

**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.**

Students with low level needs attracting less than \$6400 in Integration Funding are now catered for by the Low Level Adjustment for Disability Resource Allocation Model (RAM) Equity Loading. This often results in students being without support for entire days or parts of the day and negatively impacts on the continuity of learning and teacher workload. Even students with the highest needs within a mainstream school only attract funding that covers three to four hours in a school day with the remainder needing to be topped up by RAM money, further depleting the amount available to the school to provide equitable and appropriate resources for all the students. Those students who do not qualify are also impacted as the teacher needs to spend more time assisting the student with needs. The implementation of ESES improved immediate access to additional support within the school to meet the educational needs of students with disability. However this support is grossly underfunded, particularly when the average primary class size is over 24. Limited support with inadequately trained teacher aides who have no professional qualifications in education is a cheap and ineffective use of resources. In this situation, everyone is a loser. The special needs child is not being provided with highly skilled experts in a less than appropriate environment and the mainstream students' needs are not being met, as the classroom teacher has to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the student with special needs. What these students require, depending on the nature of their disability, is more opportunities for special placement with teachers qualified in the area of Special Education. This means the creation and expansion of separate units within more schools, as well as the creation of more specialised school placements (S.S.P) that provide the highest quality of facilities that will assist the student with a disability to reach their full potential.

#### **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 ESES has failed to establish an adequate level of specialist teacher presence in the workplace to effectively support student need. The ESES provision of one global specialist teacher is far from adequate as no one person can be an expert in all areas of disability and special need. The reallocation of nine categories of support teachers to the single role of Learning and Support (LaS) Teacher is an unrealistic expectation, especially in large schools of over 600 students, such as mine be given the sole responsibility of providing direct and timely specialist assistance to students in regular classes with additional learning and support needs and their teachers. The disbanding of the specialist teams across the state has led to a significant loss of expertise and support. Their limited staffing capacity is also inadequate, failing to meet school's requests for additional support. LaST teachers' workloads have increased substantially following the axing of the district STLAs. In effect they are expected to be experts in every area of learning difficulties which is impossible. The LaST role is impossible to fulfil and needs to be reworked in order to minimise teacher burnout which results in even further reduced support for schools and students. There is a trend towards SLSOs teaching remedial programs which often impairs the fidelity of some remedial programs and undermines the professional expertise of the LaST teacher. This is an example of cost cutting.

**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.**

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) represents a new approach to understanding students with disability across all Australian schools. The model for the NCCD relies on the professional judgements of teachers about their students. It requires teachers and schools to make evidence-based decisions about: students with disability who are receiving reasonable adjustments to access education because of disability, consistent with definitions and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and Disability Standards for Education 2005 the level of adjustment being provided for each student with disability, in both classroom and whole of school contexts the broad category of disability the student best falls within.

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

**E) Any other related matters.**

The categories of disability are nebulous and confusing which impedes decision making when identifying students with a disability. Making professional judgements is fraught with difficulty as teachers are often overwhelmed by the curriculum demands and often don't have the time to assess students in detail order to create a clear profile. Consistent teacher judgement is also a problem. Teachers need to be upskilled in CTJ on a regular basis. This profile is needed to inform the category the child may fit. They do not always receive the ESA training and therefore are unaware of the DDA 1002 & DS for E 2005 which may reflect in the level of adjustments students do/do not receive. Targeted professional learning promoting knowledge and understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) is not always undertaken on a regular basis as well as regular refreshers. The planned development of shared understandings among school staff about the NCCD model, levels of adjustment and categories of disability supported through the use of resources on the ESA website does not always take place. PLaSPs can be burdensome for already overworked classroom teachers and they need time to be supported in the process. There is a significant need for more SLSOs in order to meet the needs of students with a disability in the NCCD categories 3-4. There is not enough LaST support to assist all students flagged in a school with learning difficulties.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.