

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

Name: Name suppressed
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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.

Students in SSP settings present with very complex learning, medical and behavioural support needs for them to access education on the same basis as their peers, every student requires an individual learning plan that scaffolds them into curriculum, an individual health care plan to ensure that their medical needs are met and many students also need individual behaviour management plans in order to participate in their educational programs. Currently students in SSPs are not receiving equitable resources to adequately meet their needs to enable them to achieve their potential. Teachers feel that they are unable to support their students in comparison with their mainstream colleagues. For many of our students, school is their only opportunity to access supported learning. Staff have concerns about the consequences of inadequate funding on student's learning and wellbeing. This can have serious consequences for our students' quality of life during and after their school-age years. Teachers are unable to adequately meet the learning and wellbeing needs of these students with the current staffing ratio. This results in added physical and psychological risk to students and staff. Physical injury occurs on a regular basis and many staff talk about feeling stressed and burned out, though they do not often report these feelings as psychological injury. Many staff feel that they do not have the time to report every injury when it occurs. SSP teachers believe that their students are undervalued and that their work is undervalued because of the significant under resourcing of SSPs. When teachers are consistently told that their students do not have equitable access to resources because of the funding model being implemented, they are in fact being told that their students are not worthy of inclusion in the educational system. This is further evidenced by staff not being provided with equitable access to professional development. Equitable access to professional development for teachers in SSPs would be possible if Professional Learning funds were based on total staff allocation and Quality Teaching Successful Students staffing allocation was based on each student's factor of need. The use of effective evidence-based practices comes with a price. This is a price that our teachers feel no one is willing to pay for our students.

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.

Of those recommendations that relate to an SSP setting, the following list details those that staff feel have not been adequately implemented, if at all: 1. This has not been implemented. The NSW Government has broken promises not only to fully fund the Gonski agreement but also refuses to provide the recommend level of disability funding. This must happen if our students are to achieve their potential. 2. The funding mechanism is not transparent. SSPs are building planes as they fly them while they wait for information related to funding structures. The reasons for the provision of funding (or non-provision as the case is so often) are not made clear. 3. It has been 6 years since this recommendation has been made and SSPs are still staffed and funded on a primary school formula. This is one of the reasons that staff feel that they and our students are undervalued. If staff in SSPs are to meet the expectations and demands placed on them in meeting the needs of their students, this must change. Consistency in funding mechanisms should also be rectified. In the implementation of The Quality Teaching Successful Students (QTSS) initiative the QTSS funding for SSPs was calculated using only the number of primary aged students, despite SSPs falling under the primary school funding formula. ALL teachers in an SSP environment, that is for many other intents and purposes classed as a primary school, need and deserve the professional development opportunities that the funding of the full k-12 enrolment would have provided for the benefit of our students.

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

E) Any other related matters.

The implementation of performance and development plans for SLSO's in SSPs This cannot be achieved with the current funding that SSPs receive. SLSOs cannot be released from their classes without replacement staff due to the complex and challenging needs of our students. The significant cost of releasing and replacing SLSOs for the amount of time that would enable meaningful planning of professional goals has not been accounted for in schools where SASS staff equate to more than 50% of the school staff.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.