

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

**Name:** Name suppressed (PC)

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Partially  
Confidential



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.**

Current access to resources, funding and support placements for students with a disability or special needs are inadequate at . Students have not yet received the promised Gonski component of "Students With Disability Loading". As a result, we rely on redirecting money from the school budget that is earmarked for other programs in order to adequately meet our legal requirements in providing a quality education for our students with disabilities. Our principal is forced to make difficult decisions regarding the allocation of funds between providing for mainstream students or students with disabilities. The level of support and funding from the government is detrimental to our students. Currently we have students with autism with high needs who are provided only with minimal integration funding of less than \$8000 in their first year of high school. This money barely covers the provision of a SLSO for these students who need full time support. A substantial lack of placements for students with ED diagnosis means that we are forced to place these students into classes allocated for students with BD needs or into mainstream. These students have different support levels and require different teaching approaches to ensuring a quality education.

#### **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.**

The introduction of ESES has resulted in the NAPLAN test determining the provision of flexible funding and LaS Teachers. This is an unfair way of measuring students' learning and subsequent funding requirements. Students with long term diagnoses lose or have their funding capped according to their results in a single test. Others who are just above the cut off on this assessment scale, but still require support in mainstream classes, are deemed ineligible for funding. Furthermore,

when LaS teachers are provided the numbers are substantially inadequate. At we only have an allocation of 2.2 LaS teachers to assist with students with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. This means that a large number of students are left unsupported in their learning. Under ESES, staff are now required to profile all learning and support needs of individual students in collaboration with students and their parents. While this is a valuable tool, the increased workload on staff impacts upon their ability to provide quality learning as time is taken away from their lesson preparation and regular teaching duties. The provision of online professional learning has typically been limited in quality and face to face training is often only provided in Sydney, making it challenging for local schools to attend specialist courses on supporting students' learning needs.

maintains its commitment to providing a quality education for all students; however, it is only through re-allocating and re-distributing current Gonski funds that we are able to support students with disabilities and additional learning needs. The promised Gonski Disability Loading needs to occur to ensure the Department meets their legal obligation to provide equitable education.

### **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.**

The National Collection of Consistent Data showed that less than half of NSW students with disabilities or additional learning needs are receiving any funding at all. This evidence is contrary to the departmental claim that no child with a disability is missing out on the services they need. At we certainly have students who are suffering due to the refusal by the Federal Government to implement the Gonski Students with Disability loading. This loading has now been postponed until 2018 at the earliest. Every year that it is delayed is another cohort of students with disability who will miss out on vital support and the chance to benefit fully from their education. Of the 31 recommendations made by 2010 Inquiry, very few have been achieved. Students with disability have not received their increased funding, funding assessments and placements do not occur in a timely or readily accessible manner and applications for placements are often blocked or delayed due to arbitrary funding criteria that exclude a large number of students needing support.

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

Currently parents tend to face excessive wait times for official recognition of disability and funding approval. Parents trying to get the best outcome for their child from an under resourced school system commonly face other compounding challenges. Often our students at come from low SES families with parents who simply may not be able to advocate for their child. This is the case with some of our students who are unable to access placements. Parents also regularly face issues where their child loses funding when transitioning to secondary school and students and parents are forced to reapply. The Transition Support Service System remains overly complicated for parents and carers to seek information.

### **E) Any other related matters.**

The Gonski SWD Loading was due to be released at the beginning of 2015. The full implementation of Gonski including the Students with Disability Loading has the potential to resolve many of these equity issues. At we would be able to:

- Increase specialist teachers to support every teacher working with students with a disability
- Provide early and ongoing access to specialist support such as mental health professionals
- Provide time for teachers and Learning Support Teams to undertake transition planning with

students and their families

- Provide ongoing professional development
- Provide adequate levels of integration funding and specialist placements based on need.
