Submission No 140

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 21 February 2017

Partially Confidential

New South Wales
Teachers Federation

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.

* Specialist Equipment and/or environmental adjustments - In my experience as a teacher of a Support Class in a mainstream setting, students are often enrolled within the Support Class before specialist equipment and/or environmental adjustments are provided, and then only after the teachers apply for or request the resources. This means that the child's access to least restrictive learning is compromised for extended and unknown periods of time. The efficiency in which student requirements are provided is extremely lacking and difficulties are faced while trying to provide interim alternative arrangements. Depending on the need, the student's welfare can be endangered. For example, a child with a history of absconding was placed in our Support Unit. The child had to stay inside during lunch and recess breaks as adequate fencing was not provided to keep the child safe from accessing the car park. Support from Educational Services Team - Due to the reallocation of support teachers, support from Educational Services is highly lacking. The quality of the support is 'hit and miss' and is more generalised rather than targeted to individual need. This reflects the overstretched workload of minimal support staff leaving them unable to provide one on one, effective support.

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.

Special Schools as centres of expertise - Our school is not involved in or benefiting from a network established across schools to share the knowledge, expertise and specialist resources available in special schools. Our school was unaware this support was/is available. Therefore, no child or teacher in our setting is benefiting from expertise available in specialist 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.