

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I have been a classroom teacher for 35 years and worked closely with LD teachers.

I think agree full inclusion of students with disability (learning and/or behaviour difficulties) is the ideal but it is severely under-funded, to the detriment of the students and their teachers.

In some areas, students with Learning and Support needs in public schools are not adequately supported with LaST allocation, SLSO support or other GONSKI (?) funding.

Schools in some areas receive minimal flexible RAM funds to support students with all range of disabilities and learning needs.

Most students with an ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) receive NO additional funding support – it's meant to come out of RAM. (Resource Allocation Model ) Class teachers are expected to cater for their needs. On the surface, this can work well for some, and for others can be grossly inadequate (e.g. those with challenging behaviour). To work, it requires extra training, and extra support for the teacher (i.e. Learning and Support teacher involvement). These kids learn and socialise differently to other students. They may be very smart, but they need additional support at all stages.

Students with learning difficulties are at great risk of mental health problems. We are already observing a huge increase in anxiety, depression, suicide in this area in recent years. So much better to help them before they develop these problems.

Students with Autism have an even greater risk of mental health problems. Schools are NOT Autism-friendly places yet. Many students feel unsafe, misunderstood and anxious every day causing pressure on families.

Special class places (for students with Autism, Intellectual delay, etc) are very limited (and decreasing) in this area.

For the above reasons, the system places incredible pressure on teachers, and schools. The current system is unsustainable. Students' needs are not being met adequately. Teachers are suffering unreasonable levels of stress to do much more than is humanly possible.

Schools are not yet meeting the legal obligations of the DDA (Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act ).- "Reasonable Adjustments" .... Need reasonable support / funding / resources / people.

An added, related problem is the inadequate teaching facilities at some schools. In some schools, teachers have to struggle and juggle to find a decent place to teach

There is inadequate Learning and Support teacher allocation to public schools.

(P&C funds are being used to pay an additional LaS teacher up to 2 ½ days per week in some schools)

With NCCD since 2015, a great deal of Learning Support teachers' time is dedicated to documenting evidence of adjustments, consulting with teachers to record/plan adjustments,

meeting with parents, entering data, gathering and saving information to computer systems – NOT actually teaching students.

Also teachers dedicate many hours to applying for funding for students with diagnosed disabilities.

Drastic increase in administrative tasks due to NCCD (and also LMBR – welfare, looming) has taken LaST teachers away from the direct student/class contact.

Inadequate department of ed support for children with diagnosed disabilities.

For students with ASD, NO funding allocated, and no possibility of funding unless added Mental health, safety risks, violence etc.

Flexible funding for schools includes calculation based on expected incidence of autism of 1 in 100. At some schools this prediction is inadequate.

Most small schools have one ½ day per fortnight of counsellor time !! Parents/children have to wait for assessment, support, counselling – at times of crisis.

Integration funding support process IFS = 20+ hours of work to submit application.

The process is specialised (most teachers have not done them before); time-consuming, cumbersome, a year or two to get the funding sorted.

Successful integration funding application usually only means 1-2 hours per day of SLSO support.

When/if schools get funding support, the problem is to find someone available/willing to work limited casual hours at short notice.

To rectify these problems:

- Change the formula to increase Learning and Support allocation to every school.
- Allocate full-time LaST support to schools
- Provide reasonable LaST allocation to smaller schools based on the real needs – not based on Naplan results, and not based on an outdated expectation of ASD prevalence .
- Provide adequate RAM / flexible funds for schools to meet the needs of every student providing equity for all students
- SLSO (school learning support officers – or teachers aides) in every mainstream class with any student with additional needs. (i.e. almost every class). There is a massive potential work-force of parents, grandparents, student teachers, willing to work in schools.
- Recognise the needs of neuro-diverse students (ASD, ADHD, etc) – and provide the funding to support them properly.
- Build better facilities – or provide additional demountables
- Reduce the burden for Access request funding – or provide funds for additional staff.
- Re-instate specialist / itinerant support for behaviour / autism etc.