

**Submission
No 371**

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

Name: Homebush Boys High School

Date received: 16 March 2017



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.

Homebush BHS is large comprehensive high school of over 1100 students. We have the DoE allocation of 1.1 (full time equivalent) Learning and Support Teacher (LaST) positions and use Integration Funding Support and Flexible Funding to employ the full time equivalent of 2.3 School Learning Support Officer positions. Over 10% of our students have additional learning and support needs. We have students across all categories of disability: vision impairment; hearing impairment; autism spectrum disorder; physical; cognitive; language disorders and mental health conditions. Our teachers state the support provided by the Learning and Support Teachers and Learning Support Officers is very effective. There are ongoing requests from teachers for additional support for their students; and for advice regarding how to best cater for the learning and assessment needs of individual students. Due to the limited resources, the Learning Support Team has to prioritise where this support is allocated. This means many students are not receiving equitable access to teaching, learning and assessment activities and teachers are not receiving the professional development and in class support that they require. Our school has received minimal direct support from Educational Services staff for our school group. An example of the contact we had was when the school was asked to re-assess the domain levels in an Access Request application for a student. This request failed to acknowledge and respect the professional judgement of those directly involved with the student. It also highlighted the fact that more regional staff should be visiting and supporting the schools to know what is happening "on the ground".

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.

Our school had an active and well established Learning Support Team before the introduction of

ESES. This team has a strong record of identifying students with additional learning needs and the necessary adjustments required for these students. However due to very limited resources for the size of the school, we do not have an adequate level of specialist teacher presence in our workplace to effectively support student need. Student needs have to be prioritised which means we cannot provide every student with equitable access to teaching and learning. Teachers need access to professional learning, delivered face to face during work hours. There is an expectation that they should undertake hours and hours of online training (in their own time), so that they can be better equipped to understand and meet the learning and support needs of the full range of students in their classrooms. Most teachers feel overworked already and it is not acceptable to expect this level of professional learning to be done 'out of hours'. There needs to be a significant increase in resource allocation so that teachers can be released to develop personalised learning and support that will provide the required reasonable adjustments for students. They also need time to allow access to specialist support and special education expertise.

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.

Most of these recommendations do not seem to have been acted upon at all. For example, recommendations 1 and 20. The funding for students with disabilities did not increase substantially, there was a reallocation of resources into mainstream classes, but this was at the cost of withdrawing regional resources.

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

Through the Learning Support Team, students with disability, their parents and carers are consulted. However due to stretched resources there is rarely time to develop meaningful relationships with parents and carers.

E) Any other related matters.

Teachers at our school are extremely professional. They do an amazing job juggling the demands of delivering engaging learning activities and assessments to a varied cross-section of boys. Their dedication and professionalism must be supported systemically by delivering adequate resources that will deliver equity and excellence to every student. Especially, there needs to be a real and significant increase in funding and resources to support all students with disability and their teachers.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.