

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

**Organisation:** Mr Robert Deacon

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The funding, staffing and resourcing of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP's) has been critically inadequate for at least 20 years. For many staff and students, attending these schools continues to be a day to day trauma in the name of education. For the past 30 years I have been the Physical Education teacher at Lawrence Hargrave School at Warwick Farm. Lawrence Hargrave School is a Secondary SSP for students with a clinically diagnosed Emotional Disorder and a Mild Intellectual Disability. A school such as this is an extremely challenging environment to work in. I have personally experienced the transformation in the school which occurred when it received significantly increased levels of funding, staffing and resourcing. Unlike other behaviour schools of its kind, Lawrence Hargrave School enjoys significantly improved levels of staffing resourcing and funding. In 2002, following Industrial Action by the staff which resulted in a high level of media attention, the Department of Education poured vastly improved levels of support into the school which still continue to this day. Prior to this injection of support, the school had come to resemble a "Blackboard Jungle" where students and staff welfare and safety and teaching and learning were compromised. Since 2002, the school has been transformed into a model for success. There are some key components in the staffing of the school which have lead to this success. There are additional secondary specialist teachers in the school which help to deliver a diverse curriculum to the students in the subjects of PDHPE, Information Technology, Food Technology and Music. (this does not occur in other SSP's). There are four Assistant Principals off class at all times to support student behaviour and welfare and therefore also support teaching and learning. All teachers in the school enjoy significantly improved levels of release time above the standard prescribed two hours a week listed in the Teacher's Award. (this has been critical in reducing levels of staff and student stress and absenteeism ). The students in the school finish their school day at 2.10pm, which allows staff to participate in communication meetings, debriefing and professional development between 2.10 pm and 3pm.

I would like to see staff and students in other SSP's enjoy similar learning and teaching conditions to those enjoyed by the staff and students of Lawrence Hargrave School and I would be more than willing to elaborate on the success of my school as a witness to the enquiry. I would like to see the Lawrence Hargrave Model replicated in other SSP's in NSW.