

Submission
No 352

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 25 February 2017

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.

A survey of teachers in our school highlighted that for every one student in our school who receives additional support, there are up to four others who do not have, but would benefit from additional support. Teachers do not believe these students receive adequate and timely access to this support and they do not feel equipped, confident nor supported to provide the support. They have stated lack of time to modify tasks; inadequate time to spend with individual students, large number of students requiring support in mainstream classes, and inadequate access to specialised equipment (sound fields for students with hearing disabilities) as blockers to provision of this support. Although teachers are aware of the the procedures to follow to access Learning and Support Team guidance and Intervention, they do not believe the support is effective due to time constraints. For those students who need Integration Funding support, teachers do not believe the students receive access to adequate and timely support, again, due to time constraints. The process to refer students requiring Support Unit placement is widely unknown and/or misunderstood by teachers. Mainstream teachers do not know the processes and procedures to follow to obtain support for those students requiring specialist equipment within the school. Teachers have also noted that our Support Unit is at capacity and it would be great to expand it to enable access by more students requiring this level of support.

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.

The reallocation of nine categories of support teachers into the single role of Learning and Support Teacher [LaST] has not transitioned smoothly at our school because a specialist support teacher's knowledge seemed to become undervalued while the requirement for new knowledge and skills may have been largely unrealistic. Training and support for the teacher in this position needs to be

ongoing to ensure students are not disadvantaged.

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.

We request: the NSW Government substantially increase funding for students with disabilities and special needs in NSW Government schools to ensure all students have equitable access to education; the Department of Education and Training investigate ways to communicate the outcome of the disability funding assessment process to families, carers and schools in a manner that is clear, timely and sensitive; the Department of Education and Training move rapidly towards the development and application of a functional assessment tool which has been independently monitored and assessed. This tool should be used to inform decisions about access to disability funding and to further enhance educational outcomes for students with disabilities and special needs; the Department of Education and Training require all mainstream NSW Government schools to establish or be resourced by a school learning support team; the Department of Education and Training work towards ensuring that all school learning support teams include at least one member who holds a special education qualification, if necessary, by providing funded professional development opportunities to existing school staff; the Department of Education and Training publish guidelines on the functions and outcomes of school learning support teams, including the role of parents in these teams, for distribution to school communities; the Department of Education and Training increase resources for students with identified disabilities in mainstream classes; the Department of Education and Training take immediate action to increase the number of school counsellors in NSW Government schools with the objective of increasing the ratio to 1:500; the Department of Education and Training provide additional resources, including relief time for teachers to develop Individual Education Plans; the NSW Government promote through the national reform agenda that special education be embedded throughout pre-service teacher training; the Department of Education and Training work towards assisting all School Learning Support Teachers to obtain a special education qualification; the Department of Education and Training offer additional opportunities for teachers to undertake retraining programs in special education facilitated by the Department.

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

Our teachers would like to request specified time to be allocated to allow establishment of meaningful relationships with parents/carers of students with disability in order to work with and consult with parents/carers of students with disability, and respond to their concerns and complaints.

E) Any other related matters.

Overall, teachers believe lack of funding and lack of equipment and facilities are hampering their ability to provide the level of support needed by students in our school.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.