

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

**Name:** Name suppressed (PC)

**Date received:** 20 February 2017

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Partially  
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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.**

My school is a special school that provides a short-term (up to 12 months) intensive support for students with emotional disturbance in a metropolitan area. They enter our program through Access Request. When they enter our program students attend 4 days per week, and their home school one day per week. They gradually increase their time back at the home school, eventually re-integrating full time. Most of our students have very challenging behaviours, and can be highly aggressive, endangering others and at times engaging in self-harm. For the period they are placed at their home schools receive no additional funding. This means that some of our home schools are unable to safely manage these children during their one day home school integration. A number of our students therefore do not attend school at all on Monday, or only attend partially, for one or two hours per day. This undermines their ability to transfer the coping skills we support them with at to their mainstream setting. As a result, full-time re-integration becomes even more challenging for these students. Our students have special needs 5 days per week, not just for the 4 days that they attend our unit, and should not be denied funding support in the environment where they need it the most: their mainstream schools. While most of our students leave able to successfully manage in the mainstream school setting, we also have students who continue to need a high level support, but our system has no appropriate means of catering for them. Those who aren't able to manage mainstream, but fit the right diagnostic criteria may move from here to a special class that caters for students with particular disabilities such as an autism spectrum disorder, however those who do not fit criteria are set up to fail. As an example,

There appear to be no suitable support settings for children like this with serious mental illnesses. While there are behavioural units, this child's issues are not behavioural, they stem from a psychiatric condition which will likely require treatment throughout life. When the placement at \_\_\_\_\_ is finished, this child will return full time to a mainstream school, who have the willingness, but not the staff or the facilities to support a student with such significant needs. The case I have written about here is one of many. We have other students who have suffered significant trauma in their short lives. They are hyper vigilant, and small stressors can tip them into a flight or fight response. They are not choosing aggressive behaviours, but due to PTSD become triggered, and their ability to reason shuts down, leading to explosive episodes of aggression which put themselves and other at risk. They are ashamed and regret these, when they are able to think and process later on. Our teachers are skilled at working with students who have these special needs, but we are not mental health professionals. While many of our students do access mental health support, many do not. . Support units like our school can support and manage children safely, but those with significant mental health issues need more than management, they need to have a multidisciplinary team working with them, treating the cause of their mental health issues as well as managing the worst of the symptoms. We need psychologists working in settings such as ours who can provide therapeutic support to these students. Our school counsellors are unable to provide such therapy. As a small school with up to 33 students, our budget is tiny. Our equity loadings add up to a few thousand dollars - not enough to employ a psychologist, or other paraprofessional who could provide the support our children desperately need. The mental health crisis in children and young people is increasing. This is an urgent issue that we need to address.

**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.**

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.