

**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.

I am a Learning and Support Teacher(LaST) in a large rural primary school. We continue to struggle to meet the needs of students with a disability or special needs. Our current allocation is myself (full time) and my colleague who is 2 days per week. Students in a regional area struggle to access resources due to significant limitations due to distance as well as lack of availability. In my role I see parents who are on long waiting lists to see para professionals from Government services such as Community Health as the other alternative of private therapists, psychologists etc is very costly. We are lucky to have one day a week access to some Community Health services. Travel to private practitioners is at least 45 minute round trip. Our school tries to meet the needs of many students with learning and behavioural needs but it is impossible to cater for them with our current allocation. We have over 700 students and there are at least 5 students in each class needing support. This is very frustrating for me in my role as I cannot support all of them.

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.

Every Student Every School does not allow us to cater for all our students with additional needs. In my role as LaST, I assist the Principal in allocating SLSO (teachers aide) support throughout the school. We have some student on Integration Funding support (IFS) but because the Department has significantly decreased the IFS we have to support students using ESES. We calculated an amount of over \$100000 to pay for SLSO salaries in 2017. This does not include IFS and still does not allow us to cater for all our students who need support. Students are on partial attendance ore getting suspended because schools don't have the resources to support them.

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 have completed a number of access requests to apply for funding support over the last 10 years. I have seen a significant reduction in the amount of funding that is being allocated. The ESES policy does not adequately support schools with a number of students with additional needs. We have increasing numbers of students with mental health issues in our primary school. We have more than the Departments projected 1 in 100 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In most of our classes, there are at least 4 students who are diagnosed ASD. We have at least 12 students in Out of Home Care. We four support classes which are bursting at the seams and several students with mild intellectual disabilities in mainstream classes. We are doing our best but the funding our school receives is totally inadequate.

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

The Department's complaint and review mechanisms for parents are also inadequate. An example of this was an access request that I put in for a student with muscular dystrophy. Unfortunately this student's physical needs were deteriorating. He was unable to toilet himself so needs SLSO assistance to do simple things like turn taps on, adjust clothing, open disabled bathroom door etc. it was not safe for him to be in the playground without individual support. He needed a wheelchair. The Department allocated him 2 hours funding per day. This meant that we didn't have enough money to employ and SLSO to cover recess and lunch so the school's ESES money was used to top it up. With a significant amount of student in the school who also needed additional support, we decided to use the reappraisal process. This resulted in the increase of the paltry amount of 15 minutes extra per day.

E) Any other related matters.

I am still waiting to hear if a student will receive funding support. The access request was submitted at the beginning of Term 4, 2016 and we still do not have a response from the Department. We are using ESES money to support this student who is violent and unpredictable. I am not hopeful that we will receive any assistance as he is ASD and in my experience, even though he has attacked a teacher and his peers, the Department will expect the ESES money to cater for him and many others. Just a shame it's not a bottomless pit! Maybe some of these people in high places should come and sit in our classrooms and see how a 2nd year teacher on a Year 4 class caters for 4 students who are reading a below Year 1 level as well, or the Year 5 Teacher who has 4 ASD students as well as 6 students reading below Year 2 level. We are not adequately supporting students with additional needs in NSW public schools.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.