

Submission
No 405

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

Organisation: Autism Advisory and Support Service
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Position: President
Date received: 24/02/2010

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

- **The department wants to take the individual funding for children away and give the funding directly to schools. If children move schools then they will have no funding for the remainder of the year. We cannot let this happen.**

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

- **At the moment a panel from the dept education dictate the level of funding, the placement of the child and the location of that placement from a form which does not truly reflect the child with a disability.**
- **Parents are not told they have the right to appeal a decision**
- **There is still a lot of confusion for parents about children going to primary from preschool/child care. Firstly you have to have preschool/child care centre that have had children with Autism in the centre previously so that they understand what needs to be done and when. Parents need to know to contact their local school principals at least 15 months before they go to school (that time span was actually suggest by a school principal). Some parents aren't being told till the very last minute what school their child is going to and are left to stress and worry about where their child will be going. It can be hard emotional enough having a child go to school, let alone a child with additional needs and not knowing where that child will be going and how it will all work.**
- **Then another transitional stage that needs more attention is the transition from primary to high school. Once again it becomes a stressful time for the children and their families. More preparation needs to made into the transition into high school. A buddy system needs to be set up in place with a mainstream student to try to provide extra support. This does not mean that student is responsible for the individual with Autism but provide the individual with a fellow student that they can approach when there are difficulties. The mainstream buddy could be rewarded with their support and assistance noted in their school reports and receive may be a certificate.**

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

- **Not enough places for kids with ASD in ASD classes.**
- **Not enough ED classes. These kids are in IO or mainstream settings where they are then suspended or expelled for displaying behaviors which are simply manifestations of their mental health issues.**
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4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms

- **Good principal, good teacher and good support for the child. Bad principal, bad teacher, no assistance/hope for the child.**
- **Kids only get teachers aid for 1 hour per day if they are lucky.**
- **Many kids in mainstream can only attend school for 2 hours per day as there is no other suitable placement for them, aid only funded for 1 hour per day and teacher/class is left to struggle for the other hour. Child doesn't get an education and parent cant work.**
- Parents are not always being provided with the Individual Education Plans within an adequate time frame. Parents therefore can't not coordinate therapies or have a clear understand of exactly where their children are at or what support they require from therapists outside of the school.
- Provisions need to be made for a communication book for children that are not coping well or are having difficulties in particular areas. This would not need to be done for every child not just those that are currently struggling to ensure that there is clear communication between the parents and the teachers.
- Reports must be comprehensive in that they look at the abilities and the inabilities of the child. Putting a positive spin on reports do not help children with Autism if they are in danger of not being able to cope within a class room or are falling behind. Support and assistance cannot be sort if a clear and honest picture is not given as to the difficulties the children are facing. A crisis plan or plan of action should then be created with the parents, teacher, teachers aide and principal to assist the child.

- a child with Autism can be sent to a school that is out of area making it difficult for parents to get them to school, other siblings to a different school and then make it to and from work.
- Early Intervention places for children the year before school are very limited. For one child that gets in there are many who miss out. There seems to be an issue of there not being a standardized criteria for who is selected and who misses out. Also an Early Intervention class in South Penrith has been closed this year which means that there is one less option for children in the current area. Resource support to children who are going to school the following year is only for once every fortnight for 2 hours which just is lacking especially for those children who really should have been in an Early Intervention Support Setting.
- Some schools have a variety of teachers' aides that they rotate, so children don't always have the same teacher. Also in some of these schools any therapists who may come into the school are asked to only deal with the classroom teacher and are not permitted to discuss the therapy with the Aide.
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- Teachers aides need to be trained of how to interact manage and be provided with greater resources for assisting the children in which they support in the classroom.
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- Playground support for children with Autism is essential ensuring proper integration with mainstream peers so they are not bullied during these times.
- There are quite a few schools with IO classes who do not have adequate play areas for children with Autism and they are placed in fenced play areas that make them stand out as being different to the other children, do not have toilet facilities, play equipment, shaded areas and enough seating for these children. Seven Hills Public school is a good example of this.
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5. The provision of a suitable curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students

- **Large amount of parents who are forced or encouraged to home school their children**
- **They are not told of the difference between home schooling and distance education**
- **Many parents have unwillingly not registered their child for home schooling as they were not guided, they were simply thrown in the deep end**
- **Home schooling means you have no support for curriculum and no access to exams or certificates (HSC, school certificate)**
- **There are not enough tertiary options for kids with a disability.**

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

Currently the govt only funds early intervention. Many children are not diagnosed till they are in school which leaves them vulnerable. Interventions and services should be accessible to all children at any age and this should be funded through Medicare.

Many schools are reluctant to allow therapists into the class to assist children for one on one private sessions. Many parents cannot afford private therapies. This should be part of the child's Individual education plan(IEP) and funded by the department. At best there should be a minimum of a one hour group therapy session per week. These interventions must be provided by a therapist with lots of experience in successfully treating children with ASD.

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

- Now mainstream teachers get only 1 unit to learn about all disabilities.
- They need to spend at least one year learning about all disabilities with a focus on ASD for one day per week theory and practical component of 2 days per week.
- Teachers need to recognize the traits of asd as they will see many children who are undiagnosed in their careers.
- There needs to be compulsory refresher courses on ASD every 2 years
- Teachers need to form partnerships with parents so they can work together on strategies from therapists to form a consistency between home and school.
- This should be for all teachers including early childhood and tertiary education.
- Currently Teachers aids do not have compulsory training. They should be required to do initial special needs training and compulsory 2 year refresher courses.
- the lack of training of these teachers to be able to cope with any disability in students in their classes, and as a result the lack of understanding of their issues, needs etc.. as a result these kids are the constant target of bullies who are often underhanded and know when to pick their moments of bullying. I believe that a part of any teachers training should as a matter of course included at least a year of training in teaching students with special needs as this area of education in the main stream is growing alarmingly. If that means an extra year of education for teachers how much better equipped, than they currently are, would they be?

8. Any other related matters.

- **Transport to school for children with additional needs is facilitated by Transport Department by funded and governed by Education Department. Current policy states that kids can be on the bus for up to one and a half hours either side of being picked up or dropped off. So for a child who starts school at 8.45am and is first to be picked up, the bus can turn up at 7.30am to get to school on time. For many children this is too early. They don't get to have breakfast, toilet or have personal care before they leave. Many take medication to sleep at night or suffer from insomnia so this is just too early for them. This policy needs to change to no more than 30 minutes on the bus.**
- **Many kids pass more than one school on the way to the school the Department has chose for them. EVERY SCHOOL NEEDS TO HAVE AN AUTISM CLASS AS THE NUMBERS REFLECT THIS NEED.**