

**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.

The teachers at my school do not feel equipped and confident to accommodate students in their classrooms with a disability or special needs. They do not know how to make adjustments to their programs. The teachers feel very overwhelmed resulting in the students to be constantly withdrawn from the classroom. At our school we have a Down Syndrome student who requires constant SLSO assistance and a storeroom needed to be converted to a mini classroom in order to accommodate her learning needs. Integration funding by the government is so considerably insufficient that unfortunately other students with needs at our school miss out on support as most of the money is required to fund the needs of our Down Syndrome student. We also have a student who requires a wheelchair, she is partially deaf and blind with minimal Itinerant support. The school and the mainstream classroom teachers are struggling to cater adequately for the needs of these students and other students with needs.

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.

This has had a complete adverse effect on our school because the ownership of integrating students with a disability or special needs has shifted from qualified departmental staff to our L&S Team. Our current LaS Teacher (who has been a classroom teacher) is new to the role and is feeling overwhelmed by it all. She is trying to understand it all. There has been no guidance by the department, no training by the department, hence we go round and round achieving little. How are our mainstream teachers expected to cope if we, the L&S team aren't coping? How are we to train our teachers in providing quality education to our students with special needs if we haven't been trained?

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.

I have yet to see ANY of these recommendations implemented. If they were implemented then we wouldn't be at this crisis point.

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

We always strive to keep open communication with parents. However, all face to face communication happens out of school hours. We rely on our school counsellor to keep communication a flow. However, consistency has been difficult and communication has been lost due to constant reshuffling of school counsellors by the department. Our school counsellor is new to our school this year and needs to familiarise herself with the school community.

E) Any other related matters.

Our school needs proper environmental adjustments to cater for the needs of our Down's syndrome student, as well as our other student who requires a wheelchair. Our school's LaS Teacher, SLSO's and mainstream teachers need urgent training in best practices in catering for students with special needs. Our school needs the School Counsellor to be appointed at the school for a minimum of 3 years, allowing them to establish healthy relationships and have open communication with the school community.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.