

**INQUIRY INTO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR
SPECIAL NEEDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
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As public school teachers and NSW Teachers Federation members we continue to campaign for the right of every student to receive a public education of the highest quality and for all students to become successful learners.

We are committed to equity and excellence for every student and in doing so assert, as was confirmed in The Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski Review) that it costs more to deliver on these values for students with disability.

We will not stand by the currently inadequate provision of education to students with disability and the lifelong implications this inequity has.

The National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) and Australian Education Act 2013, acknowledge the requirement for, and commitment to additional funds for students with disability. The NSW government's unwavering commitment to the Gonski funding model paves the way for this investment to be realised.

We stand ready to work with our employer and NSW government in delivering equitable quality education but can only do so effectively when equipped with the necessary tools and supported by a system that is responsive to need.

We offer the following submission as an index of unmet need and a call for equity for every student.

A) Equitable access to resources for students with a disability or special needs in regional and metropolitan areas.

Students with disabilities do not have the same access to both individuals and institutions that support students within schools. In our case this is evident when students who require immediate services to support their mental health are denied this. Our small, regional central school is often without a counsellor. This impacts upon students and the community's well-being as there is very little immediate assistance available to provide for students who need extra support. A consistent school counsellor would rectify this and provide where there is need.

B) The impact of the Government's 'Every Student Every School' policy on the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs in New South Wales public schools.

ESES has not established an adequate level of specialist presence within the workplace to effectively support student need. We are more than 30 kilometres away from the nearest larger centre and some staff have never met with specialists who provide the necessary support. We currently do not have a counsellor at our campus - a counsellor being provided to us has not yet been finalised. Counsellors when they are on campus sometimes have infrequent visits. If visits are missed there is no make-up time to redeem the student's counsellor time lost. This does not assist our students who have immediate and spontaneous need. At least having a permanent counsellor on campus would help. Having immediate access to a variety of in-school professionals would also help.

C) Developments since the 2010 inquiry by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs and the implementation of its recommendations.

Teachers know their students well and what they require. Often it is the submissions for access to these extra requirements for students with disabilities that are denied. Teachers are working on top of their loads to complete submissions to the best of their abilities, and these are often rejected for students whom teachers know are in need of extra support through funding. Listening to teachers and paying heed to what they know best would assist changing this. Making it less burdensome to fill in submissions would also help.

D) Complaint and review mechanisms within the school systems in New South Wales for parents and carers.

Our staff and parents are at times visibly distressed when students are refused funding under the current model. Teachers have both a responsibility and a need to support parents of students with disabilities. Teachers' recommendations for financial support are denied for what are deemed 'mild' disabilities, particularly within the secondary setting. This means that students whom teachers know need immediate access to educational and mental/emotional support are denied through a rejection of funding. There is also a lack of specialists at the ready to provide support for them. Providing specialists on campus and fewer regulations on who is eligible for funding would help students here.

E) Any other related matters.

Teachers feel that the professional development they need to be up-skilled in in order to adequately teach students with disabilities is falling into their own hands, at their own expense, and in their own time: time that they need to prepare lessons and learning. Being in a regional area, courses are sometimes located in larger centres such as Sydney that are 500 kilometres or more away. Not only are teachers finding they are paying for courses, they need to pay for travel and accommodation on top of this. These extra expenses cannot be sustained by teachers who need constant professional development and the time to plan for adequate learning. Having adequate training available at times that do not impede upon teachers' planning-for-teaching time would help. Taking away the financial burden from teachers would ease this issue.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.