

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 26 February 2017

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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.

Assess to special educational services are much more readily available in metropolitan areas than regional. The populations of many regional areas often means specialist services and settings are not made available and when they are, they are often under resourced and do not have specialist teachers servicing the centre. Unfortunately, access to many services in regional areas are not adequately funded therefore, any impact that the service may have is minimal. Within a metropolitan setting, it is very important that students requiring access to a support class are provided with timely and appropriate support, however this is not always the case. More support classes are required to meet the demands. If a parent has applied for a support class but has not been successful in the application, no extra support to the school is usually provided above access to a SLSO and the school Learning and Support Officer often does not have the training, experience or confidence (usually because a lack of the previous two points) to manage the needs of that student.

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 "Every Student Every School" policy has increased the awareness of people within NSW schools with a disability or Learning Difficulty but has not increased the capacity of schools and teachers to meet their needs. As the result of a lack of training and resources, Learning and Support Teachers often do not have the capacity to meet the needs of students with a disability and the flow on to this is that classroom teachers do not have the resources to meet the needs of these students. As a result of Every Student Every School policy, teachers are aware of their obligations under the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005, however, there can be a disconnect between policy and practice because of limitations of time and resources. It is not possible for the Learning

and Support Teacher to meet the needs of the students that they are supporting as they often have limited experience, training and no access to other specialist staff such as Autism outreach. Learning and Support teachers and students with disabilities require this position to become a Head Teacher position and for it to always be a permanent/ full time position. This would encourage more skilled and experienced people into a very demanding roll that can often become filled with early career teachers seeking employment in other areas but fall into the roll to meet the needs of their school. This is very noble of these teachers but leaves them feeling inadequate and not able to model best practice to other teachers. When this is the case, other stake holders in the student's education do not always respect the professional judgement of these teachers. this is unfair on the staff member and the student. For students requiring low level adjustments to curriculum, could parents of these students be offered concessions on external services such as tuition to provide more time to 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.

We have seen little evidence of increased funding for students with disabilities in our school. Any funding that we do gain has a difficult application process involved and never equates to the amount of money that is required to support the student and increase educational outcomes. Finding the applications is not transparent and takes more time than it should to make. There is no evidence that the Department of Education and Training has increased resources for students with identified disabilities in mainstream classes as the access to their most vital resource of experiences and specialist teachers has been taken away with the Learning and Support Teacher position and the Learning and Support Teacher can not do the job with limited training and resources. Functional assessment tools are not currently used in our school as staff have found them "ridiculously cumbersome with little outcome". Formalised training should be provided to SLSOs. This would encourage more professionalism and would encourage their standing within the school community.

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

E) Any other related matters.

More is needed to be done to protect teachers from violent students. Special Education teachers are passionate about providing the best learning experiences and outcomes for students with a disability, however stress and injury make it difficult to work long term in this environment.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.