

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

**Organisation:** Barrack Heights Public School

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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.**

For students requiring in school specialist support, such as the School Counsellor, there is an inadequate provision of time. Student need is constantly prioritised and reprioritised according to changing need and to meet placement panel dates. There is a huge amount of unmet need from parents, caregivers and students requesting to see the School Counsellor for support and advice. Students requiring Integration Funding do not receive adequate and timely access to this support. The Access Request mechanism is time consuming and difficult to use due to the nature of its' design. The professional judgement of teachers and others who know the student is not always acknowledged or respected in the process. Timeframes imposed by the region inhibit timely access to funds. The school has been asked to resubmit Access Requests, re-assess the domain level for students and make changes that do not reflect the professional judgement of those directly involved with the student. Our workplace has difficulties adequately supporting students as their parents/caregivers are unable, for a variety of reasons, to gain the required 'paperwork' e.g. Drs reports, speech assessments etc, to support an Access Request. Our workplace is located in a low SES community, along with a high Aboriginal enrolment. Our parents/caregivers of students may: be poorly educated; have little access to transport; have drug or alcohol dependency; have mental or physical health issues of their own; have disability; and/or be on a low income and only have access to public health provisions (with waiting lists or not in nearby suburbs). Our workplace has gained three support classes over the past three years. There has been a lack of DET support in establishing a physical environment suitable to support the needs of students and the staff working in the support classes. There are numerous WHS issues that need to be addressed quickly to protect the safety of ALL staff and students in our workplace. The DET is abrogating their responsibility to adequately provide a suitable physical environment for the specialist classes and the provision of specialist staff to address the complex needs of the students placed there.

**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 established an inadequate level of specialist teacher presence in our workplace to effectively support student need. Our workplace Learning and Support teacher has qualifications and a wealth of experience supporting students with a learning disability but is not an expert in behaviour support. The removal of the support of regional support and expertise in terms of itinerant teachers, e.g. itinerant behaviour support team, has had an enormous impact on teachers and students. The online training programs are inadequate and inappropriate. They offer the same training for all regardless of an individual teacher's skills and expertise. Teachers' perceive the online training as a 'taster'- lacking in depth of knowledge. Our school is not involved in or benefitting from any network to share the knowledge, expertise or specialist resources available in specialist schools. Was there any funding provided to support such networks? Our colleagues in specialist settings need to be supported in order to allow them to support other schools. Our school has used the PLASST since its implementation. Teachers have used the PLASST to profile the learning and support needs of their students but not in collaboration with the students and their parents. Teaching staff only feel somewhat better equipped with the PLASST to identify the strengths, abilities, skills and learning needs of students with disability. Teaching staff acknowledge the depth of professional learning they have received through the expertise of the workplace Learning and Support teacher regarding identifying the strengths and needs of students with disability. The RAM equity funding for students requiring low level adjustment for disability is inadequate to meet our obligations to students under the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005.. It has not enhanced the specialist provisions available to the school. It has not improved access to timely specialist support for students and their teachers in our workplace.

**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.**

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This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.