

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

Name: Name suppressed

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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.

We are very well known in our area for doing an outstanding job with students with disabilities. In our school of 368 children there are approximately 49 students on Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs/IEPs) . These are developed in response to the content of the DDA. Government statistics are incorrect. There is a significantly high percentage of students (approximately 30% per class) who require adjustments to the curriculum. These are discussed with and signed off on by parents/carers. The content of the PLP requires teachers and LaST to have be fully informed of, and able to interpret/decipher reports by doctors and health care professionals, and to translate that into what is reasonable able to be implemented in the classroom. Of the 368 students in the school, ten are funded. Three more are currently awaiting completion of Access Requests but we have to "fight" to get integration funding. Of the 53 kindergarten students, 7 began the year on partial attendance. Two of these students are now attending full time. Only one of these 7 students will qualify for integration support as they don't have a "label", yet all require significant additional support. It is unlikely 2 of them will be able to attend all day this term. The "fight" for integration funding has reached an all time low. Our local Public Schools NSW Ed. Services staff are very helpful and apologetic at having to return/reject Access Requests but they are only following through with the pressure put on them from above. Our professional judgement is being completely disregarded - it's like the person who can embellish the best gets the funding. That is not how it should be. I can't speak for others but at our school we ONLY EVER put in an Access Request for a child who needs significant help and I am always in disbelief when this cry for support is rejected. Last year we had a child in kindergarten who attended for 1.5 hours each day for the year. After six months we finally received integration funding (for the following six months, not for the time and money the school had already spent). Two staff were with this child the entire time he attended. Numerous incident reports were sent. No vacancies were available for a special setting. Reason: there were too many other students needing placements and not enough vacancies in SSPs. The LaST and LST went above and

beyond to support the child and his family. The child is still not attending for more than 2 hrs but is attending an SSP. He is at another school now but as he attends the SSP for only four days, he is at his home school one day each week without integration support. How is that supporting the CRT? In-school specialist support is provided by the LaST. The school allocation is 0.6. The school funds an additional 0.25 in an effort to accommodate the sheer volume of students in the Learning Support Team's "books". Teachers are understanding in that they realise the LaST is trying to spread herself across the school in the short amount of time that she is there but it's not enough. She is also called upon to support students with significant behaviour issues (as she is the only person off-class other than myself) and it is often that we will both be called and needed to be in two or three different places at the one time. Do teachers feel equipped to manage their classes – yes (the mainstream population of their classes) but when you have approximately 4 children with challenging behaviour, 2-4 children with ASD, another 2-4 with ADD/ADHD, 4 with speech and/or communication difficulties, it is IMPOSSIBLE to realistically do an outstanding job. Schools for Specific Purposes have classrooms with approximately 8 students with special needs, usually with an SLSOYET we are asking our mainstream teachers to teach a large number of students with disabilities PLUS the rest of the class, often with only an hour of SLSO support each day. I challenge the people making these decisions to come to work each day, do an outstanding job and then ask them if they "feel supported". Our LST meetings go for at least 2 hours each week. Additional time off class is given to the assistant principal as the LST coordinator. We rarely get through the list of students on our agenda. We get a counsellor one day and a tiny bit each week – an amount that has been argued to be increased for more than six years by three different counsellors due to the workload. The LaST has upskilled one CRT and four SLSOs in delivering specialised reading programs and oversees their implementation. The LST meet twice per year with all parents/carers of students with PLPs/IEPs or pathways programs. To review/consult/modify/update. Teachers have undertaken extensive additional PL in behaviour support, PBL, NVCI training, Speech, language and communication issues, PLP writing and implementation, ASD support, Aboriginal Ways of learning, vision support, OT and speech intervention, SAS training – social skills, for example. They are informed and well-trained but overwhelmedAND they are all outstanding teachers. There is not enough time or money to give teachers additional time off class to work with the LaST to write PLPs. This is done in their own time. The LaST coordinates and attends all transition sessions for pre-schoolers coming to school and Yr 6 children going to high school. On average this is usually 30% of the cohort of each year. It is INSULTING to have their knowledge, experience and professional judgement questioned (eg NCCD) by those who feel they know our schools and our students better than those on the ground. I invite anyone to come into our school to see how we work, how we try to support so many students with inadequate resources. There are just not enough bodies to go around and support the students who need support. We are required to provide intervention for students in settings that are not designed for or staffed for specialist intervention.

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.

Removing the low level needs funded students was a mistake. The students were funded for a reason in the first place. The LaST and RAM funds are used at our school to fund all the children without funding as well as the children who are on adjustments. The more students who are added to the list to be covered by LaSt, the less time each child gets. The difficulty with putting LAS teachers into school has been where they don't have training AND EXPERIENCE across all areas of need. We have been very fortunate with getting a LaST with behaviour and reading training and experience) but other schools have, for example an Intensive Reading Specialist with training (but NO EXPERIENCE) in working with students with ASD/ADD/ADHD and speech and communication challenges. You can't say that ESES has established adequate levels of support by teacher specialists "across the board" because it will be different for every school. We have been extremely fortunate

Moving all the AP LaSTs etc... staff from centrally accessible locations has been a mistake also. Our local "Regional Office" was a "one-stop-time-saving shop" for all support. Now we are chasing people down from school to school. The DoE is relying on teachers to teach each other and upskill each other. The restructure was supposed to develop a "one-system" consistency but in reality it is so much the opposite of that. There are so many schools doing things differently it's ridiculous. How do you know if you're a centre of excellence and expertise – how do you go and tell everyone that you are all experts in your centre?

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.

Although many of these measures/changes would be beneficial, it requires money that the government/DoE just does not have. In addition - teachers, APs and TPs have nearly full teaching loads. There is not an infinite number of hours in the day.

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

E) Any other related matters.

I have an outstanding, committed staff. They work collaboratively to provide the best education possible to all students in their care. They do not feel supported by the system and understand the resourcing limitations upon me (human and financial). They understand that I am stretched, the LaST is stretched and the LST is stretched in terms of time. The paperwork, red tape, and frustrations experienced while trying to gain support for students has to be looked at. Things have moved in a positive direction in some areas (RAM, properly trained (some), experienced (some) people in schools). Disrespecting the specialist people put in the schools by saying NCCD information is inaccurate is insulting. Did the DoE not honestly want to know what the real statistics were? Is it not they who request data, data, data from us? Lack of consistency is terrible. Expectation of us all teaching each other is appalling.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.