

**Submission
No 86**

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

Organisation: Mr Jack Galvin Waight

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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.

As a teacher and Federation representative in the Hunter region it is becoming more and more apparent to me that students with disabilities and schools that support these students are missing out. 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. This is drastically affecting students, teachers, school communities and our society. At meetings in Newcastle, Cessnock, Maitland, Kurri, Singleton, Dungog, Scone, Merriwa and Muswellbrook teachers and principals are telling me that the needs of students with disability at their school are not being properly met and that school funding and resources is having to be used from other areas. Thus denying the resources and funding for other programs and drastically increasing the workload of teachers.

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.

Despite the efforts of principals, teachers and support staff to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities and special needs The Department's Every Student, Every School (ESES) Learning and Support Framework implemented in 2012, has led to a growing amount of inadequate support in schools. For example the number of children needing additional support is growing but the sources and level of funding are not. Many students have a learning or behavioural disability but it does not present itself as so severe that paediatricians will give it a diagnosis. With extra funding, these students would be supported and engaged in learning in the classroom, freeing up teachers to be able to better service all children in the classroom. Moreover, teachers and support staff are just over-worked with growing case levels that cannot be managed. To try and cope schools

in the Hunter have to divert money from other curriculum areas to employ additional aides to try and ensure that children who require full time assistance and support receive it.

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.

The overwhelming view among teachers, parents and community members in the Hunter Region is that there are still significant inadequacies in the NSW education system for students with disabilities and special needs. The Government needs to take immediate action to address these inadequacies if it is to meet its legal obligations to ensure equal access to the education system for all children. The action that is required is clear and supported in schools and the community. Fully fund the SDW loading as outlined in the Gonski report.

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

Improve information on its website for students with disability and their families.

E) Any other related matters.

There are also issues with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). There is no good reason why data from the process should continue to be kept secret. The commonwealth and all state and territory governments agree that results from the NCCD should be used to inform an improved disability loading. Further delays and secrecy over the process are unacceptable. With the first full implementation taking place in 2015, results and details of how they will be used to determine the distribution of funding must be published before 2016. Australian politicians showed leadership in backing the National Disability Insurance Scheme. They must do so again and rise above party politics to complete the unfinished business of fixing disability education. Students and their families have waited long enough. Gonski 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 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

Funding the disability loading is imperative for the future of our students, teachers and our society. The Gonski recommendations are not just about more money; it is a fairer funding system, a fair go for all, a plan for our nation's future.

Name Jack Galvin Waight

I am a Teacher

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.