

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
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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.**

- Students often do NOT receive adequate and timely access to Integration Funding support. The process of applying for the funding is onerous and time consuming. With limited funding available, we find the process to be competitive and not based on actual need. Instead, it appears to be unfair in distribution - with many applications denied or the level of need unmatched by the amount of funding granted, which means either the school has to find a way to utilise its own resources to match the need or the students go without the support they actually need. Support placements are very limited and highly competitive. The application and administrative processes are onerous and time consuming, with input from teachers, counsellors, support staff, medical staff and parents required. Panels then determine if placement is granted based upon the very limited numbers of vacancies, NOT on actual need. Parents who do not understand the process sometimes cause delays in placements or refuse them once granted. Schools are left to try and cater for need when placements are denied, or parents do not understand the system, with no extra funding or teacher training, apart from what the school can source and pay for from its own budget. This is far from equitable, unfair and is denying students the quality education they deserve to match their level of need. I feel that we can identify the needs of and necessary adjustments for students, however, the adjustments are subject to the availability of funds and staff. I endeavour to provide the required reasonable adjustments to students but this is often left to my good will and hard work. Although teachers do the very best they can, funding levels and specialist teacher resources are far too low for the required reasonable adjustments to be provided consistently and equitably. -The school does the best it can to run an effective Learning and Support Team but again, this is dependant on funding. The level of student need far outweighs the number of specialist support teachers and support resources the school can purchase. -I am provided with limited time to develop personalised learning and support plans. It is common to find teachers completing these processes in their own time once the allocated time with funding has run out.

**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 implementation of ESES in NSW resulted in: -increased classroom teacher workload through the expansion and implementation of online training modules for teachers, in order to meet the high need of students not being met by specialist support. -making the school responsible for accessing specialist courses for teachers when funding allocation did not provide the specialists required. This has resulted in: -teachers being left to make adjustments to support the individual learning needs of students with disability or learning difficulties without the support they require or the professional learning they need. -the school being forced to create and maintain effective collaborative partnerships with parents and other professionals, in lieu of special education personnel being responsible for this. -many teachers struggling to feel equipped to understand and meet the learning and support needs of the full range of students in their classrooms. -an adequate level of specialist teacher presence in our workplace to effectively support the high level and varying degrees of student need. -only some Learning and Support teachers at the school being a specialist -access to additional support within the school to meet the educational needs of students with disability or difficulty not being met -teachers and the school being responsible for the timely and proper use of the Department's Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST). -teachers requiring training and time to feel better equipped with the PLASST to identify the strengths, abilities, skills and learning needs of students with disability. This training and time requires teacher good will or school funds to be used – again another inequitable and unfair burden on schools with high numbers of new teachers and LBOTE parents/students. -specialist support for students with disability not always being accessed due to lack of funds or lack of specialist teachers/resources/placements. - a reduction of staff placed in schools as specialist support or the collapsing of specialist classes, placing students with special needs back into mainstream classes without specialist support -reduced resourcing from the department for students with more severe disabilities. -reduced capacity by the department to meet obligations to students under the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005, however, the burden of responsibility being placed on individual schools and teachers. -the devaluing of students with a disability or learning difficulty, which does not promote the system-wide recognition and understanding of the rights of students with disability.

**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.**

I do NOT believe that the NSW Government substantially increased funding for students with disabilities. Reduced specialist teacher numbers, the collapsing of specialist classes and the withholding of GONSKI funding allocations for students with disability prove that this has not occurred. Students whose disability and level of need is unlikely to change dramatically in the space of a year still have to reconfirm their disability status on an annual basis in order to receive disability funding. The need is not matched by funding and the funding is reviewed annually. This increases teacher workload and uses the time of support teachers, taking them away from actually supporting students in my class. This annual review wastes time and resources and should cease. Allocation of funding per student need removes this waste. Although the Department implemented PLASST as a tool to be used to inform decisions about access to disability funding, I do NOT feel it has further enhanced educational outcomes for students with disabilities and special needs. The lack of funding to match the identified need in my school precludes the enhancement of student learning outcomes. The Department of Education has NOT acknowledged and accepted that there is widespread concern about the unmet demand for special education places in NSW Government schools. It has NOT increased the number of special education places and classes to ensure that there are adequate places to cover demand for all students with disabilities and special needs and it HAS dissolved

language support classes. This goes directly against the recommendations. Although the Department of Education worked towards ensuring that all school learning support teams include at least one member who holds a special education qualification, many more qualified staff are required to meet the needs of our students. The recommendation that the Department of Education provide additional resources, including relief time for teachers to develop Individual Education Plans has NOT been followed. Time allocation comes from school good will (where existing funds are allocated by the school for this purpose). Extra funding is NOT provided for this in budgets and many teachers end up spending their own time working on these plans. The Department of Education has NOT worked towards assisting all School Learning Support Teachers to obtain a special education qualification. PL to up skill teachers comes from school allocation of other funds, not from disability allocations. No other support teachers in our school have obtained Special Ed qualifications.

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

Our school works hard to establish meaningful relationships with parents/carers of students with disabilities or learning difficulties. We commit ourselves to working with and consulting parents/carers of students and respond to concerns and complaints raised by parents/carers of students in a timely manner. However, we do all of this off our own backs, without the direct support of resources or allocated funding from the department. We utilise school budget funding for other purposes or we rely on teacher good will and use personal time and resources to implement this.

**E) Any other related matters.**

To deliver equity and excellence to every student, our school needs the full GONSKI allocation of funding for students with disability. We need dedicated funding for Teacher training – every single teacher has students with specialist/high needs in social, academic and behaviour domains, however, we can NOT access training. We also need programs with targeted support and the funds to match the needs of every student – so it must be an allocation per student need, not a pot of money. Our school requires more Counsellor time and qualified counsellor personnel – student need requires this to be fully qualified teachers who are counsellor trained, so that they have the understanding and expertise required to make recommendations and implement programs that will target student needs and support teachers with an understanding of educational settings.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.