

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
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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.

For many years now students have not received adequate or timely support both in the long or short term despite the best efforts of teachers. This has again been painfully evident in our Kindergarten situation at the beginning of this school year. We became aware of two high needs student enrolments and so applications were made last October 2016 for two ASD children enrolling in 2017. As of February 23rd no funding had been received. After the school contacted the Learning Engagement Officer expressing the urgent need for the funding to become available a LEO came to the school to do further observation. Ultimately the school was informed there would be support for the application but still no extra funds are available. In the interim other school funds are being accessed to cope with these student's aggressive and unsafe behavior. Keeping them and those around them safe is a high priority. This of course means other student's learning programs cannot continue until this situation is resolved. Availability of qualified and experienced SLSO's is a constant issue. Inconsistency with funding exacerbates this problem. There is also concern that when this SES funding arrives, historically, it is inadequate to even meet the resources already set up to support the student. For example, for a student with extremely unsafe behavior issues requiring fulltime one to one assistance being given only five days of funding. The unfortunate consequence being that the student is then being put on partial attendance as the school is unable to ensure adequate safety, supervision and support due to the inadequate funding. As well when this approved funding does arrive, it will not be retrospective. The school funds set aside for established programs are then affected. The chain of access to this funding is obviously too long and prone to bottlenecks jeopardising student safety and learning. Waiting for 'emergency' funding and it taking six weeks to arrive, is unacceptable and causes a huge drain on school funds, to say nothing of the strain placed on teachers and SLSO's and the time being taken away from other 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.

There have been no positive improvements in our situation. We have not received regular support from our AP LA, only in situations of emergency. She is working at capacity across multiple schools and support is stretched across an enormous area with many schools having higher, more pressing needs than others.

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.

There has been no substantial increase in funding for students with disabilities and special needs because the 'criteria' for disability is so restrictive. Students who do not meet the 'criteria' are being significantly disadvantaged. It seems that it is not about equity for all students but is driven by economics. Families who receive NDIS funding should also be able to use this funding within schools.

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

Currently our LAST is working at capacity and focusing on immediate high behavior needs, to the detriment of others who have been identified with learning needs and need support. Teachers struggle to find adequate RFF time to cater for the learning needs of their mainstream children let alone the time needed to consult and arrange appointments with specialists, carers/ parents of students with high needs. Our LAST is not a specialist teacher but has worked hard to be up to speed with the latest research to organize and train up our SLSOs to meet close to 20% of our school cohorts needs. SLSO's are willing and wanting to be trained up but opportunities and funds for professional learning are slim to nonexistent. Any training opportunities run by our LAST is taking time and money away from students' timetables. Opportunities for PL on staff development days should be available for our SLSOs.

E) Any other related matters.

E If a student does not fit into the hearing or vision range of need and so receive specific support, there is little or no opportunity to consult with specialist teachers. Areas such as language needs, fine motor, behavior, autism, ODD or dyspraxia, the list goes on, are left to LASTs being willing to become trained, often by after hours online courses, in these areas. LASTs in our area are attempting to support and learn with and from each other, taking time to build networks, in their own time and at their own expense. In many cases teachers are buying their own resources for specific student needs as there is no dedicated budget. Teachers are doing their best for all their students but specialist help, adequate provision of time and quality support is vital to achieve the best outcomes for all students. There needs to be a separate funding allocation for those student requiring special assistance (such as OT or speech) or who have specific learning disabilities who do not fit the diagnoses criteria and so the threshold for individual funding. Many families are unable to afford access to private support and rely on our public school system to ensure all children receive an equitable access to education, as is their right.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.