

Submission  
No 357

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date received:** 26 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.**

Learning and Support Co-ordinator. 2015-2016 In my role as Learning and Support co-ordinator/ Teacher, one of the main frustrations encountered has been the extensive attempts to gain adequate support for students with recognised needs. Numerous students requiring ongoing and varying adjustments were included in the NCCD data and did not receive funding. Many of these students present challenges in the classroom and playground and require the assistance of Learning Support Officers, however the LSOs are not actually assigned to, or employed for these students. The system is clearly flawed and has numerous discrepancies. The need is increasing, yet the means to support is falling on teacher and SLSO good will. Schools and kids need reasonable financial assistance immediately.

#### **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.**

Prior to 'Every Student Every School' individual students were given amounts of funding support based on their need, under 'Every Student Every School', 'flexible funds' is given based on prevalence of disability within Australia. This does not take into account a region's needs. The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder within Australia is often quoted as being somewhere between 1 in 90 to 1 in 110. This does not reflect our school enrolments where 12 students out of the 217 enrolled are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which is closer to a 1 in 20 ratio. This ratio is similar to other schools that I have worked in. The 'flexible funds' will need to be flexed as much as possible! Despite this lack of funding, teachers that I have worked with take extra time, effort and planning, to get to know their students, form strong and positive relationships, follow recommendations from specialists, frequently liaise with parents and make sure that their students are accessing the

curriculum. With adequate support, teachers and school staff will be able to provide more comprehensive support for students, leading on to better outcomes post schooling. School Counsellor and Registered Psychologist

**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.**

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

On meeting with the P&C as the school's Federation Representative it was abundantly clear that parents felt distressed that not only were students with a disability having their one-to-one support from the teacher or SLSO reduced owing to an increasing (predominantly unfunded) need within classrooms, but the cohort as a whole was disadvantaged as the result. Parents and community members felt that whilst there were adequate provisions in place in terms of review mechanisms on a school level, that their concerns, and 'real-world experience' of classroom logistics were not being heard on a Government level. The P&C have requested that the following points are emphasised in the Inquiry as detailed below. School P&C Students with Disabilities are being disadvantaged regarding the number of hours spent with them as this funding is now being spread across more children that are now not eligible. We have 12 Students funded but in actual case this number is more like 30 Students that are identified with a need but these are not funded. This is creating the funds to now be taken from "other" areas to "top up" funding for SWD that is not being received. Our teachers are spending hours of work preparing and making an application for funding for SWD only to have in most cases declined.

**E) Any other related matters.**

School Learning Support Officer feedback. Children who are unable to focus or process instructions within a mainstream classroom need constant one-one attention and monitoring. When these students arrive with a diagnosis (often multiple diagnoses but not enough to qualify for funding) they are usually placed in a classroom which has an existing SLSO. The SLSO is already working with 2-3 funded students and often others who have been identified as benefitting from the presence of an SLSO in the classroom. Difficulties arise when these high need students are placed together and adjustments have to be made to suit very different social, academic and physical abilities. It becomes a juggling act within the classroom to keep students focused and on track whilst trying to meet their individual needs. When a physical diagnosis is also highlighted it becomes a safety issue. For example, a child with a major health care need is monitored constantly by his SLSO due to the need to be kept "safe" from bumps/falls etc. A second child who arrives with a history of violence towards others, has an ASD diagnosis and has previously attended a Special Needs Unit (BUT receives NO funding) is placed with the SLSO in a mainstream class and is expected to work alongside the student with physical needs and others already diagnosed within the classroom. As more students arrive and are identified with any need for adjustment at all the caseload for the SLSO becomes unmanageable as students "piggyback" on the funding of other students. This situation leads to an inadequate focus, usually on academic outcomes for these students, as the SLSO is required to spend an enormous amount of time juggling behaviour management and medical issues in order for the classroom Teacher to meet the needs of the rest of the class.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.