

**Submission
No 171**

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

Organisation: Bega High School

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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.

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. The federal government's own data collection shows that 13.6 per cent of all students need funded support at school but only 6.2 per cent are getting it. This affects more than 270,000 students across the country.

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.

The Department's Every Student, Every School (ESES) Learning and Support Framework implemented in 2012, aimed to find better ways of ensuring that the additional learning and support needs of every student in every school are met. The \$47.9 million provided to NSW through the Australian Government's National Partnership initiative, More Support for Students with Disabilities were used to implement ESES. The Department described this as "an important opportunity for public schools in New South Wales to build their capabilities to meet the additional learning and support needs of students with disability." Funding for students with disability via the NSW Resource Allocation Model continues to be distributed predominantly via the Student Learning Needs Index (SLNI) established under Every Student, Every School, which serves as a mechanism to distribute capped funding based on relative needs of the school within the system.

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 inquiry participants is that there are significant inadequacies in the NSW education system for students with disabilities and special needs. The Committee believes that the NSW 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 current efforts of principals, teachers and support staff to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities and special needs is commended by the Committee. However, we recognise that school communities would benefit from additional support and guidance on how to effectively maximise the use of available resources to assist students with disabilities and special needs.”

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

While there is some guidance available to families through case managers and transition support staff, this support is only available for limited periods of time and is not available to everyone. The same issue applies to support services for students with additional or complex needs in general, many of which are withdrawn at key transition points. The lack of continuity in care is exacerbated by the fact that there is no single agency responsible for transition planning and support, and is a major issue for students and their families.

E) Any other related matters.

The Gonski SWD loading was due for release at the beginning of 2015 but has not been delivered by the federal Coalition government. The loading, as detailed in the Australian Education Act 2013, is applied at: a.223 per cent of the respective Schooling Resource Standard for students attending a special school b.186 per cent of the respective Schooling Resource Standard for students attending any other school 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.

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This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.