

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential



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.

I am a school counsellor who works in rural and remote schools. I have found getting support for students with disabilities in these schools to be difficult. Getting students to visit appropriate medical specialist such as psychiatrist and paediatricians is challenging due to limited visits and long distances to travel. This delays students receiving disability confirmations and therefore access to support. There are students with disabilities that miss out on integration funding and access to support classes due to living in a regional and remote location. A majority of teachers at this school believe that the remote environment inhibits students accessing support. In addition, there are no support classes for students with a mild intellectual disability at this school. Only students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities are granted access to the multi-categorical support classes at this school. Students with mild intellectual disabilities are in mainstream classes and are not provided with equitable access to support class resources. At one of the rural and remote schools I work at there are 385 enrolments. There are 140 students that require supplementary, substantial or extensive support for a disability. That is 36% of students that require these levels of support. The 2015 NCCD report stated that 12.5% of students needed supplementary, substantial or extensive support. At this rural and remote school, this number is much higher at 36% of students with less access to resources. Twenty students at this school are in a support class or have integration funding (5% of school population). The rest of the students are supported by teachers and SLSO's in their classroom. The majority of teachers at this school feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach students with disabilities and more training is required. There are limited training opportunities for rural and remote schools and a lack of casual staff to work while staff are away at training. There is also a lack of staff at rural and remote schools due to the small populations of towns. A special education teacher at one of the remote schools I work at said that support for students in her class is not always timely. For example, there is a student that needed specific equipment to access the toilet independently. There was a significant delay in getting this equipment because someone from a

disability support service had to come to the school to assess and give quotes. This person had to travel nearly 400km to visit the school. A large majority of teachers at this rural and remote school felt that students with a disability were being disadvantaged due to living in a regional area.

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.

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.