

**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.

Problems for students, who are blind or require Braille to access curriculum include: * teachers not providing content in sufficient time to prepare Braille. * too many platforms, with too great variance in accessibility for students who access curriculum content via laptop and screenreader, e.g. OneDrive is accessible, MS Word and MS PowerPoint. However other platforms such as Moodle, Edmodo and Google Classroom are not so readily accessible - teachers continue to access these and consequently students who access Internet via screen reader are disadvantaged. * poor connectivity for Apple products such as iPads. * sites that provide access to training for blindness products may be blocked by department. * limited access to Windows accessibility utilities such as Windows Magnifier - students may not have access to all options, i.e. docked, lens and fullscreen view.

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.

Shifting of the markers so that autism is no longer acknowledged as disability attracting Integration Funding for SLSO support in a mainstream environment - often, for the students who also have a significant vision impairment, the autism is the 'disability' that is far more problematic and requiring of support than the student's vision loss. Smaller class sizes would assist teachers to better support these students, and more support is required for classroom teachers.

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.

There still exists an attitude among thankfully a small minority of classroom teachers that children with disabilities, including blindness and vision loss, should be in a special setting. It is often difficult to address this matter with schools even when the teacher concerned is clearly in breach of the Disability Standards for Education. Many parents are unaware and lack full understanding of their rights and will not escalate matters beyond the school, even when they are unsatisfied with the outcome. For those who do, the matter is more likely to be quickly resolved.

E) Any other related matters.

NDIS: The students who most need NDIS funding sometimes appear to be the ones who are receiving least funding, perhaps having been let down by their case planners. The funding awarded appears to depend on how well the goals and outcomes for students are defined, and how well the proposed resources and support is matched to these goals and outcomes. There are evidently parents, who are higher educated and articulate, who have gained a far better NDIS result for their own child(ren) than less educated parents have been awarded for children with far greater support needs.