

**Submission
No 314**

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

Name: Mr Paul Regan

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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.

If access to a teacher with appropriate training for working with students who feature disability and/or special needs is important, then the current situation falls far short. Training and development opportunities for teachers in the areas of special needs and disability have been, so far, few and far between. Moreover, when students have been identified as those who need individual programs, the emphasis is still on securing a speedy exit from the funded scheme rather than a reasonable and fully planned sequencing of teaching and learning experiences, personnel support and evaluation.

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.

Whilst there has been some improvement in the provision of education to students with disabilities or special needs, the 'Every Student Every School' policy falls short in some key areas. Firstly, the identification of affected students still remains an issue, as is the utilisation of an effective 'assessment tool'. Secondly, far from cutting down on paperwork, the development of IEPs and PLPs has massively impacted on the workload of classroom teachers. When five to ten students with low-level disabilities and/or special needs regularly feature in today's classrooms, the levels of documentation and paperwork are astonishing. Typically, IEPs and PLPs run over ten week periods so a classroom teacher can expect to go through this administrative hassle three or four times a year. Significantly, no structured time is afforded to teachers who undertake these planning and development programs for affected students and this impinges on the quality of the programs presented. Thirdly, the introduction of the LAST teacher to schools has been problematic. The LAST teacher's role is far from uniform between schools and some have no contact with students whatsoever. Obviously, such scenarios don't facilitate the provision of a quality education to students

with disabilities and/ or special needs.

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.

Nil

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

Nil

E) Any other related matters.

The recent development of 'psychologists', as an alternative to 'counsellors', being employed in schools certainly hasn't assisted in the provision of education for students with a disability or special needs. School counsellors play a vital role in the identification of such students and facilitating both their accommodation and assimilation into mainstream classroom settings. Just as importantly, counsellors bring an educational/ teaching perspective into these processes which school psychologists don't.

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