

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 23 February 2017

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.

Students who come under the DDA, are not receiving adequate and timely support to access the curriculum. This is due to the fact that the demand is so high and the needs are very intensive across the areas of behaviour, social, emotional, physical and academic. For a school of over 1400 students, only those students with very high needs are able to access this support and other students who have learning difficulties, are unable to access. Children who come under the Integration Funding are supported well but it is an intensive and time-consuming process to access this funding. Teachers are not informed by the department what specialist equipment and adequate resources are available and how to access them. The school does its best to support the teachers, students and parents with limited funding and resources.

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.

Allocation to students with needs requires a review as the NAPLAN data is not a true reflection of the needs in our school. For example, our students with highest needs choose to be absent on the day of the NAPLAN assessments as it causes anxiety and overwhelms them. Additionally, our high performing students skew our results to appear at a high standard, however there are many students who come under the DDA and are overlooked. There are many students with many needs who require support prior to Year 3 but the funding does not allow for this. Due to this funding model, our school only receives 0.8 of LaST allocation for a large school of over 1400 students. Thus only students with highest needs are able to be supported and receive limited support. This impacts on the classroom teachers and other students' learning as they need to devote more time to students with high needs. More itinerant support is needed for classroom teachers rather than the online

courses, which do not cater for individual needs.

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.

A lot of recommendations from the 2010 inquiry have not come to fruition and is much needed. For example, we have a part time counsellor whereas under the recommendation of 1:500 ratio, we are under-resourced. Consistency of regular counsellor helps build teacher capacity and develops rapport with parents, students and teachers. More classes for autism are needed across the state, not multi-categorical classes as it does not meet the unique needs of the students in that class placement. We agree with the 2010 recommendations however that have not been implemented, which are desperately needed for students, teachers and parents.

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

Our school establishes meaningful relationships with parents/carers of students with disabilities however this impacts all staff involved and takes teaching and planning time away from students with disabilities as well as other students in class. More funding is needed to support this relationship so that learning programs can continue effectively.

E) Any other related matters.

There has been a significant increase in the number of students presenting with high language needs, gross and fine-motor difficulties and physical disabilities which parents/carers cannot afford to support outside school. Early intervention programs are implemented in Child-care to identify the needs of the children however there is no continuation in the early years of primary school. This also impacts students of migrants as they may not have attended child-care or preschool, therefore not been identified with needs and require identification and support at school. We strongly recommend that the government allocates permanent full-time speech pathologists and Occupational Therapists to school with separate allocation of funding. Teachers are working tirelessly to support all students adequately and are increasingly frustrated by the lack of support provided through funding and resources. This also affects their wellbeing, thereby impacting the quality of teaching. We follow all the guidelines to support children in a classroom, parents, teachers to the best of our ability but everyone is stretched and we cannot access all the support that is needed for our students with needs.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.