

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

Organisation: Avalon Public School

Date received: 21 February 2017



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.

It is the right of every student to receive a public education of the highest quality and for all students to become successful learners. Too many students with disability are being denied fundamental rights through inequitable access to additional support; missing out on improvements to their learning outcomes, well being and successful future lives. As teachers, we need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to work with a diverse student population, the systemic supports to provide early interventions and the time to understand and plan from the needs, strengths and hopes of our students, together with their families. Unfortunately, neither of these above statements is being met. More and more children are arriving at Avalon Public School with varying and at times rather demanding disabilities, that affect the whole class, both academically and socially. Some students although diagnosed, receive minimal aide time. Early intervention from parents can limit this additional support (as there are other cases more demanding that take up all the funding) Teachers are often left to survive on their own to meet the demands of students with disabilities. They haven't had time off class to do courses. They're just expected to cope. Without proper funding, we can't address children's "individual needs" or provide teachers with the support they require to handle numerous stressful situations that affect everybody. Class sizes need to be considered with teachers who care for students with a disability, especially if they are given no aide time. If it truly is the right to give every student the highest quality of public education in an equitable environment then we need to address this quickly or we will not be producing children who are successful learners, whether they have a disability or not as there is a concertina affect. Some parents can provide their children with support outside of school to help them improve their individual learning outcomes. Other parents don't have this privilege and require our ongoing support. We are a democratic society and it should be equitable. Have you noticed that more and more children with disabilities attend Public Schools? Surely this needs to be addressed by our Government. It's time to provide all schools including Avalon Public School with the funding they deserve to meet children's individual needs. An

increase in aide time will benefit not only students with a disability, but will allow the classroom teacher more time to accommodate all students within their care. A few students at Avalon Public school with a disability receive minimal support in the form of a few hours of aide time per week. Many students with disabilities which do not "attract funding" receive minimal or no support and are expected to perform in classes of 30 or more students. There are many students struggling with literacy and / or numeracy and/or behavioural difficulties that cannot be adequately addressed by the current level of funding at Avalon Public School. Children whose parents are able to advocate strongly for them or have a specialist's diagnosis are often given more assistance than other very needy children.

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.

Teachers and other educators are required to provide access to all learning activities or modify activities when necessary for students with disabilities regardless of whether that disability attracts any extra funding. Often this is difficult to achieve in mainstream classes due to lack of funding for a specialist teacher or even aide time. This lack of specialist assistance means that these children are NEVER able to accelerate enough to catch up to their peers. Children of parents who can AFFORD outside specialist help such as speech or occupational therapy progress much more successfully than those children who are unable to access external help. Students with disabilities are not always looked after consistently throughout their 12 years of school. Particularly in high schools, students with disabilities can receive inadequate, variable or non-specific funding that does not address their particular disability.

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.

Some teacher training and professional development opportunities in regard to students with a disability are available, often on-line, and these programs are valuable. However, sometimes more support is needed than can be accomplished through the use of on-line materials. Not all teachers are free to access these materials after working hours. In England, SLSOs are specially trained to help low progress learners. Australian aides may complete Certificate 3, but this is not adequate training.

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

E) Any other related matters.

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This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.