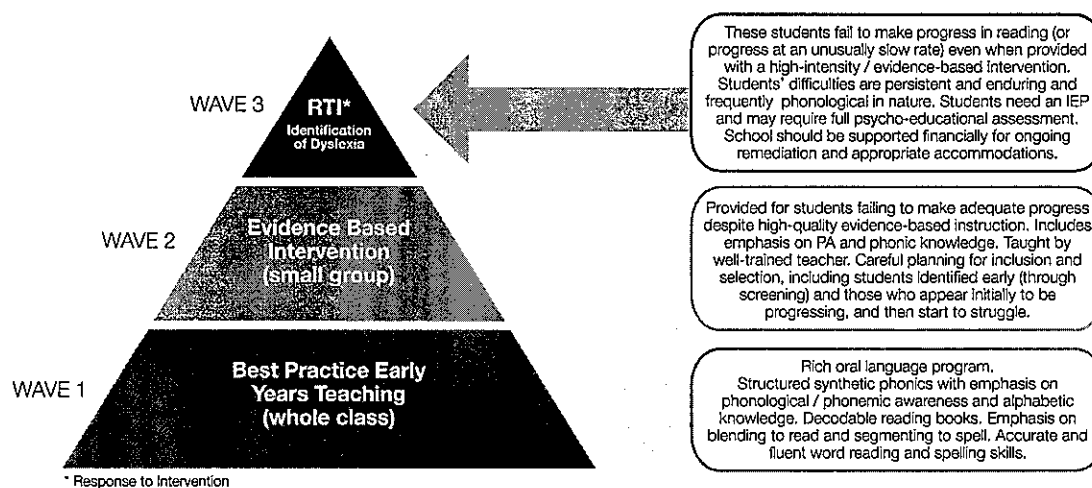


Figure 1. Identifying Students with Dyslexia within the Three Wave Model.

If the evidence-based literacy teaching approaches proposed in the National Curriculum are implemented right down to classroom level, this will be enormously beneficial to the children classified as instructional casualties, and so one would expect to see substantial improvements in the average literacy levels in Australian schools. But if that is all that is done, the children with dyslexia will benefit only to a small degree. They will continue to be left behind and the gap between these children and their peers will widen even further.

Our Working Party's job is to make recommendations as to what steps should be taken to address the needs of these individuals and so reduce the functional impact of dyslexia.

The economic, social and personal costs of dyslexia

Failure to learn to read despite receiving appropriate reading teaching has serious consequences.

Research has shown that such children are at serious risk of mental health difficulties^v especially depression^{vi}. Juvenile delinquency is more common amongst such children^{vii} as is dropout from school^{viii} and unemployment (Australian Bureau of Statistics data). People with poor literacy are less responsive to health education and use of disease prevention strategies, are less able to successfully manage chronic disorders such as diabetes and asthma, and incur significantly higher health care costs^{ix}. All these personal costs of dyslexia explain why a significantly higher proportion of people with dyslexia are likely to attempt suicide than adolescents with normal reading^x. And these personal costs of dyslexia explain why the final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission has identified that strengthening functional literacy is a key strategy

to improving health outcomes across Australia^{xi}.

These are just some of the serious personal costs of dyslexia. Dyslexia has serious social and economic costs too.

The incidence of dyslexia is much higher in the prison population than the general population: for example, a recent study reported that 53% of the inmates of Chelmsford Prison in the UK were dyslexic^{xii}

The UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee in its report dated 18 December 2009 concluded that “the Government’s position that early literacy interventions are an investment that saves money in the long run is evidence-based”.

A report by Access Australia^{xiii} jointly commissioned by the Business Council of Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum to test the merits of the economic case for increased policy emphasis on youth participation in education, training and employment reported that:

- Student achievement and better pedagogies in literacy and numeracy are fundamental to improving the learning capacity, employability and positive participation of young people
- Boosting the proportion of young people completing school or an apprenticeship to 90 per cent by the end of the decade would increase workforce numbers by 65,000, boost economic productivity, and expand the economy by nearly \$10 billion (in today’s money) by 2040
- Measures to increase school retention rates would also result in additional annual taxation receipts of \$2.3 billion (in today’s money) by 2040, reducing Budget deficits and helping to defray the cost impact of the ageing population.

In Australia at present, children and adults with dyslexia have no specified pathways to achieve diagnosis and support. In the education system there are few qualified to diagnose, and the wait time for school psychologists is up to a year. For adults, there is no process through Centrelink for support. Individuals therefore have to fund their own diagnosis and subsequent support. On a user pays basis, only the financially secure can afford this. This leaves pensioners, low-income earners, students and the unemployed with nowhere to go.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are about both reducing the impact of dyslexia on the approximately 5-10% of Australian children and adults who struggle with its daily implications and about the ways in which assistance can be provided earlier and more effectively (thereby preventing dyslexia from becoming as serious a condition as it does when left unattended). These recommendations are designed to improve both access and equity in the everyday lives of Australian children and adults currently struggling with this hidden disability. This can be achieved through:

- Officially recognizing dyslexia as a disability;

- Providing high quality literacy instruction;
- Providing school-based dyslexia resilience programs.
- Improving current teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding of learning to read and dyslexia;
- Improving training courses for future teachers;
- Enabling access to early assessment and identification;
- Providing appropriate support and accommodations, including the establishment of an Accessible Instructional Material Centre (AIMC) whose first task will be to facilitate the development of a national Accessible Instructional Strategy (AIMS);
- Establishing dyslexia-friendly schools and workplaces; and,
- Increasing community awareness of dyslexia.

Implementation of these recommendations would have two highly beneficial results:

- It would maximise the probability of successfully learning to read, and
- It would minimise the negative impacts of being unable to read

DEFINING AND RECOGNISING DYSLEXIA AS A DISABILITY

Recommendation 1 - Definition of dyslexia

There should be adoption at a national level of a working definition of dyslexia to allow shared language for productive discourse on the issue in Australia. Our proposed working definition, consistent with the definitions published by the British Dyslexia Association, the International Dyslexia Association/ National Institute of Child Health and Development, the International Reading Association, and the Rose Report on Dyslexia, is:

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability of neurological origin. It primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It is frequently associated with difficulties in phonological processing. It occurs across the range of intellectual abilities with no distinct cut-off points. It is viewed as a lifelong disability that often does not respond as expected to best-practice evidence-based classroom methods for teaching reading.

Recommendation 2 - Recognition of dyslexia as a disability

There should be legislative recognition at both State and Commonwealth level of dyslexia *as a disability* as determined under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992). Dyslexia should be included under the special needs section of the Education Acts in each of the states as has now been instituted in NSW. This will require that additional disability funding becomes available.

Recommendation 3 - National Dyslexia Advisory Council

A National Dyslexia Advisory Council should be established. Its membership should include people with dyslexia, representatives from Australian peak dyslexia organizations, and national and international experts on dyslexia and learning disability.

Recommendation 4 - Compliance with the Act.

Commonwealth funding of all educational institutions should be contingent on demonstrated compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Amended in 2008), and the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

Recommendation 5 - Pre-service training

All teacher-training syllabi should include:

- Training in evidence-based reading instruction, shown through rigorous research to minimise the impact of dyslexia;
- Training in early screening / identification of students at risk of long term literacy problems, including dyslexia; and,
- Training in effective, research-based strategies that support students with dyslexia including: resilience development, use of non-print mediums, and presence of whole school dyslexia policies.

Recommendation 6 – Evidence-Based Teaching

- It should be ensured that appropriate teaching strategies, shown through rigorous, evidence-based research to be effective in developing strong literacy skills, are used in all Australian Junior Primary classrooms. This will assist in reducing the impact of dyslexia significantly.
- All schools should ensure that the three Waves of literacy provision are in place, are of a high quality, and are well-coordinated. In order to achieve this, schools should have access to the expertise of teachers with specialist skills in addressing dyslexic difficulties
- Provision should be made for close monitoring of students ‘at risk’ of dyslexia as well as those diagnosed with dyslexia
- Learning Support should be provided for those diagnosed with dyslexia through a written Support Plan that incorporates individual literacy teaching, resilience teaching, and classroom accommodations.

Recommendation 7 – In-Service Training

- Professional development programs should to be developed for all practising classroom teachers to assist them to identify and support students at risk of dyslexia.
- Existing in-service training courses provided by approved organizations should be officially recognized and funded.

Recommendation 8 – Specialist Training

Funding should be provided to universities and other approved organizations for the establishment of specialist accredited training courses to train practising teachers to identify and teach students at risk of dyslexia, such as those courses provided by Dyslexia Action UK.

Recommendation 9 – Dyslexia-Friendly Schools

- A national program should be established for the development and accreditation of ‘dyslexia-friendly’ schools involving specific inclusion (at all levels of policy and practice) of the needs of students who have dyslexia. (The British Dyslexia Association has a detailed model of such ‘dyslexia friendly’ schools).

- A funding scheme should be established to which schools could apply with a specific plan for making the school dyslexia-friendly. Schools already accredited as dyslexia-friendly could also apply to this scheme for funding to become consultants and PD providers to other schools and to become providers of assistance to dyslexic children in other schools.
- Clear guidance should be provided to schools on what appropriate provisions have become available for people with dyslexia.
- A national teacher dyslexia resource booklet should be compiled and distributed to all schools, similar to that produced by NZ Education Dept.

Recommendation 10 – Special considerations for people with dyslexia.

A diagnosis of dyslexia should entitle a student or adult to use a computer or laptop, with appropriate assistive technology programs installed, in class, in exams and in the workplace; and should also entitle students to additional time in exams, or to the use of a reader or scribe.

ASSESSMENT OF DYSLEXIA

Recommendation 11 – Dyslexia Assessment

- Access to early, systematic, dyslexia assessment should be available to all students identified by teachers as being at risk of dyslexia.
- Initial screening and assessment of such at-risk children to be undertaken within the school environment by a specialist teacher, followed by in-depth assessment of reading and spelling by an appropriately-trained psychologist, speech pathologist or other person with relevant qualifications.
- FaHCSIA should directly fund parents and adults to access dyslexia assessments provided by suitably qualified professionals.
- Full funding through Centrelink should be provided to parents on pensions or with health care cards, students on Austudy or equivalent and those on unemployment benefits.
- Professional development programs need to be developed for all practising school psychologists to assist them in the assessment and appropriate support of students with dyslexia.
- Recommendations arising from in-depth assessments should be fully supported by the school, training institution or workplace.
- The cost of dyslexia assessment, tuition and costs involved with accessibility such as alternate formats and specialist software programs should be added to the list of eligible expenses for the Education Tax Refund.

APPROPRIATE SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Recommendation 12 - Information booklet for families

A booklet for families and carers should be prepared and distributed which explains what new provisions for dyslexic children have been introduced.

Recommendation 13 – Accessible Instructional Material Strategy (AIMS)

An Accessible Instructional Material Strategy (AIMS) for primary, secondary and tertiary education should be established throughout Australia. This should be enacted through Federal legislation.

Recommendation 14 – Accessible Instructional Materials Centre.

The Federal Government should establish an Accessible Instructional Materials Centre (AIMC) as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 15 - Assistive Technology

- Funding for the Print Disability Services Program should be increased, with the appropriate level of funding determined under the AIMS.
- An Assistive Technology Fund for Dyslexia should be established that provides assistive technology options directly to students around Australia.
- A national subscription to Bookshare should be funded by FaHCSIA.
- Publishers should be required by legislation to provide an electronic version of any educational text.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Recommendation 16 – Community Awareness

National support should be provided for initiatives that develop community awareness and understanding of dyslexia, such as:

- Funding should be provided for existing Dyslexia help lines and support programs.
- Support for a Dyslexia Week should be developed.
- A mentor system by successful people who have dyslexia should be established.
- A Dyslexia section on the FACHSIA Raising Children website should be developed.
- Clear guidance should be provided to families on what appropriate provisions have become available for people with dyslexia.
- Media coverage of what assistance people with dyslexia are entitled to receive should be fostered.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Recommendation 17 – Dyslexia-friendly workplaces

A national program should be established for the development of 'dyslexia-friendly' workplaces detailing specific inclusion (at all levels of policy and practice) of the needs of employees who have dyslexia. Employment seekers with dyslexia should be eligible for funding under the Workplace Modification Scheme (this provides funding to people with disabilities to modify the workplace - physical modification, or the supply of assistive technology).

Recommendation 18 – Improving adult literacy courses

- The effectiveness of TAFE and adult learners programs in the remediation of adult illiteracy and access to learning / training should be evaluated.
- The Certificate I in Foundation Skills for Adults with Dyslexia course currently run at TAFEs in Western Australia should be adopted in all states and territories.
- Centrelink recommended literacy training courses should be monitored for effectiveness and accredited by specialists in the area of literacy difficulties.

DYSLEXIA RESEARCH FUNDING

Recommendation 19 – Funding for efficacy research

Funding for research to determine effective dyslexia support in schools, for example, funding for:

- Large randomised controlled trials of school-based dyslexia intervention studies including:
 - Evaluation of the efficacy of dyslexia treatment programs
 - Development and trial of models of dyslexia resilience programs and environments
 - Development and trial of models of teacher training and whole school support for effective use of assistive technology by students who have dyslexia

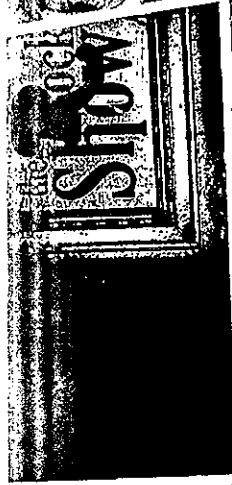
The UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee in its report dated 18 December 2009 recommended that “the Government . . . commission a large randomised controlled trial to identify the most effective and cost-effective early literacy intervention”.

A CONCLUDING EXAMPLE

One of the members of our Working Party, Jim Bond, has suffered throughout his life from profound dyslexia. Very recently he has begun to work with the Macquarie University Accessibility Services Unit. He is a man whose life has been transformed through the use of assistive technology. He has told the rest of us about the profound differences to his life that have resulted from his being able to access printed information independently for the first time in his life. In the space of a few weeks he has already begun a degree in political science at University, has been able to read the web (and its many references to himself), and his wife has had the first break in 30 years of having to read absolutely everything to him. Many other Australians need and deserve to have such opportunities made available to them.

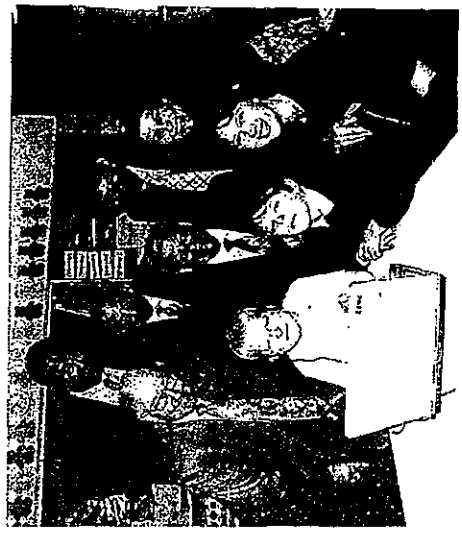
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what's new

JNSCRAMBLING DYSLEXIA & MAKING A LIFE LONG DIFFERENCE TO LOCAL KIDS



Mingara Life Oct/Nov 2009 p4-5

Dyslexia is a type of learning difficulty in which a person is challenged with language and words, more specifically reading and spelling. Dyslexia does not discriminate. It is not a symptom of low intelligence and sufferers are able to achieve well in other areas to the same education level as others, however they may be unable to read at the expected level. Common symptoms of dyslexia include difficulties with reading, spelling, comprehension and identification of words.

The cause of dyslexia is unknown and without early intervention and specialised education, sufferers can become frustrated, lose confidence and self esteem.

Statistics show, approximately 12% of the Australian population suffers from dyslexia in varying degrees. The effects of dyslexia in society include severe frustration, children becoming uncontrollable at school and at home, social conflict, followed by unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns, alcoholism, drug abuse and dependency.

Jim Bond knows what it's like to feel the frustration of learning difficulty, he suffers from dyslexia. For 21 years, Mr Bond from Killarney Vale on the NSW Central Coast, has campaigned to have dyslexia recognised as a disability to enable early support for children suffering from the condition and specialised training for special needs teachers.

With tenacity and passion, Mr Bond, engaged the support of Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes, representative of the NSW Legislative Council, to assist him in getting a private members bill passed through the NSW Parliament, recognising dyslexia as a disability and children with it as having 'significant learning difficulties'.

In accordance with Article 23 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, states:

"Any child with a disability should have access to and receive an education in a manner conducive to achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development."

Conforming with this Article, on 3 December 2008, legislation was passed through NSW Parliament, recognising dyslexia as a disability, committing the government to provide educational support for children with significant learning difficulties.

Following the passing of the Education Amendment Bill, the Government set aside \$90 million to train 80 new full-time special education teachers to work with students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Professor Max Coltheart a cognitive scientist from Macquarie University designed and implemented this training for teachers in NSW, ensuring they are equipped to support the children and conform to the Education Amendment (Educational Support for Children with Significant Learning Difficulties) Bill 2008.

Taking the new legislation to the next level, Mr Bond, investigated new technologies to assist dyslexic children and teachers in the classroom. Quantum Technology, distributors of assistive technology solutions to students, have software that will help students with significant learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, gain independent and immediate access to educational materials. The software, called WYNN, provides bi-modal access (visual and auditory enhancements) to any type of electronic information (scanned, web, Word, PDF etc). WYNN can speak out text whilst simultaneously highlighting the spoken words. This technology is instrumental to supporting children with dyslexia.

Standing true to our vision to 'make a significant contribution to the quality of community life' Mingara recently presented The Entrance Public School with \$6,500 to become the first school in NSW to adopt this software. The Entrance Public School has been classified as a "high-need" school in NSW, with 25% of students identified as having a learning disability, so this software will be life-changing for some students.

Photo (L-R): Professor Max Coltheart, Jim O'Donnell (Quantum Technology), Jim Bond (Dyslexia Campaigner), the Hon. Reverend Dr Gordon Moyes, Grant Glavinan (acting CEO, Mingara), teachers and students from The Entrance Public School.

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Date _____

James Justice Bond JP

8 September 1999

PAPER - FALLING BETWEEN THE CRACKS; How the System fails Dyslexics

For the Human Rights, Disability and Education Conference, 17 September 1999

I was born in 1959 in Gosford NSW. From 3rd class I first recognised that I was somehow different from the other children, who harassed me for reasons I didn't understand. Teachers were also impatient with me, marked me as a dummy and sat me at the back of the class, ignoring me. My parents tried to assist me by hiring extra tuition, but they did not have the knowledge or skills to help me beyond the most rudimentary learning. I had a speech impediment, which was not corrected until 1969 by Professor Delbridge of Macquarie University, who also the first to recognise my Dyslexia. You may be wondering how long has this mysterious condition been known about?

Well, Dyslexia was first identified in 1912 in England, and has had that name since then. The majority of the teachers then did not know what dyslexia was. I suspect many still don't. People in broad society still do not know what it is. Perhaps people like Kerry and James Packer could move mountains by publicly acknowledging their dyslexia? The list of famous and successful people with dyslexia would surprise many :

Thomas Eddison, Albert Einstein, Paul Erlich, the actress Susan Hampshire, William James, General George Patten, Nelson Rockefeller, the sculptor Auguste Rodin, US Presidents George Washington and Woodrow Wilson, and most poignantly perhaps the American celebrity Bill Cosby's son - who was completing a Masters in Education shortly before he was tragically shot and killed.

In addition to my attendance at Epping Boys High School, I also enrolled in the Macquarie University School of English in 1970 where for the next 2 to 3 years they attempted to teach me how to read write and use numbers. This did advance my education to a basic level, but not a competitive level compared to my peers at school. This was despite various tests and the opinion of professionals that I was above average intelligence. In 1973, at the ripe age of 14 years and 9 months, I received the school's "Citizenship Award" and completed school - with a letter to my father from the Principal stating that they could not teach me anything further given my condition, which they could not address, and that I should do better leaving school and seeking manual employment. They had no hope of giving me academic skills, and had instead concentrated on giving me labouring skill's and expected that to be my only option in the workforce.

My inability to read and write had a catastrophic effect on my employment prospects. I have applied for hundreds of jobs. Because I could not get jobs requiring literacy, like many thousands of people who cannot read and write I took on labouring jobs. As an indication of my frustration and increasing sense of alienation, and in order to get attention with employers I even went to the extreme of changing my surname - well, it worked, people remember the name!

Eventually I obtained work with the State Rail Authority where I did various labouring jobs - I had failed the Trainee Engineman Test (because I could not read) so instead I became a loco cleaner! I became an Acting Plumber by way of on-the-job training (because I could not take part in TAFE courses). Then in 1982 I injured my back at work and my employment was terminated. This left me with 2 disabilities - Dyslexia and a back condition. For someone who could only rely on labouring work, this effectively shut me out of the workforce and condemned me and my family to poverty.

I used to hide the fact that I could not read. But after X my injury, I needed help. More and more I "came out" admitting my Dyslexia, which I had previously hidden through embarrassment. Now I could not afford to do this anymore. CRS became involved. They assessed me and suggested that I tried for Security Work. The CRS and CES financially assisted me with training for this. However, my applications were unsuccessful with State and Federal Government agencies.

In 1994 I settled a long legal dispute with the NSW Government concerning employment discrimination in a public sector job that I had applied for in 1989. This received some publicity in local papers and Parliament. With wider public knowledge of my condition I immediately found rejection and alienation from people I had considered friends and neighbours. From then on our social life stopped. My family was snubbed and ceased attending social functions at schools and so on. My children suffered humiliation from mates at school who had heard about me from their parents. The legal battle was combative and stressful to me and my family, and though it came down in my favour, the settlement included a non-publicity clause that effectively stopped me speaking about my case. This further increased my alienation.

My solicitor recommended psychological help, particularly after the protracted legal dispute and associated alienation. After 12 months of intense psychological help, they recommended that I do a TAFE course in Small Business Enterprise. I completed this, with the assistance of a scribe, achieving a credit level certificate, proving that I was not stupid and could achieve academically at Tertiary Level.

My alienation turned around and I realised that I should become an active lobbyist for my rights and the rights of the 1 in 7 people with Dyslexia and the 1 in 5 with Learning Disabilities - incidentally these are Government figures. My life since then has been incredibly busy fighting ignorance and obstinacy, and the tendency of institutions to be confrontational and litigious rather than cooperative and pragmatic when confronted by citizens claiming their right to participation in society. I should point out that when I describe myself as a "lobbyist", I mean an unpaid lobbyist!

Dyslexia and associated "Learning problems" are contentious issues today in Education and Employment. The Department of Education carefully refers to "Learning Difficulties" rather than "Disabilities", presumably in order to exclude these conditions from special funding. In the US, they more confidently refer to Learning Disabilities, and expend a lot of money and academic energy trying to find remedial technology and teaching methods.

Some time in 1988 I was showing my kids the State Library of New South Wales, and almost accidentally I overheard a voice miraculously coming from a machine they had there called the "Kurzweil Reading Edge", reading out the text of a book that it had scanned. I was dumbstruck. In all my years of struggle, nobody had told me that such technology existed. I wept to think how this technology could have helped me in my education and employment and how different my life might have been. Since that day I have lobbied State Federal and Local Governments, Rights Groups, Employers, Libraries, Universities, Colleges and Schools to have this kind of technology instated to assist people with a literacy, learning or a vision disability, including Dyslexia. It has been a long struggle, with many successes and failures, but in that time technology has improved remarkably and the only excuse is political and institutional. The means are there. It is either ignorance or opposition that blocks the way.

The current Kurzweil technology is called Kurzweil 3000. It is a computer program that scans printed material onto the computer screen. This is an exact colour image of the original, which can include diagrams and photographs as well as text. The image can be magnified and spoken out loud by the computer. As the computer speaks, a coloured highlight tracks the spoken word, which can be magnified in a separate window. This complementary of speech and visual image is highly effective for people with reading disabilities. The colour of the text can be changed to suit,

The effectiveness of this speech and Mr Vaughan's involvement shows the importance of political leadership on these issues. Since then we have seen the beginnings of success - awareness of the needs of Dyslexics, new teaching methods and technology, and the will to implement solutions. My struggle to make people aware, in tandem with improvements in technology, the effectiveness of the law in protecting the rights of disadvantaged people, all in combination with political leadership over-riding bureaucratic inertia, has resulted in real solutions for people like myself.

So, where am I today? I am on the Board of the Mater Dei Catholic College and representative of the Broken Bay Diocese, advising on special education and other issues. My most recent success? Another legal case between myself and Public Recruitment Services Australia, over my long standing attempt over many years to enter the Public Service; I have taken the entrance exam 5 times over the last 10 years. Once again, I have had to use the sledgehammer of the law, taking the case to the Human Rights Commission, once again successfully. This will result in changes to the test Procedure taking into account the needs of Dyslexic applicants.

This is good news, but I should like to end on a sombre reminder of the appalling consequences of not helping Dyslexics - including social failure, depression, and suicide.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to give a voice to the thousands of Dyslexic people who, like me, were never given the opportunities taken for granted by every other schoolchild.

I should like to acknowledge, in no particular order, and with apologies to those too numerous to mention:

Dr William Allport (Killarney Vale)
Dr George Miller (Killarney Vale)
Dr Michael Slattery (Principal Mater Dei Catholic College, Tuggerah)
Dr Greg Robinson (Newcastle University, Senior Lecturer, Special Education)
Dr Paul Whiting (Sydney University)
Dr David Kemp (Minister for Education and Training)
Michael Lee (Shadow Minister for Education, Member for Central Coast)
Senator John Teeney (Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Education)
Tim Fischer (ex Deputy Prime Minister)
Brian Vaughan (ex Chairperson Standing Committee on Law and Justice)
Kurzweil Educational Systems and their distributor in Australia and New Zealand, Optek Systems
Anna Cody Director of Kingsford Legal Centre, Faculty of Law University of NSW
Chris Public, President of the Anti Discrimination Board of NSW
Reverend Father Robert Brogan (The Entrance Parish)

1999-State Council Representative Broken Bay Catholic Schools

2001-Board Member St Peters Catholic College, Tuggerah

2002 Employment Workplace Relations and Education References Committee. Education of Students with disabilities

2003 Vis. Lecturer of Special Needs. Catholic Universities.

2004

There is no doubt in my mind that the DET disability criteria discriminates against dyslexic students. Recommendation that the disability criteria should recognise all disabilities, and adoption of the technology like the Kurzweil 3000, so special needs students can achieve their full potential

2003-Enquiry into early intervention for N.S.W. Learning Difficulties

as can the reading voice and rate of speaking, and at any time Dictionary definitions can be obtained as well as pronunciation. There are many other features, including using these tools to read the Internet, that are of proven benefit to people with reading disabilities including Dyslexia and learning disabilities, and even for people whose first language isn't English, which may be of help to our immigrant communities. There are scientific studies from the United States that show significant improvements in reading speed and comprehension for these people. Where this technology has been demonstrated to Special Education Teachers, they have all been convinced of its effectiveness. Their problem has only been access to funds to purchase it.

The problem is this; in theory, certain disabled children are allocated by the Department of Education, on a per head basis \$1800 per annum to meet their special needs. This money is pooled and administered to the schools on a proportional basis, but it is up to the schools to spend the money as they see fit. This does not necessarily result in direct spending on special education for individual children. For example, how is it that I was told at a recent meeting at Woy Woy High School that they have a budget of only \$500 for all remedial tools including books and software for 40 special needs students? The problem is partly mysterious budgeting but also partly definitions - the Department of Education is very careful to refer to Dyslexia as a "difficulty" rather than a "disability", and this extends to all "Learning Difficulties". In addition, The Department of Education advises that it cannot recommend, review or prescribe technology, that it is up to individual schools to find out about and decide upon themselves. Unfortunately, I don't have all the time in the world to personally visit every school to evangelise this technology, which seems to be the only way left open by the Department's attitude.

On another tack, the effectiveness of standing up for my rights has been demonstrated by legal rulings in my favour. For example, the establishment of Kurzweil 3000 at my local Library at Wyong Shire was only after legal dispute with the Council. I had tried everything short of legal action before this, two years of talking with committees, before I was compelled to use the sledgehammer of the law. The matter was settled by way of conciliation through the Human Rights Commission. The conciliation included the purchase of Kurzweil 3000 by the Library and a ruling that the technology be shown to local schools at a special demonstration with media publicity. This led to it being seen by Dr Michael Slattery, Principal of the Mater Dei Catholic College, Tuggerah, who immediately saw its application in remedial literacy. He raised funds for it and successfully established it at the school. Incidentally, despite the confrontational start, Kurzweil 3000 is, now considered a valuable resource at Wyong Shire Library.

On 17 September 1998, The Honourable Brian Vaughan (Chairperson Standing Committee Law and Justice) raised the issue of Dyslexia in State Parliament of New South Wales and recommended the Kurzweil 3000 system be adopted. He said:

"The use by Mater Dei college of this computer technology illustrates what all State schools and community libraries should possess to ensure that a comprehensive service and adequate education is provided to those who suffer, for example, a visual impairment, not only dyslexia ... bearing in mind that the Premier announced in a media release on 15 September that the Labor Government has implemented a \$2 million literacy strategy, it seems that this technology ought to be adopted. I agree that it cannot be purchased by every school or library, but surely it is up to this State, our Government, and the education system to provide this technology to regional schools and libraries."

(Hansard page 7603, Legislative Council of NSW, 17 September 1998)