

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date received:** 24 February 2017

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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 are significant inadequacies at our school. There is a lack of funding to support all students with severe needs whether they be health care needs or behavioural needs. The Federal Coalition Government has continued to refuse to fund the Gonski students with Disability (SWD) loading. This means that our students cannot receive support for specific needs over and above what is provided for at our school. Students with disabilities do not have equitable access to resources such as free transport to school. Parents/carers of students with disabilities have to prove that they cannot transport their student to and from school to access the Assisted School Transport system. This can sometimes mean that a parent/carer may have to drive 40km each way to access the nearest Special School or support class. Lack of funds to cover the cost is not considered a reason for approval to be granted. We believe that this is discriminatory as no other parent in New South Wales has to prove that they cannot transport their child to school to access free transport. This is one example of the issues that face all students with disabilities especially those living in regional areas such as ours. There are many others; Teachers do not have access to regular meetings for professional development with other SSPs as ours is the only SSP in the network; The supply of Specialist equipment / support which has been deemed necessary by therapists and/or school expert teachers has to be approved by the Educational Services team and this can take a lengthy period. The professional judgement of expert teachers and the Principal is often not acknowledged or respected as approval is not granted.

#### **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.**

In 2017 the school has been advised that there is no additional budget for specific student support

through the Department of Education. We believe this is driven by the government's ESES policy, the formula of which was designed to stem the 11% growth in the cost of special needs education. Without funding the school cannot provide vital specific additional support to students at our school with severe health care or behavioural needs on an ongoing basis as we operate from a very limited budget. In addition at our school all teachers are released to collaborate with parents/carers at our own expense. This is essential to the development of quality individual education plans / transition plans and in particular Personal Learning plans for our Aboriginal students that drive quality learning for all our students. There is no time is provided for this and 2 weeks are required to ensure all plans are completed at the expense of teacher time away from the classroom.

**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.**

In 2017 we will have to draw funds from our limited budget to support students with severe needs, a music therapy program, community access programs, work experience programs, Riding for the Disabled, a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen / Garden Program and trained physical education providers. The school budget does not stretch to cover all of these. This highlights the lack of appropriate funding for students with a disability. The school definitely cannot support a speech pathologist, occupational therapist or physiotherapist. yet all of these are essential to our children. The School Budget Allocation does not provide individual "Targeted" funding (above the existing staffing entitlement) for students with disabilities with complex behaviour and health care needs. This means that these students are at risk of not getting mandatory hours of access to curriculum and students and staff are facing unreasonable health and safety risks. In addition, not all students requiring support receive it. In consultation with parents/carers schools are applying for support placements for students only to be told that there are none available and students will be placed on a waiting list until such time as a vacancy occurs. Another example of this is the return of Access Requests where domain levels are questioned and ARs are returned for revision despite lengthy decision making at the school level to ensure adequate support is provided.

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

We believe that systems for complaint for parents and carers of students with disabilities are difficult. Often our parents have no understanding of Special Education if they attended mainstream high schools. They may in fact themselves have a disability and the terminology and processes involved are 'expert' in nature. School executive are left to solve issues with little or no support from Educational Services. Parent complaints are almost 100% based on the inadequacies in the system. Our school has a very good relationship with its parent body and by nature teachers are nurturers so we creatively come up with solutions to systemic problems which provided the correct support was available would not exist. This uses valuable time away from our core business. One such systemic problem is in the area of transition support which is essential to "better employment opportunities and a more meaningful community life" (The Chair's Foreword, Final Report of the 2012 Legislative Council parliamentary Inquiry) specialist support is extremely limited, given the vastness of Department of Education regional directorates and the number of schools that require assistance. Our school operates Community access programs K-12 and Work Experience programs 7-12 at our own cost and with support from the local community. This year we have been advised that there will be no opportunity to apply for School to Work funding. In the past we have received a small amount of funding from the Department of Education to support this program. Yet all of our students require this assistance.

**E) Any other related matters**

As a School for Specific Purposes we are funded on a Primary model. Funding in SSPs is inequitable and inadequate to meet the learning and wellbeing/safety of students and staff. Background Historical staffing models and new funding models associated with the Department of Education's reform agenda is increasingly disadvantaging SSPs compared to primary and high schools, for example

- Secondary aged students in SSPs remain funded as primary students despite their age and requirement to access secondary curriculum.
- Quality Teaching Successful Students staffing allocation (a primary school initiative) only applies to the K-6 enrolment in an SSP, despite the whole teaching staff (K-12) requiring the professional learning anticipated through this funding. SSPs do not have secondary teacher release conditions for the assistant principals/ expert teachers to support teachers in years 7-12. The funding was allocated with a loading of '3', 3 x number of K-6 students. This loading does not give equitable funding for teachers K-6 in an SSP compared to primary schools. Teachers 7-12 in SSPs get no support to improve quality teaching.
- Executive teachers receive no extra release time to organise school programs such as sporting programs which cannot be provided at school as we have no trained secondary PE teacher or Music Programs as we have no trained secondary Music teacher. There is no provision for time to manage the administration of Wellbeing programs / the organisation of Athletics Carnivals or School Swimming programs. Teachers do not receive extra time to develop Individual Education Plans for each student and health care plans for each student which at our school is equivalent to more than 60. Extra time is also not funded to prepare significant adjustments to the curriculum for 60 students.
- Professional learning funds allocated do not take into account the professional learning costs of an SSP as all staff require manual handling, NCI training etc. Over half our staff are SASS. The introduction of Performance and Development Plans (PDPs) for SASS will result in over 20 additional PDPs in this school without any additional resources (funding to buy time) to support their development or subsequent professional learning. As previously mentioned our secondary teachers do not receive time to be involved in peer observations because at our school QT funding is allocated to this process and our secondary teachers do not receive this funding.
- The FTE (Full time Enrolment) budget allocation is based on the number of classes X 6. eg a school with 9 classes receives funding based on  $9 \times 6 = 54$  as dictated by a formula devised by Disability Services when the actual enrolment can be greater.
- Kindergarten students in SSPs are not funded until they actually attend whereas mainstream Primary Schools are funded on notional Kindergarten enrolments prior to the beginning of the school year. Much needed resources cannot be purchased prior to that year.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.