

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

Name: Name suppressed (PC)

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Partially
Confidential

STORY

This is our experience with the Department of Education and the Special Transport Department and government services all associated. One false report, has ruined my sons education and continues to do so and no one is taking responsibility, being held accountable.

My son was diagnosed **moderate** Autism with GDD by the Tumbatin Clinic in 2005. It was first recognised by our family GP Dr T as he was not pointing and lining up toys etc.

could not get into a pre-school due to his Autism, not toilet trained and lengthy waiting lists.

Tumbatin Clinic referred us to My son did not make the short list to start at the school. There were many families at the school Open Day. This is where I wanted my son to start his journey through the education system and understanding Autism.

was referred to by the Dept. of Education, he was assessed by the School Counsellor in 2006, a year prior to starting school in 2007. She came up with the same findings as Tumbatin Clinic of a **moderate** diagnosis for her report.

In 2007 a new School Counsellor took over the 2006 School Counsellor position. She re-classified to **severe**, she did not inform me, nor ask permission to re-assess my son as did the previous School Counsellor in 2006.

At the beginning of the school year in 2007, the new school Counsellor asked (husband) and I to sign the re-classification document she sent home in school bag.

The re-classification made no sense. We refused to sign the document, as there was no reason, logic or evidence.

The new School Counsellor also made false claims in relation to my son's nature, stating he was "stalking" in her assessment. She made sound worse than he was. At the time of the report and diagnosis, my son was (and is still) non-verbal, so the only way he could communicate was to; follow you and watch you to learn, and to lead you to where he wanted you to go, or to what he needed. Rather than trying to "stalk you", he was simply trying to gain your attention or communicate with you. The new School Counsellor advised it was only terminology; however I asked it to be removed as I felt it was an unacceptable use of words, labelling my son for life. She opted to change her wording and retracted the word 'stalking' from the report.

I still continued to refuse to sign the re-classification, which labelled my son **severe**, as I felt it could damage my son's future, and it was not based on evidence.

(husband) and I went in for a meeting with the new School Counsellor. convinced me to hear what she had to say. The new School Counsellor advised that would gain more assistance through Centrelink and services with the **severe** label. Furthermore she stated that if we didn't sign, would have to move into a large class with less one-on-one education support, or even possibly have to be moved to another school. At the time it seemed more like a threat than an option.

Still advocating for future. I asked her how she arrived at the **severe** label when her predecessor claimed he was **moderate** twice in the one paragraph of her report? She advised it was from a sentence that stood out to her from her predecessors report, stating was 'distracted'. I asked her what room was assessed in and she showed us the room. The room was in a heavy traffic area where kids were passing, moaning, groaning, running, making a lot of noise transitioning to classes. I stated that I was even distracted by the flow of noise and I am not intellectually disabled, as a result I felt it was an unfair assessment. I asked why they would use that room to assess? She stated it was the only area they have.

She strongly advised the label of **severe** would not stay with him for life and would only impact on his study as without it he would be placed into a larger class, with less one-on-one support to move forward in his education. was meant to be a temporary place for to transition to another school.

We were never told that is for **severe** disabled children. I was just told it was a SSP that covered the spectrum of disabilities. It's all in the wording, misleading.

My husband/ convinced me to concede and sign the report. The new School Counsellor, and I had another meeting at the school. It was discussed between and the new School Counsellor to label the GDD severe, rather than the Autism. I did not understand the point to that at the time, and felt it was just a play on words. I was chronically sleep deprived due to my sons Autism, he would only sleep 3-4 hours of fragmented sleep a day with no naps and my husband had a chronic co-morbid (Bi-Polar/Schizoaffective Disorder and Epilepsy) mental illness. I signed the papers under a lot of pressure from the school and home. and I were not used to the system of disabilities and the Dept. of Education. My husband couldn't take much more of the struggle, hence signing the report. We believed the school was temporary. A stepping stone for

In the same meeting the new School Counsellor admitted that it was due to funding. needed to have the label to warrant funding to be placed in the school. This was unfair, using my son to gain funding.

I still went on to fight the report...Trying to find a new assessment.

As the new School Counsellor advised there would be more help for [redacted] through Centrelink and services, I called the services and attempted to confirm this notion.

I called Aspect Australia; they advised there is no government subsidies for speech therapy. I still booked [redacted] for sessions and paid \$80 per session myself with no financial assistance.

We were already on the list for an Autism Dog. I gave the agency the new report for [redacted] and they advised they do not give Autism Dogs to **severe** children only **mild to moderate**. As a result, we lost a service we had been waiting for.

I spoke with Holdsworth Centre regarding extra day respite care for [redacted] and Holdsworth advised they could offer me workshops and parent groups but could not offer respite due to his **severe** diagnosis as they only care for **mild to moderate** children. As a result, we lost yet another service.

I called Centrelink to ask for any added assistance, thinking they may be able to help with the cost of therapy. Centrelink advised I was getting the same entitlement as everyone else and I was not entitled to anything more. I was made to feel like I was greedy. Again, the information provided by the new school counsellor was misleading and incorrect.

I mentioned all the above losses and rejections to the new School Counsellor and the School Principal of [redacted]. I was devastated, and asked to have [redacted] re-classified and they refused. The new school counsellor mentioned the paperwork/ABAS assessment is expensive and they can not do another one due to funding. I continued for years after this to challenge the re-classification and its reasoning.

I also asked for a copy of both ABAS assessments and was not given this. Still waiting.

I went through ADHC intake asking for a case worker to advocate for us and help us get [redacted] out of the school and be reassessed.

An ADHC Case worker and I went to [redacted] Open Day. We talked to the principal at the school and the only issue at the time was [redacted] toileting, to which I was working on.

The principal of [redacted] advised [redacted] can move to another school and can always come back to [redacted] if he could not transition and needed further support.

During this time, [redacted] was still being taught by me at home as well as at school and was also having speech therapy and occupational therapy. [redacted] was also visiting a paediatrician, the sleep clinic, feeding clinic and Cardiologist. I purchased Boardmaker Program, and learnt Makaton and Speech Therapy techniques whilst watching the therapist during the home sessions.

was regressing in his education and his behaviours. was being overlooked due to being the passive child in the classroom. Surrounded by moaning, screaming students. Students that jump on tables, students that walk around the room flapping hands, and a child in a wheel chair that was fed through a tube, non verbal that could not move. was coming home with bruises, bite marks, bleeding cuts on face and even a bite mark between legs near his groin. The first incident report came home and after receiving many more incident reports, I started to ask for more information. I felt the school was not being forthright with information when I requested it and I eventually had to start dealing with the principal directly.

I always went to the school for the activity days and always took family with me including Grandma and Nanna. would come on occasion but found it too distressing to go to the school. I did not feel that was getting the same level of attention as the other **severe** children. He would be given a task and left alone to do it, or left waiting for someone to give him something to do, or I would help him. I found this to be upsetting as has the will and temperament to learn, however was not given the time of day, as promised by the new school counsellor when he was labelled as **severe**.

was attacked by the same child twice in the one week. I was told that this happened because the teachers were busy helping the child in the wheel chair and therefore the child just went for There were two teachers in the class and yet no one was helping/watching my son.

At an IEP meeting teachers did not realise could use words. I mentioned to the teacher that had a vocabulary of words and even uses them with friends, family and Eastern Respite staff. I wrote the list down. The teacher was stunned. I was shocked that the school was not aware of this as it demonstrated that they never tried to talk to

In addition, the teachers also did not use Makaton (another common method of communication), with which he could understand. I was frustrated at this meeting as all of this information had been raised and discussed in previous meetings. I felt all the hard work at home in relation to study, was going to waste during school hours. I had speech therapist from Double Bay Communicate Speech go to school to give him lessons and show teachers how to communicate with him. I had to pay for this, in order to ensure the staff were educated.

A teacher at advised me the staff do not know Makaton as they have to fund the course themselves, it is not funded by the Dept. of Education. The teacher also advised that they had issues with the Boardmaker program at the school. I was shocked at the lack of funding provided for such basic things as it was impacting on the children's education and communication development.

I was referred to private practise. The paediatrician understood the struggle I was having and she understood why I wanted to have re-assessed however could not afford it.

She referred me to ADHC, advising they have a psychologist that can do the test for
Our caseworker from ADHC did not disclose this information to me previously. If I had
known, I would have had re-classified sooner.

held an art exhibition at a Bondi Beach art gallery. All the students' art was on sale
to raise funds for the school. I could not It to the event, however a friend purchased
art and gave it to me as a gift. I was told by the school my son was good at art and
I was happy he had an identified skill, even if he wasn't academic. Years later I find out my
son is not artistic at all.

The local parish priest at and advised me that the primary school has
Autistic children attending and advised I should look into it for I reported I would
as soon as I received a new ABAS assessment.

My husband distanced himself from it all as he was unable to handle the stress and
complications, alongside managing his chronic mental illness. He passed away in 2008, a
week before Christmas.

Whilst dealing with the school and classification issues, I was also having difficulties with the
school bus drivers. I mentioned it once to our ADHC case worker, as one of the drivers was
being sleazy and touching me and she reported it and advised she had spoken to the school.
The school made no comments. Eventually we were given a new driver.

I was dealing with everything on my own, the school, the school bus drivers, the Autism, the
Services, and therapies and on top of that I was grieving my husband. I was advised to send
to overnight respite for a break. At that time I had never spent time away from
as no one could babysit him due to his absconding and non verbal nature.

We tried night respite first, this was not good for as all the children were
severely disabled, the house was old and run down, and a female staff member stated she
allowed to sleep in her bed as he was unable to get to sleep. I was shocked! In
addition to this, toys were stolen from his room and were not returned (these toys
were given to him by his deceased father).

I was convinced by ADHC worker to send to overnight stay respite
house, it was brand new. At first I was taking him to and from the house and then I was
offered a pick up from to and drop off to my home from
house. I consented to my son attending on the provision that he would be
staying with **high functioning**, verbal children. I observed this to be the truth; however I still
didn't feel happy about having respite.

One night I picked up from Usually I would take my other son
(baby brother) into the house with me but this time I had my mother in the car.
She waited with my baby as it was a quick pick up only.

I was let into _____ by a staff member and in brevity of the situation. I was attacked from behind by a large teenage boy; I only know this as when I was screaming for help, the three staff members were calling his name to stop and ADHC made a mistake on a report showing his name, breaching the confidentiality they strongly protect. The boy had me from behind, his hands were wrapped tightly into my sewn in hair extensions, I saved up to have the extensions done for my birthday. It took three grown men to have the teenage boy removed from me. My head, neck and back was in pain from having four men ripping at my hair, at the time it felt like I was being scalped.

_____ was watching all of this happen. I could see _____ standing still as I was screaming and being attacked. The teenage boy was taken into a room and I was asked if I wanted to leave _____ I said no, never again. I was told the teenage boy attacks hair if it is long. I said I was not warned of this when I was let in by staff and it was clearly visible I had long hair. This was a breach of safety.

I went straight to my GP and reported it.

The report went to ADHC admin and legal.

The new Special Transport Driver L, who had come to pick up _____ a handful of times, arrived once with her sick daughter in the front seat as she was home from school. I was amazed that she would take her sick daughter to work with her. Exposing all the disabled children in the car to her illness. I reported this to the school.

Most importantly Driver L arrived at our home to pick up _____ and she asked about what had happened with the attack. I explained to Driver L that I was attacked at _____ by a boy called (I won't mention his name here) the teenage boy and how he attacks people with long hair. Driver L advised me that she picks up the teenage boy, and _____ travels in the same car as him. I took _____ out of the car and let Driver L know _____ will no longer need her to pick him up for school, as I do not want my son to be at risk. Driver L mentioned she would like to keep _____ on her run, and that teenage boy is sedated in the mornings and needs help to walk to the car. This concerned me even more.

ADHC respite house knew of the teenage boy and his behaviour and _____ knew of _____ and his behaviours, but neither of the services were able to communicate with one another or with parents. If I had not have spoken with Driver L, _____ would have continued to be transported in a car with the boy whom he saw attack his mum. This could have significantly impacted on his safety and mental health.

I was very disappointed about the lack of communication between schools, services and parents as confidentiality seemed to supersede risk and safety and I feel this is neglectful.

I was given psychology appointments through Victims Services for the attack. I asked ADHC, _____ and the Special Transport to support _____ in this. _____ was left without

transport from home to school; he was not given any special support from ADHC or in relation to this traumatic experience. All the while ADHC advised me they were working closely with the teenage boys family, proving support and the teenage boy was still receiving respite and having Special Transport support. Why was not receiving the same level of support?

After days of phone calls and complaints finally we were given a new driver, Driver H.

This only added to existing problems I was already advocating for in relation to education, finding a new school, and having re-assessed.

ADHC re-assessed and the new report found that was indeed, **moderate**.

The new Special Transport Driver H was also too friendly and inappropriate. He was unprofessional and would ask if wanted to go for a ride on his motorbike out of school hours. He would also come by the house to see how is when he was sick and not attending school. I could not find the strength to complain about this at the time and therefore just put up with it. I couldn't afford for not to go to school, as I needed time to mourn, and continue my own therapy in relation to the attack and fear I experienced. I also needed time to continue searching for a new school for

Finally some good news! teacher sent home a letter stating had won an art award.

My family and friends went to watch accept the award certificate and see his winning art. The winning art was displayed on the wall and was able to be purchased. I purchased art. I didn't expect the price tag of \$200, to which I paid the school from my carer's pension. I could not afford the other pieces of art he had for sale. We were so proud of thinking he was at-least creative, if not academic at all. This all turned out to be untrue as I later found out the art was not done by

still was not given any supports for what he went through with witnessing the teenage boy attack. Only offered to regain a spot at with the new promise of being with **high functioning** kids. I declined. I tried desperately to find a new school as I did not want to be traumatised seeing the teenage boy around the school as he was heading into high school in a year. I now had more reasons to get out of

I asked paediatrician Dr S about as I was concerned was not studying as I didn't see much learning in the school. She advised there is no academia in the school. I woke up! I explained all the compacting problems I was having with the school and government departments.

I called and asked Teacher V what happens when they finish high school/graduation? I will never forget this, the teacher stated; the students have a

celebration at year 12 not a graduation. Meaning they celebrate their attendance leaving the school uneducated. This devastated me.

Driver H would ask me if _____ can have lollies. I said no.

Driver H would play music in the car.

Driver H expressed how he and _____ got along and he was easy, hence him being in the front seat.

Driver H liked _____ nature so much that he allowed him to watch his iPad. It seemed innocent but also troubling, as to the content of the viewing time in the bus.

Driver H would at times have his ex-wife in the school bus, she was not employed by Special Transport or _____ and should not have been in the bus with our non verbal disabled children. Another huge Safety concern.

Driver H would also complain about how far he had to travel to pick up the school bus and then come the opposite direction to pick up _____. He said he was going to ask for a Dept. of Housing unit in the suburb we live in, _____. He said he was going to tell the Dept. of Housing he drives _____ to school and needs to live close to the eastern suburbs. I found this uncomfortable.

Months later my client service officer _____ from the Dept of Housing, mentioned she had allocated a unit in _____ for _____ driver. I felt uneasy with Driver H now five minutes down the street I lived on.

Driver H would break the policy's and procedures regularly, however I put up with this as I did not want to lose the transport and lose more days of _____ education at school.

_____ the Dept. of Education and Special Transport do not understand the impact that their flawed and unprofessional service can have on student and family's lives.

One day the Driver H decided he wanted to have a person in the bus with him as a carer for the kids. He asked me if I wanted to do it and I did not, as I didn't want to be subjected to him in a bus and I was busy. I would have loved to do it for _____ but couldn't. My new partner offered to apply for the job and Driver H later took him out to the western suburbs to a house for a job interview with his boss.

I noticed Driver H becoming not so nice to me when I became involved in a relationship.

Driver H advised me he had made a behaviour report on _____ with the school, stating _____ is **aggressive** in the car, he scratched his new tattoo and he is wrecking the inside of the vehicle. This was a sudden turn around from the allowing _____ to use his iPad and coming to my home after school hours, wanting to take him for a ride on his motorbike. This has never happened before with any services. Hearing this I made a complaint to the school.

I was not accepting the label of **aggressive**. First the school label **severe**, now a Special Transport driver with no degree in psychology is able to put the label of **aggressive** on a report. All which has not been proven or sighted by any professionals. Just taking his word for it. The school did not find it strange that this stand out driver raises a claim that does not match **is passive**.

Eventually Driver H brought up he wanted his ex-wife to work on the bus. I complained to the school, that this is just a means to get his ex-wife a job, for him to earn more money, this is unfair to **I mentioned how he used to get a home in the eastern suburbs and how he tells me his ex-wife stays over at his home. He was using for his personal gains and I wanted the new School Principal S to advocate for**

School Principal S brought up Driver H's new tattoo being scratched. I mentioned to School Principal S I have no problems with tattoos but Driver H should cover it, as it was large taking up most of his forearm and it was a scary tattoo. I said that would probably scare the kids and should be covered up. School Principal S said he doesn't need to cover his tattoo and who knows what else is going on in the school bus, **being the last child left to take home. I asked for proof of what was accused in the car as is known to family, friends and the community of never being violent. My son is passive.**

School Principal S wrote in an email as she also said in a phone call, **was probably getting frustrated due to sitting in the car for an hour prior to the school bell ringing. My son sitting in a school bus for one hour in the mornings 'seemed reasonable' to School Principal S? I live half an hour away from the school and am a stay at home mum. There was no excuse to pick up an hour early as I was home, he could have picked up later. What Driver H was doing with my son and other disabled children in the bus is seriously concerning. The School Principal S did not seemed concerned.**

I called the Special Transport, I asked the lady named D if a bus driver was allowed to have children sit in the vehicle for an hour waiting for the school gates to open? She advised that's 'not right' and confirmed that the drivers can have the children in the car for 15 mins each way, past the time of arrival. I also asked if the drivers have to do their Cert IV or V to work for the Special Transport? She advised they do not need a Tafe certification or degree to work for Special Transport, only Working With Children Check. I asked do they screen, interview drivers? She advised the drivers need to apply through Special Transport.

I asked for another driver as Driver H had breached policy and procedure by offering my son lollies, coming to my home out of school hours, wanting to take my son on his motorbike, having his ex-wife (not employed by **or Special Transport or Dept. of Education) in the car, picking up my son an hour early and keeping seated in the car for an hour before school, being over friendly and personal which was unwanted, creating a false report on my son being aggressive to which is only a result of being in the bus, to which is his word**

only, no proof of claim. Using my son to assist his quality, using him for his housing transfer. I have had enough!

My sons last day with [redacted] came from him dropping [redacted] home and he said to me why did you talk to the school? Why did you report me? He got loud and was getting emotional. I reported this to the school also.

After many emails, phone calls to the school and Special Transport, we were finally allocated another Driver H2.

This ongoing Dept of Education nightmare all started from the new school counsellor and the horrid part is she never had to prove it, just change words around and give him a new label for funding. How cruel! This is not the life we are meant to be living.

I never gave up during all these years and still haven't. I went to a myriad of Autism and disability conferences, groups and parent groups and training sessions and therapists and specialists. I learnt wherever I could get knowledge, all for my son to progress, not regress, yet the Dept of Education allowed all of this to happen to [redacted]. There are parents that have given up or don't care and rely on the system to take care of their child. That was not us, We deserved better!. [redacted] deserves an education, and at a minimum the right to communicate. [redacted] has a big vocabulary, but can not initiate conversation and with all he has gone through, I fear the trauma of the education system locking him in.

Back to our experience... Special Transport sent the usual letter of [redacted] school bus schedule and the drivers detail. [redacted] Assistant Principal P advised me that the driver will call me to advise of the ETA for school. This did not happen, I waited all day and called [redacted] in the evening to find out his ETA for school the next day. Driver H2 started off poorly.. He arrived the next day and apologised for not calling as he said the he was only told yesterday about the job to which I know for a fact was untrue.

The following day, Driver H2 turned up too early, [redacted] was not ready and I mentioned this to him. He seemed put out and he said he would go around the block a few times.

The following day he said he wanted to change the time of pickup, then he changed it again, wanting to pick up [redacted] earlier and earlier. This was starting to worry me. I always wondered if they treat all women this way, knowing it is intimidating standing up to a man and that we need the service for our children.

It was a hot day and I noticed the new Special Transport driver, Driver H2, put [redacted] in the back of the school bus/van. I asked why? He said that's where he is sitting. I noticed [redacted] was sweating and face was red from the heat and I spoke to the carer in the back near [redacted] wearing a Burka and I said I hate the heat and she said me too.

The next day the same thing. [redacted] came home with a red face and sweaty. Driver H2 the driver was in my opinion dressed inappropriately, wearing a singlet, his nipple was showing,

he had the windows down in the front of the van and the back had no pulled down windows. I asked him why he doesn't put on the air conditioning for the children and the lady in the burka in the back. He said he doesn't have to do it and he is not putting it on, then he said he can't put it on. I said by law the kids must have ventilation. He got angry and said I'm not paying for the service. I advised him I was going to report it and the way he had spoken to me. He said not to report him as it's his uncles van. I said you should put the air con on and he refused.

I reported this to the school. As the Assistant School Principal P deals closely with Special Transport. Then I spoke with the principal School Principal S and then Special Transport. They chose not to advocate for Special Transport did state that the policy for school transport was that all cars must have air con and be used when hot or cold weather. I asked why are the vehicles not checked and the ways in which the staff are dressed? She advised the office she is in is a long way from the schools and they can't be everywhere, hard for them to regulate and they have policy guidelines for the drivers to follow.

The complaints and advocating for right to be treated fairly, right to be educated, the right be safe and duty of care to be upheld. The advocacy dealing with the school was just getting too much. I could now see why parents get tired and give up. Why the good parents clear out of And how locking the children into the system of lies just creates jobs in disability services. I decided to call BOSTES.

It was nearing Christmas, all government departments were winding down and not really interested. Putting me off to when they get back from leave. I found myself left in a pool of nothing and could not wait until next year.

I applied to BOSTES for to be given permission to be Homeschooled.

In the new year of 2015, I purchased home school supplies, stationary and apps for study. Exciting times. I worked on his curriculum, based off the BOSTES website.

I was sent a letter from that was to attend school as it is not permitted legally to miss school. Now that I was serious in getting away from and complaining outside of the insular realm of and the Dept. of Education, the School Principal S acted concerned for education all of sudden. Never did I see and School Principal work so fast for education previously. I wasn't impressed with being tormented by the school any longer.

The school also reported this to FACS and it became an education and personal issue with the school principal.

I had to prove I was teaching Yet the Dept. of Education and Special Transport make vexatious reports with no proof.

The school wanted me to go in for a meeting and I refused, as I was focused on nothing else mattered to do with [redacted] I asked for help last year and they were not interested.

I eventually was convinced to go to the meeting at [redacted] School Principal S and two Dept of Education women were present J and A. We discussed everything I have mentioned in this story. .

Their complaint was that I did not have the certificate from BOSTES in my possession, even though we were granted a 6 month trial, just awaiting them to post it. I was told had to go to school until I had it. I refused.

I took [redacted] school work books and his communication books and incident reports and went through all the reasons why [redacted] will not go to [redacted] ever again and I had proof unlike [redacted] Dept of Education and Special Transport.

I showed the ladies J, A and the School Principal S [redacted] artwork that I paid \$200 for, that was still in a frame to which I had on my wall and removed it when an artist advised me that there is no way [redacted] did it. I was embarrassed when it was shown to me. For years I believe my son was at least an artist.. One of the Dept of Education ladies advised it was probably hand over hand, still [redacted] artwork. I showed her what [redacted] does at home with me, now I am homeschooling him. How he can not hold a pencil or paintbrush properly. There is no way it was hand over hand, it is teacher art. I paid for teacher art. This is misleading and a false sense of achievement. I showed them how he can not draw a straight line nor write his name, yet he can do so much in his workbooks at [redacted] I mentioned he has been able to say the alphabet, count to 20 and say colours for years and that was from home study and lots of speech therapy. I mentioned how I have had to break down what he has learnt at school as he can only sing the alphabet as a whole and count in a string of numbers, he does not understand random letters and numbers. [redacted] taught him how to get by in their flawed school system not how to survive in the real world system.

I was harassed by the Dept of Education right up until I received the BOSTES certificate. I sent it straight to Dept. Of Education lady A to verify and was left alone.

After the first 6 months trial and BOSTES home assessment, we were granted the maximum, a 2 year certificate of Homeschool.

I have not given up on [redacted] going to school, I am just working on his communication skills so he may have a chance to be accepted at a school away from **severe** children.

In 2016 [redacted] and I went to [redacted] school. It was not a school for **severe's**, it was real study in the classrooms, [redacted] was not able to attend as he is unable to initiate conversation, otherwise it would have been the school for him. The School

Principal J referred us back to the Dept of Education. Another tough pill to swallow. He advised [redacted] school.

We went to [redacted] Open Day. I went in with a group of parents and the first thing to see was not surprising after the [redacted] experience but the response was not what I expected to hear. A young boy ran towards us with no pants on, just clothing on his torso, it was cold and raining, winter time. I asked the lady taking us on a tour of the school...if they embrace the disability or try and help them? I said he has no pants on what if other kids copy, plus who knows what people are looking. She said he likes to run around. We all looked on as he ran around the playground and there were male and female teachers around, treating it as normal. All the other kids were in class. Red flag!

The teacher showed us all the younger kids in primary and I wanted to see what the teenagers were like. The tour ended with all the other parents and I asked to walk through with [redacted] to see the teenagers. It was loud, aggressive and far from normality. Students with headphones, students moaning and screaming, pulling up school shirt revealing chest and a boy saying 'You're not a baby' over and over again. [redacted] covered his ears and the teacher said the school is making [redacted] anxious. She was honest and noticed, this was one thing I appreciated. The classroom was great. The only feature I loved. Each student had their own workstation, like you would at a job. They had their own drawers on the table and PEC board with their days work. All students worked on their own individual study, based on what they can do and perfecting it. This is not what it was like at [redacted] All the class worked the same. [redacted] was in a class with students that couldn't do anything, so this was [redacted] level of education.

In 2016 a SYT psychologist referred [redacted] to [redacted]

In 2017 went to meet the School Principal C, in brevity, he was straight to the point not wasting any time. He advised the students are in the **mild** to **moderate** range but their behaviours are full on. He said with [redacted] being passive and non verbal I would need to weigh up what I felt he could deal with in [redacted] Students canspeak but they are verbally abusive using daily expletives. Plus some students rage and throw items at the principal's window. He said it was quiet whilst I was there but was not the same atmosphere yesterday. He was right; [redacted] will not cope in that environment. The one credit and positive I took away from that school was when the principal mentioned how they help the child with the challenging behaviours, they do not embrace it. He mentioned the child outside used to walk around with no pants on and now he wears his school uniform pants. I was not shown around the school. He advised I should go to [redacted] and speak with Dept of Education re: schools.

I spoke with [redacted] in 2016 on the phone and they advised they were a school just like [redacted] I have not visited this school.

psychologist set up a meeting at the Lifestart Office. We met Lady C from Dept of Education she offered us to go and look at [redacted] again, stating the new principal has made changes to the school and that it is running much better now. I went over all the problems [redacted] faced with [redacted] due to the new School Counsellor to present day. The usual Dept of Education rhetoric of we can change the past, and being dismissive of the facts was frustrating. Dept of Ed. lady C from time to time talked over the past experiences I was painfully trying to express, but I managed to mention most of it. She did mention a few times that she had not heard of the name of [redacted] new School Counsellor to do with [redacted]

I repeated that she was the one that created all this. I also made the point that if you educate disabled children, then you are setting them up for a future, but when you keep them in [redacted] when they are study worthy, you are creating more jobs for Community and Disability Services, as if they know nothing, they need the pension, carers, case workers, therapists, respite and other services and activities. This is not the future I want for [redacted] I mentioned the pains of [redacted] and Dept. Of Ed lady C told us of a time she visited [redacted] and how the students were reading recipes and were cooking. This is the narrative the Dept of Education give you, they make out its all good and you as the parent are getting it wrong. I mentioned that the school probably gathered all the students that could read and cook and put them in the room for the ease of her visit, because that is not what [redacted] is like. I mentioned that no one has apologised for all we have been put through and still going through and that I am going to continue homeschooling and will be saving up to take up the ABA course to help [redacted] and also mentioned that we have Bi-weekly speech therapy starting up in March. Dept of Ed lady C advised we should get a new ABAS assessment. She said that they can do it but I may not be happy with the outcome due to past experience. I mentioned that due being stuck in [redacted] with the Severe reclassification, [redacted] was never taught anything so of course his test is going to come out with what I don't want to hear. Dept of Ed lady C and the Psychologist T advised I should keep home schooling [redacted] and continue with speech therapy and see how he goes before doing the ABAS. I mentioned I can't afford the ABAS. The Lifestart Psychologist T said she will look into possibly Lifestart purchasing the ABAS, but it has to go through an approval process.

Dept. Of Ed lady C advised once an a new ABAS is gained, the Dept. of Education can advise of what school [redacted] can visit. She said not to visit [redacted] until after the ABAS is completed and in the meantime keep up with what I am doing as we are doing well.

The Psychologist T mentioned to Dept of Ed lady C that she has seen [redacted] communicate with her in my home, using a game she created with PECS based on his favourite movie. And it was a motivating way to gain his attention.

I advised that with homeschooling it just comes down to showing [redacted] you are watching him. I have tested how he goes with performance and when you are not looking for a length

of time, gets lazy however if you tap him gently on the shoulder or show him you are there he works well and performs.

I tried to get more of story across in relation to how the school have a celebration not graduation and how this is condescending. Very upsetting. How the paediatrician advised me there is no academia at

How the School Principal S did not advocate for how she accepted the drivers behaviours and sitting in a school bus for an hour before school and who knows what was happening in the bus. Dept of Ed lady C was dismissive again, with I can't change any of that. I stated to her you can't fix the future without going back into the past. And that will not change for the better as the **severe** students are still amongst the **moderates**.

The Psychologist T intervened and advised me I could write down our experiences for the Parliamentary Inquiry. Dept of Ed lady C agreed to it being a good idea.

We ended the meeting on I mentioned that if I can get to speak he could try there again and Psychologist T was on the same page, stating if we can work on his communication and interaction with people, that is where he could resume school.

I feel we are not back at square one. is still engaging in primary education as he did not receive appropriate schooling at should be so much more advanced than he is!

The question is where does fit in?

He is passive non-verbal but has a vocabulary. He has a willingness and memory and wants to absorb and learn. But he is so far behind in his education, he can not study the same as a high school student of his age, and was forced into a life of therapy and home-schooling, meaning he was unable to make friends or attend school.

Solution:

1. People with disabilities and their families want the same future as immigrants, the right to an education, freedom, acceptance and quality of life, yet the disabled is treated as a lesser equal to them and a burden to the tax payer. Which is not the fault of the disabled child or adult but an issue that lies within the Australian Education system.
2. Disabled children that are not **high functioning and savant** are written off and placed into a category which revolves around babysitting and teaching basic independent living skills.
3. Moderate children sit in the middle of the scale and can be placed in a range of **mild to moderate** or **moderate to severe**.

4. The **moderate's** that get to school with the **mild's** are the ones that can speak but may have some challenging behaviours and a slight delay etc. Then the **moderate's** that get sent to school with the **severe's** are the non-verbal children, with delay's but not all of these children have extreme challenging behaviours. They are simply just the **moderate's** that need a little more coaxing and support.
5. In my opinion we need schools like _____ and _____ for the **severe** children that are a danger to themselves and would be treated poorly when mixed with your **atypical** child. I am normal and I was bullied and abused in school hours, it would be worse for the disabled, especially those that are non-verbal and can not defend themselves or report the bullying. Having schools such as the ones mentioned above, would be best for the **severe's** as they can focus on Independent living skills and work on challenging behaviours.
6. Then schools such as _____ are paramount for **mild to moderate** children that have challenging behaviours and are in need of independent living skills but can also be taught under the BOSTES curriculum. These children have the hope and goal to transition to an IO class given the right assistance, if not guided, they could easily fall into the _____ category and I wouldn't wish that on any **mild to moderate** child that has a willingness to study. It should be Learning ability over IQ. _____ also school's children from troubled homes, not just the disabled, so this is no place to school the passive **moderate** children.
7. Then there are schools like _____ that are needed as they provide schooling to the children that are **mild to moderate** but not all with challenging behaviours.
8. Then we need the schools that do not exist and if they do, where are they and how much does it cost? ? The Australian school system needs to find a place for the **moderate** children that are across the scale within their range. Non-Verbal but can use words. Have slight challenging behaviours, passive and willingness to learn. Ability over IQ. These children are the most forgotten and abused by the system. These are children like my son and I am not speaking from a bias point of view it is fact as I have met many parents with a similar story.
9. This category of children: the passive and some with slight/mild challenging behaviours are too aware of their situation, they have ability to learn but a slower rate, are too slow compared to the **atypical** student and bullying may be an issue. And they are too fast in learning to be schooled with **severe** students and too passive, which could lead to them being abused physically and verbally. This is unfair to the passive student. Plus this range of student can not fit in with the challenging **mild to moderate** students as like with the previous two groups, these students learn at a faster rate but can be a danger to the **passive moderate** student and can pick up bad behaviours.
10. The **moderate passive** student either verbal or non-verbal has no place in the education system as it stands.

11. In a mainstream school setting if a child is disruptive there is a process taken. The teacher notices, the child sees the principal, the child sees the school counsellor, the child sees the psychologist or, OT or Behaviour therapist or the Speech therapist. What ever the case may be there is someone to pick up the slack and support the child to fit back into class and not be a disruptive force letting the whole class fall behind. Why is this not the same as the disabled children? How can you put **moderate's**, verbal or non-verbal in a class that can study but need to focus as disabled children are easily distracted. How can they have a fair chance to study if there is a student moaning, or jumping on the table or, throwing things, or biting, kicking, hitting abusing another person, student or teacher? It's not possible.
12. This is what my son _____ has been subjected to for his school life and all of this is over being reclassified not due to that is what _____ is a **severe** intellectually disabled child but for funding.

*Reclassified **severe** without reason or proof for funding.

*Reclassification **severe** loss of services...Autism dog, Holdsworth Centre Respite, No extra help from Centrelink or services as advised.

*Reclassification **severe** was not given the education commitment discussed.

*Reclassification **severe** _____ missed out on transitioning to another school.

* _____ has been abused physically by _____ students

* _____ witnessed his mother being attacked by a _____ student at

* _____ has been sat waiting in a school bus for an hour waiting for the school gates to open. Policy is only allowed 15 minutes.

* _____ was sat in a school bus with no ventilation of extreme heat days. (have copy of complaint made to Special Transport and

* _____ accused of being **aggressive** put on a documented report card for Special Transport by _____ driver, without proof or witnesses.

* _____ was used by _____ Special Transport driver to move to the eastern suburbs He used _____ on his application.

* _____ witnessed his mother being abused verbally by two Special Transport drivers, and

* _____ artwork was done by teachers and said it was done by him at a price tag. (I have the certificates and the winning artwork and photos from the art gallery.

* missed out on a lot of school days due to Special Transport and Dept. of Education and violent student issues.

* was subjected to a classroom of disruptive, aggressive children. I saw when visiting class and picking up early for medical appointments.

* during his schooling did not get to see **atypical** students, either intellectually or physically impaired, bad behaviours and strange facial expressions. He witnessed all this whilst I was trying to get him to normalise his facial expressions and flapping etc at home. Made life harder on us.

* being a classroom with students that can not function or learn, holding back and teachers not looking into what he can do and can't do. Eg: speak, use words. - Having to start education again from scratch. He can not fit in with high school curriculum.

All these points are the ripple effect of a misleading, false report.

All in all we all want the same for our children be it across the whole spectrum and range of disabilities but like in the real world. All parents want the best for our children but not all children make it to university and become doctors or a lawyer. Some of us work or some of us are being assisted by the government. It should be the same for disabilities. Not all children will be able to take on learning and gain a skillset. For e.g., you are not going to put a teenager that didn't complete year 9 in a top uni degree. So why a severe child that can not focus should be put in a classroom with moderate children that have a chance to study?

In school we remove the disruptive child and seek out therapies for students to be inclusive but not disruptive to the rest of the classrooms learning. So why is it that disabled children are not given the same privilege?

To find the solution is simple but you first have to face it and be honest in the findings. The Department of Education needs to be overhauled in its ways of thinking of the disabled. Children should be tested prior to school, giving the child a non-bias assessment through a hospital and an IEP should be formed on the test along with the parents and therapists doctors understanding of the child's best interest.

At the moment we are keeping disabled children 'stupid' and 'needy' so we can continue to keep the business of disabilities alive. I, like many other parents that haven't given up and continue to advocate and fight for their child's right to an education and quality of life, have the lifelong worries of what will happen to our children when we die.? It's a whole life where there is no quality of life!

Education is key... education can give the children the dignity to live without having to feel like a burden on the tax payer.

In closing, A lot of families rely on the Special Transport to safely drive their children to school. Special Transport is important as these workers are in close contact with vulnerable children; they are the first point of contact. Better screening should be made for employment and drivers should have some knowledge in Disability Services, having at least completed their Cert IV at Tafe.

The vehicles should be assessed once a year to be road worthy for the clients. In my opinion the business owning the vehicle should be asked to take the vehicle to a licenced mechanic referred to by the Special Transport Department, failure to do so will be loss of contract. The Drivers should be made to wear appropriate clothing, possibly a uniform for all drivers so parent and carers can recognise them, also making them feel responsible for their job title.

These jobs are given to anyone with a Working with Children Check as this is easy to pass if you haven't had any issues with the police or haven't been caught yet. The position should be respected and not just be given so easily to everyone. As getting school via Special Transport, to the hours spent in school and arriving home are not easy for these children and their families. The government pays all these people in between to provide services and it is being abused by the lack of work ethic and vexatious claims.

I understand that the special schools have lack of funding...but this does not give the schools and transport companies reason to label a child for the rest of his life for a little bit of funding. This is unfair!

It all needs to be investigated and changed from the inside out.

Thank you this great opportunity showing what it is really like for the disabled and families and a major for reading story. We hope this helps, adding to the many other voices.

Peace and blessings.