

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission:

a) Equitable access to resources for students with disability

Recent data released by state and federal government shows that more than half of students with disability who need funded support at school are not getting it.

The 2015 Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) shows that 12.5 per cent of students needed supplementary, substantial or extensive support for a disability or learning difficulty – more than twice the number currently receiving funded support.

The continued refusal of the federal Coalition government to fund the Gonski Students with Disability (SWD) loading means growing numbers of students are not gaining equitable access to education or improved life outcomes through schooling. The federal government's own data collection shows that 13.6 per cent of all students need funded support at school but only 6.2 per cent are getting it. This affects more than 270,000 students across the country.

It is time to act and deliver children with disability the funded support they need to succeed at school, especially since the federal government has known about this data for more than a year and done nothing. In the meantime, young people in schools struggle to make educational gains with limited resources, and teachers and schools try to do more with limited funds.

My family is impacted by this lack of funds, as are others. My cousin lives in a regional area in NSW and discovered that her child has special needs. It was determined that the most appropriate setting for her child was a special education class, however none of the eight schools in her regional town had such a setting and she ended up relocating to another town in order for her son to gain the support he needed at school. She was fortunate that she was able to do this, but not everyone can relocate and nor should they have to. She determined that without this additional support her son would continue to find school difficult, to be suspended for his behaviour (part of his diagnosed disability) and disengage with learning and school. To travel a hour every day to attend school in the next as a primary school student she thought would take a considerable toll, and possibly contribute to his challenging behaviours. Rather than be forced to find a solution in such a difficult scenario, students should be supported in their local area, especially one with population close to 24,000. Introducing Gonski funding for SWD could mean that their local schools could have provided the appropriate support for my cousin's child to succeed at school, rather than being forced to access educational in another town.

e) any other related matters.

Gonski funding enables improvements for students with disability. The Gonski SWD loading was due for release at the beginning of 2015 but has not been delivered by the federal Coalition government. The loading, as detailed in the Australian Education Act 2013, is applied at:

- * 223 per cent of the respective Schooling Resource Standard for students attending a special school

- * 186 per cent of the respective Schooling Resource Standard for students attending any other school

The full implementation of Gonski – including the Students with Disability Loading – could deliver:

- * additional executive release and specialist teachers to support every teacher working with students with disability
- * early and ongoing access to specialist support such as speech pathologists and mental health professionals
- * time for teachers and Learning Support Teams to undertake collaborative transition planning with students and their families
- * adequate levels of targeted provision (e.g. integration funding, specialist placements) based on need
- * ongoing professional learning on effective inclusive practice for all teachers.