

Submission  
No 366

**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.**

For those students who need additional support, including adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment activities: Often the number of students in the class makes it difficult to successfully provide the individual teacher support they need, even when adjustments are made. Having support staff in the room makes it easier but it is still not the best solution for those students. For those students who need access to in school specialist support (i.e. support from Learning and Support Teacher, School Counsellor, School Learning Support Officer, Learning and Support Team guidance/intervention): Teachers generally do know how to access such support, but the process to get anything started is a very long one and in the mean time a teacher maybe at their wits end trying everything they know in collaboration with colleagues to help such students. Our counsellor is a one day a week allocation, no where near enough. Do teachers find this support effective? Counsellor support may lead nowhere as parents often do not follow through with recommendations, when parents are on our side wanting the best for their children the process can lead to successful outcomes. Is the professional judgement of teachers acknowledged and respected when accessing this support? Sometimes yes but sometimes no - we are told you have to make adjustments and do the best for this student, you are never allowed to feel that the situation is inappropriate. Maybe the student would do better in a different setting. What inhibits and enables access to this support? Parents refusing to give permission to have a student assessed or to follow through with e.g. speech therapy, o.t. etc is a huge impediment to being able to provide a better outcome for a student. For those students who need Integration Funding support: Do students receive adequate and timely access to this support? Mostly no, it is a very long slow process to achieve success. Sometimes a student has integration support but another student arrives and needs immediate support, so the child who has been allocated the support loses that teacher's aide so that the newer student can be catered for. TOTAL INEQUITY FOR BOTH STUDENTS!! Do teachers/the school know how to access this support? Yes I believe our school has good knowledge of how to get things done and sometimes

executive are forced to make decisions in regard to using other students funding while we await diagnosis and funding. Do teachers/the school find this support effective and is it received at levels adequate to deliver equitable access to education and improved learning outcomes? For 2 of our students even 5 full days a week would not be adequate to support the students in question. These students are simply in the wrong place! Is the professional judgement of teachers and that of others directly involved with the student, acknowledged and respected when accessing this support? Once again we are never allowed to say anything negative at the expense sometimes of our mental health and the ability of other students in the class to receive a happy and safe and calm learning environment each day. What inhibits and enables access to this support? Once again parents who have never sort out a diagnosis for their children and then simply expecting a school to "fix" their child, suddenly we have to go through a long process to try and get support at the expense of all other students in the class. Consider whether your workplace has the adequate resources to: Provide teachers time to develop personalised learning and support- s'times this is possible BUT the student with special needs always takes precedence over the mainstream students which seems like discrimination in reverse. The ordinary students are always the ones who are missing out. Provide teachers access to specialist support and special education expertise - often specialist support staff turn up during class time and expect the teacher to stop a lesson to discuss best practice! NOT HELPFUL! However that said often specialist support will observe a student and provide advice at a mutually agreeable time. It is always a lot of extra time for the teacher! Once again the special needs student takes priority over every other student! Provide teachers access to relevant professional learning - this would be possible always in fact teachers are told without any consultation to attend prof'l learning. Provide teachers access to in class support - this often means that support staff are being used NOT for their actual purpose, but sometimes as an aide while the paid teacher's aide is taking a break!! Provide every student with equitable access to teaching and learning - Once again I feel that the mainstream students are no longer having access to an appropriate learning environment when a student with special needs is screaming and spitting on a daily basis inside the classroom. A normal learning environment is NOT being provided for those students. Establish processes to engage in effective transition planning for students - when the parents refuse to accept a placement at a special unit it is not possible to put transition in place!!

**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.**

**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.**

**E) Any other related matters.**

Adequate mental health support for teachers responsible for those students with extra needs should be provided and easily accessible. It is unfortunate for a teacher to need to take stress leave. Classroom teachers are NOT special ed teachers.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.