

**Submission
No 328**

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

Name: Ms Sarah Kay

Date received: 26 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.

There is currently great inequality in the access that students have to disability support in the public education system. The criteria used to decide if students receive additional support do not take into account the needs of each individual student, instead making blanket decisions for all students with a particular disability/condition. This has significant impacts on the learning of students with disabilities as they are often not given the support they require to get the most out of their education. Inadequate support for a student with a disability in a mainstream classroom also often has repercussions for the other students in that classroom, as the teacher is unable to give them the support they need due to the complex needs of a few students. The process of applying for additional funding for a child with significant needs is time-consuming, complex and seems to offer no recourse when the answer is "no". The professional judgement of teachers who have contact with the relevant student is not considered or respected in the application process.

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.

I began teaching in 2013 so I don't have experience with disability support prior to 'Every Student Every School'. However, I do not believe that the needs of all students with a disability or special needs are being met under the current policy.

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.

In order to provide all students with the education they deserve, teachers who are in daily contact with special needs students must be listened to, and their professional judgement must be respected. Every child is unique, and this is especially true when we consider special needs students. No policy which seeks to organise students into narrow categories in order to determine who receives additional support and who does not will be able to adequately meet the needs of all students. We are currently failing to offer many of our students with special needs the opportunity to get the most out of their education. Urgent action is needed to improve the current system.

Name Sarah Kay

I am a Teacher