

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

**Organisation:** Ms Debra Goodsir

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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 are blind or low vision access the curriculum through Braille or large print in the early years of school and with technology in the later years of Primary and High School. This move to technology enables them to gain independence and work skills. The best and most efficient technology, providing the most thorough range of accessibility options is Apple devices - iPads, MacBooks, Mac computers. The D of E refuses to support apple products in schools. While students and teachers using laptops can access assistance from tech support officers, no support is available for apple products. This is a clear case of discrimination against a specific group of students - those who are blind and vision impaired. It contravenes the disability standards and makes accessing the curriculum much harder for students who are VI. Many schools have inefficient or non-existent wifi systems. There are many apps available which enable students who are blind to have independent access to distant work, or independent living skills. One example is "Tap Tap See" enabling students to know what is nearby. Other apps enable students to take a photo of work and access it by screen reader. All of these apps rely on wifi. They are not able to be used in schools because D of E cannot provide reliable wifi service.

#### **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.**

#### **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.**

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

**E) Any other related matters.**

There is a very real need for more training for classroom teachers in meeting the specific needs of their students with disabilities. Students with vision impairments, and particularly blindness are rare and courses occur infrequently and usually only in major cities. Funding for release and travel to specialist courses at the beginning of the school year is necessary. For all students, but particularly students with disabilities, smaller class sizes would enable teachers to spend more quality time with all students, to spend quality time in preparation of resources and consideration of teaching methods so that all students would benefit.

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**I am a** Teacher