

Submission  
No 392

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

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Training

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## Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Provision of Education for Students with Disability or Special Needs

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) provides a service to all schools across the Northern Territory, including Non Government schools.

The approach to service delivery for students with disabilities has been modified over time, most recently driven by the need for compliance with the Australian Government's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and its legislative guidelines *Disability Standards for Education (2005) (DSE)* and the *NT Anti-Discrimination Act 1996*. In line with these Acts and standards DET reviewed and modified its Special Education Policy to align with these Acts, resulting in the new Students with Disabilities Policy 2008.

There are a range of provisions available to cater for the educational opportunities for students with identified needs. These include inclusion in regular classrooms with a range of supports, Intensive Support Units, Satellite Classes and Special Schools and Annexes.

### **Schooling Provisions:**

#### *Inclusion in Regular Classrooms with Consultative Support*

- This type of provision is appropriate for students with disabilities who can successfully participate in all or most classroom activities, with minimal intervention. The Principal may seek guidance, advisory and/or therapy consultative support from specialist personnel.

#### *Inclusion in Regular Classrooms with Additional Support*

- In order for some students with disabilities to achieve quality outcomes in their regular class, additional support may be needed. This support may be given from a Special Education Teacher, Advisory personnel, Special Education Support Officer or a Special Education Support Assistant (previously known as an Inclusion Support Assistant).

#### *Inclusion in Regular Classrooms with Withdrawal Support*

- Some students with disabilities may receive support from staff within the regular classroom and on a withdrawal basis. This may include a Special Education Teacher, Advisory personnel, Special Education Support Officer or a Special Education Support Assistant. The programs may be short term, transitional or long term.

#### *Intensive Support Units*

- Some students with disabilities may receive support primarily within the context of an intensive unit attached to a regular school, but are able to participate in regular classes with varying degrees of support from Special Education Support Staff. The programs may be short term, transitional or long term.

*Special Schools and Annexes*

A Special School or Annexe is a DET Chief Executive approved or recognised alternative special education setting for students with disabilities.

- Students must meet specific criteria to enrol in these settings.
- Students enrolled in a specialised setting receive their education in a variety of contexts, which may include regular classrooms, colleges, tertiary settings, the local community and the workplace, as well as in the specialised setting environment.

In terms of purpose built special education facilities, DET has Special Schools, Annexes, Centres and Units that cater for a range of students with disabilities.

Current approved / recognised Special Schools and Annexes:

School	Enrolment #
• Acacia Hill School (Alice Springs)	52
• Kintore Street School (Katherine)	10
• Namarluk School (Darwin – primary)	115
• Henbury School (Darwin – middle/secondary)	72
• Centralian Middle School Annexe (Alice Springs)	6
• Humpty Doo Primary Special Ed Annexe (Darwin Rural)	11
• Katherine High School Annexe	15
• Nhulunbuy Primary Special Education Annexe	7
• Palmerston High Special Education Centre	40
• Woodroffe Primary Special Education Unit (Palmerston)	19

# February 2010 enrolment data

*Special Units*

A Special Unit is an alternate special education setting for students with a range of identified special needs that meet the eligibility criteria for the specific facility.

*Hearing: Gillen Primary School and Maningrida CEC*

To access this provision a student must meet the following criteria:

- Bilateral moderate or higher hearing loss (at least 30 dB or more) according to the Australian Hearing Standards, with concurrent functioning deficit (>2 to <=15%ile) using the Profile for Hearing Impairment, or requires support to maintain educational level.
- Bilateral moderate or higher hearing loss (at least 40 dB or more) according to the Australian Hearing Standards, with significant current deficit (= < 2%ile) using the Profile for Hearing Impairment, or requires support to maintain educational level.

*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Malak Primary ASD Learning Centre*

To access this provision a student must meet the following criteria:

- a confirmed diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger Syndrome / High Functioning Autism
- a history of education and social difficulties, and disengagement
- aged between seven and twelve years
- has no additional medical condition that impacts on the students learning
- is involved in formal intervention by SSD

**Funding:**

Students with disabilities are supported in a number of ways. The current types of support available are:

*Equipment Grants:*

\$50,000pa Equipment grants are provided to enable curriculum access for students with an identified disability ie for essential mobility, communication and self-care needs, and not for consumables or personnel.

*Transport:*

The Department of Lands and Planning provides transport assistance for students for whom mobility and/or safety prevents them from travelling independently to and from school.

*Special Needs Resource Funding:*

\$5.43M pa funding to support schools to provide assistance to students who have met the criterion.

*Infrastructure:*

\$30M committed over the next five years to build and upgrade special schools across the NT.

*LNSLN Special School Projects:*

\$230,000 pa per capita funding allocated to Special Schools and Annexes based on enrolments to assist with educational adjustments.

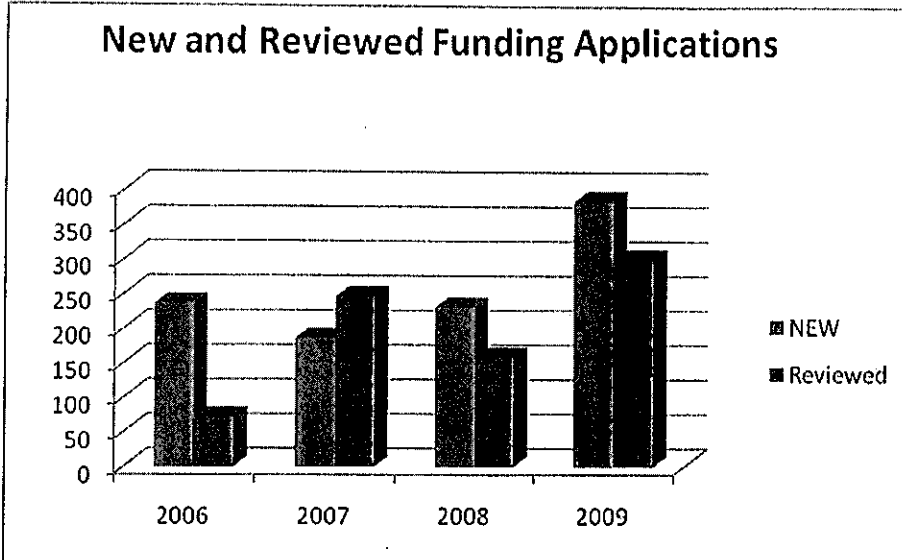
*Advisory Support:*

Education Advisor teams directly support schools across the NT. Note the following table:

Disability Staff	Darwin City / Katherine	Palmerston / Rural / Arnhem	Alice Springs / Barkly	ST2 Senior Advisors
Education Advisor Special Education	2	3	3	1
Educational Psychologist	3	3	3	2
Early Childhood Advisor	3	3	2.5	1
Hearing	1	2	2	1
Vision	3		.5	1
Transition to Work	1 NT Wide			1
ASD	3 (including 1 NT wide)			1
Gifted Education	1 NT Wide			0

### Students with Disability Data:

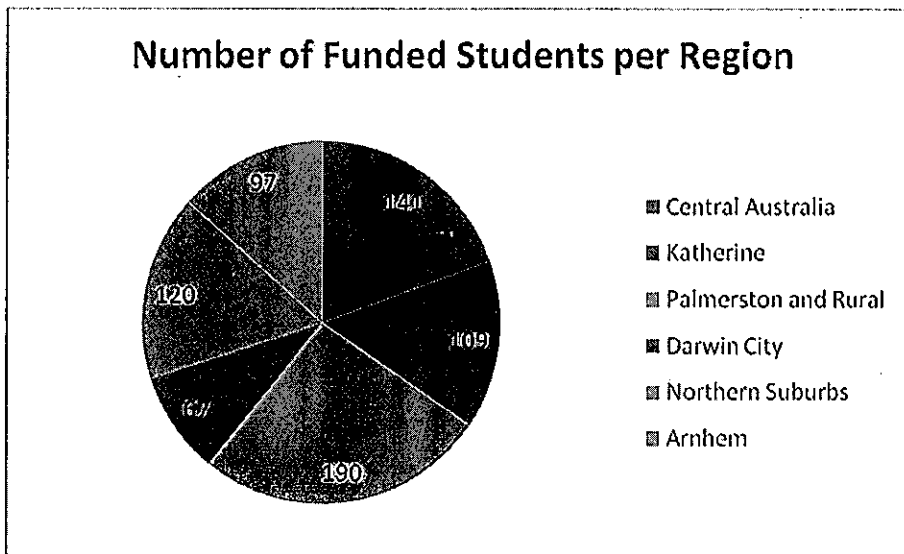
The following graph represents the new applications that are received as well as students whose funding needs to be reviewed. Reviews occur four times a year and new applications are also processed four times per year.



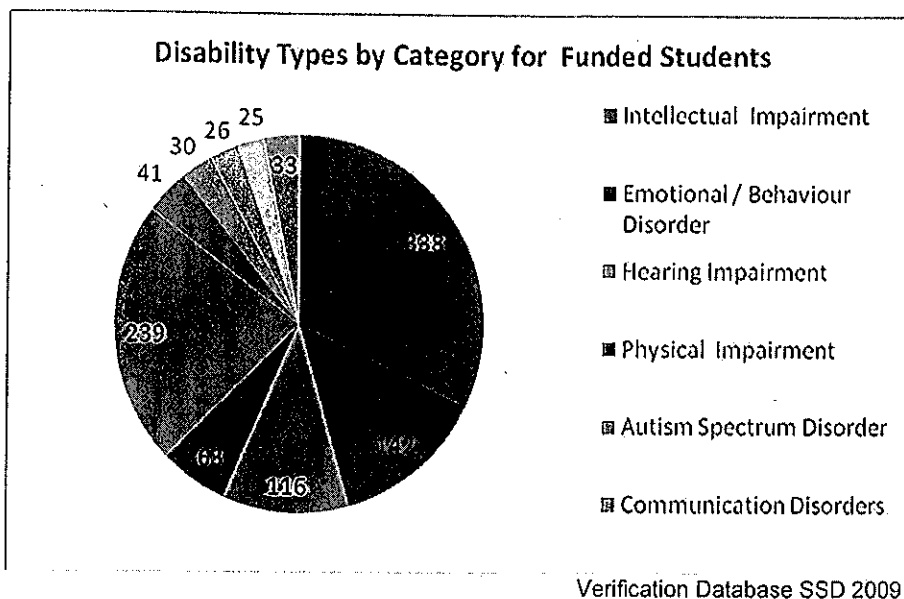
Ascertainment database SSD 2009

This graph demonstrates the increase in applications for funding from schools over recent years. DET is currently reviewing its funding allocation model.

There are currently 724 funded students with disabilities in the Northern Territory of this, 14% are in the high needs category. The break down across the regions for the 724 funded students is as follows:



The pie graph below represents the breakdown into the specific disability categories for the 724 funded students.



Student Services has 5,132 students recorded as current clients on the database including the 724 funded students. This represents 16% of the total NT student population.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

### ***Funding:***

DET is investigating alternative models for Special Needs Resource (SNR) funding as the steady growth across the NT in the number of students being diagnosed with a disability has significant implications for the financial resources that are available to support these students. Additionally the way in which SNR funding is generally utilised by schools to support students with disabilities does not always provide the best outcomes for the student, eg having a Special Education Support Assistant directly attached to the individual student. This too requires investigation.

### ***Data:***

The need for a better coordinated approach to data across the system regarding students with disabilities.

### ***Special Education Teachers:***

There are 144\* Special Education Teachers (SETs) across the NT. A number of these teachers don't have the qualifications, knowledge, skills or experience that is required to effectively fulfil their role as a SET. It is difficult to recruit qualified SET to the NT.

\*2009 staffing data.

### ***Professional Learning:***

DET has identified that there is a lack of opportunities for SETs and support staff to participate in professional learning related to Special Education. As a result additional effort is now being applied to this issue. This is particularly important in the NT context where regular turnover of SET's requires constant professional learning updates.

***Service Delivery:***

Travel to remote communities is often difficult and expensive due to costs of transport, lack of accommodation and access due to weather. This impacts on the service provided to many communities. DET is trialling alternative service delivery models in an effort to address this ongoing issue.