

Submission  
No 137

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

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Partially  
Confidential

#### **A. Equitable access to resources for students with a disability or special needs in regional and metropolitan areas**

I have held the fulltime position of NSW Teachers Federation Organiser for Camden-Campbelltown (10 years) and St Marys/Mt Druitt (13 years) public schools. Both areas include high concentrations of socioeconomic disadvantage, intergenerational poverty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, families from other countries where English is not the first language used within the home, mental health issues and disabilities.

During my time as the local Organiser, many principals and teachers have reported to me the high levels of need amongst students with disability and learning difficulties. A significant proportion of cases include students that have a disability without any diagnosis or medical and pre-school enrolment educational intervention. This is predominantly experienced by schools immediately after enrolment of the student, usually kindergarten. It is this that sets such poor and less educated communities apart from others that have the personal income and education to successfully intervene in a child's life in the pre-school years.

As a result, the pressure is often overwhelming for schools in the communities I work.

Exacerbating the pressure on principals, teachers and parents is the lack of additional funding, suitable alternate student placements and the additional teachers and support staff needed to meet the needs of students with disability.

In many cases over the years, and with very little options or time available, I have had to work with affected teachers to exercise their industrial and political might to bring these critical issues to ahead. Whilst such actions, and there have been many, have reached a successful outcome for the school and the student(s) concerned, the systems within the Department of Education have not improved in my time to adequately address this shortfall of support.

Further, the promise of additional recurrent funding for the Students with Disability loading within the National Educational Reform Agreement (Gonski) signed in 2013 has failed to be realised solely because of the federal government's obfuscation and intransigence. Whilst this is a Commonwealth matter, it has direct relevance and impact on the access to resources for NSW students with a disability. Simply put, the NSW Government and its Department of Education is unable to address the needs of students with disability without the hundreds of millions of dollars promised under Gonski.

