

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 26 February 2017

Partially
Confidential

I write this submission as a concerned community member, a parent, a former full-time teacher and as someone who currently works in supporting the work of teachers in NSW.

I thank the NSW parliament for the opportunity to make a submission and will keep this submission brief. All views expressed in this submission are my own.

Since I studied to gain my teaching qualification 15 years ago, I have worked with and supported hundreds of NSW teachers in their commitment and drive to provide a quality and equitable learning environment for all students. However, too often I hear teachers and principals having to resort to 'making do' with the resources they have, rather than the resources they need, to provide equitable access for students with disability. Too often I hear teachers say that they know what they need to support students and their families but also know that they cannot access what they need due to the lack of funded resources. This sometimes includes the need for a student to have a qualified teacher work with them on a one-on-one basis in every class every school day.

Students with disability usually require more funding in order for them to access the same education opportunities as their peers. The federal government's failure to fund the students with disability loading in the Gonski needs based funding model has meant that more and more students in NSW with disability are missing out on the resources they need to access equitable educational opportunities.

The State government's ESES policy has taken specialist teachers out of schools with the reallocation of 9 specialist positions into one generalised Learning and Support role. To me, this is the same as making a History trained teacher teach the History, English, Maths, Physics, Design and Technology, Drama, Geography, Japanese, and Business Studies curriculum to an HSC class and then wondering why the students' results do not reflect their ability. It is not the teachers' fault - it is a flawed system which leaves students struggling to reach their potential.

Teachers, principals, disability workers, and parents all work so hard to provide students with disability and special needs a high quality education. I have never heard a teacher say they want their students to struggle and I have never heard a parent say they do not want their best for their child. I am however very concerned about the current inadequate provision of education for students with disability. This has lifelong implications which costs the state and country economically and socially.

The NSW government's commitment to the Gonski needs based funding model is exemplary and paves the way for the provision of accessible and equitable education opportunities for ALL students. However there is still very high unmet need in the education system for students with disability. Without the students with disability loading, and with the threat of the federal government to renege on the National Education Reform Agreement leaving schools below the School Resourcing Standard, students with disability will be left further and further behind.