

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

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Submission - Inquiry into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs in government and non-government schools in New South Wales.

From:

To: General Purpose Standing Committee No 3.

Dear Committee Members,

In relation to the inquiry terms of reference the first term of reference that will be commented upon is:

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

An example will be given to show how students with a disability at a SSP school in Western Sydney are constantly physically assaulted and constantly subjected to various types of trauma during school hours because resources are not allocated by the Department of Education and Communities to help students with their mental health. Equitable resources are not allocated to these special needs/high needs students in relation to mental health support.

Example of a common event in the school:

- Student John Smith (fictitious name) is in year five and in the care of the minister with FACS. He is in out of home care and he has suffered abuse and trauma when he was with his family in the past. He regularly wanders around the school assaults other students as well as staff, destroys classrooms windows, doors, lights and equipment in rooms. John assaults other students which sometimes results in an ambulance called to the school. John then is suspended. This situation happens a number of times through the year.

DEC suspension policy requires the school to put strategies in place to cater for the student's needs when they are suspended. The school has no resources to cater for the student's mental health in the long or short term. This results in a cycle of constant assaults by students towards other students and staff partly because there is no long term regular counselling for students. A further concern is that when students are suspended they have nowhere to go and frequently are involved in illegal activities.

The cause of John's destruction and violence has a lot to do with his past experiences with trauma and abuse within his family. The school counsellor has made this conclusion by conducting interviews and tests. The counsellor does his best to help students at the school but most of his

time is used at his desk doing paperwork required by the Department of Education and Communities. Despite the best efforts of staff, they are unable to give John and many other students the support they need to break the cycle of bullying, assaults, broken bones, teeth knocked out and property damage by many students at the school.

The second term of reference to be commented upon is:

Other related matter:

Working within the above environment as a teacher I made a complaint to the School Education Director. The nature of the complaint was that the Principal of the school was not given the resources to support the mental health of high needs students at the school despite her best efforts. The school Education Director did not reply to my complaint, consequently I made a complaint to Safework NSW. The nature of this complaint was that the school is an unsafe environment for students and staff and long term mental health support is needed for students.

A result of complaints made was that the principal was bullied and staff were interviewed without notice or opportunity to find a support person when interviewed. Traumatic events were spoken about by staff and no counselling was provided after the interviews (this was a comment from a school counsellor).

Students at the school need counselling to help with past trauma experienced. No help is presently given and so they express themselves through violence, threats and property damage.

I thank the committee for their time to consider my submission. I would also like to say that I decided not to mention the school in this submission by name because I am concerned for the principal working there presently.

Regards,