

**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.

There is undoubtedly an unmet need for support for many students with identified additional learning needs in our regional area. As well, many "learning support" roles are filled by whatever casual teacher is available and willing to teach students with disabilities. In the past, specialist teachers filled these positions and brought with them a wealth of professional knowledge, often gained through tertiary studies in specialist fields. However, increasingly, these teachers are not available and their specialisation and skills are lost to the system. Moreover, most teachers who do fill the support role are only able to undertake relatively brief online learning modules, if any, in their own time to support various types of disability. In some cases these casual teachers are removed from their day to day role whenever there is another teacher away, which means that the students with disabilities take second place on many occasions. This is not possible when a "dedicated" LaST is permanently employed, although the role statement does say they must perform any duty "as directed by the Principal".

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.

Casual employment of unqualified teachers to fill the role in every school is a cop out. No specialists available to each school apart from APLA to advise. The number of students with issues appears to be on the increase (see NCCD figures if they ever decide what to do with them). There is an unmet need in schools that is increasing as teachers take on ever more paperwork in order to attempt to gain additional support, often unsuccessfully, such as in Online Access Requests.

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.

N/A

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

N/A

E) Any other related matters.

Teachers remain anxious and ignorant about the impact of the NDIS on schools, which appears to be politically manipulated by governments. As well, there is a growing and deeply held resentment among public school teachers about the limitations on funding students within the public system vis-à-vis the funding received by private schools. Even the Gonski review did nothing to address the differences between the two sectors, as any increase to public schools was matched with the same for the private schools. It seems apparent that the heavy lifting is done in the public realm regarding disabled students, but funding mechanisms are currently contributing to the widening disparity of equity between the haves and the have nots.