

**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.

The additional resources needed to offer equitable access are grossly inadequate in order to meet the additional needs of students as defined by the DDA and Disability Standards, which assert that students should be able to access the curriculum "on the same basis as" other students. It is my experience that the schools are expected to follow Departmental policy and legislative requirements, yet regularly have to 'borrow' from other areas of their budget in order to make the reasonable adjustments that meet individual students' needs. This is especially relevant for a cohort of students, who can be collectively described as students who refuse to engage in learning for a range of functional reasons. Making reasonable adjustments within the quality teaching framework, goes to the availability of authentic professional development available to classroom teachers, yet, in my Principal network of schools, are not able to resource access to that online training about teaching students with additional needs within school hours and therefore teachers can only occasionally gain access to this professional learning during school hours.

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 implementation of the ESES framework is akin to a slowly unfolding drought spreading to all schools in NSW which is drying up the specialised provision of additional support to classroom teachers and their students. When we consider... * The reallocation of 9 categories of support teachers to the single role of Learning and Support (LaS) Teachers * The reallocation of Assistant Principals Learning Assistance and Assistance Principals Behaviour to the single role of Assistant Principal Learning and Support * The use of the Student Learning Needs Index based on NAPLAN results to allocate flexible funding and LaS Teachers * Students with low level needs attracting less

than \$6400 in Integration Funding are now catered for by the Low Level Adjustment for Disability Resource Allocation Model Equity Loading. ... it is clear that the architecture of the resource support for disability support in the mainstream setting is being diluted. The Support for students with disability in regular classrooms is also being steadily eroded by an inadequate level of specialist teacher presence in my workplace because the full time Learning and Support teacher position has not been filled by a specialist i.e. The support they provide students is timely but it is not specialised because the temporary teachers who have been appointed have not had the necessary qualifications or experience in doing so. The implementation of ESES and the subsequent removal of the framework has often left our LST struggling to meet the additional needs of the number of students referred by class teachers for support. Our Community of School (COS) has no access to Special schools as centres of expertise because there are no Special schools within 250 km. It is entirely up to one APLaS. Many local schools have basically given up seeking APLaS support because it is such a stretched resource. As a consequence of all of the points above, the specialist understanding and assessing learning and support needs is ad hoc at best and not effective. PLASSTs are done as best they can by classroom teachers who have not been trained in how to analyse the data they throw up or what to do next with that data in order to improve individual student outcomes. One of the most significant concerns I have since the implementation of ESES is the impact on the access to the curriculum for students with high or complex additional learning and support needs. Schools simply do not have the resources, Departmental Officers say they should provide for those students.

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 simply note that to the best of my knowledge, a number of the recommendations have not been acted on in my local area.

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

I simply note 2 facts. The first is that it has taken until now for the Department to implement a new Complaints Handling Policy, irrespective of the merit of it as an effective policy in addressing systemic change and in keeping with notions of procedural fairness. The second is that, up to this point in time, parents and carers, are regularly informally discouraged from formally complaining.

E) Any other related matters.

I want to put on record to the Committee that some LaSTs were allocated to more than one school even though they, like me, were previously full time, permanent specialist itinerant teachers based in one school. In my case I was told at the time of allocation that I could not change that decision when I raised my concern at the time. For me that has a significant impact on my workload, the way that I am perceived in this post ESES era by my colleagues who do not understand the specialised role of the LaST, my career aspirations and my own sense of professional worth. I have always defined my job as making a positive difference to students' lives by improving their learning and well being outcomes. It is frustrating and, at times, stressful, to be perceived as either a visiting, part time teacher who is somehow a lesser teacher because I do not teach a regular class. I know I have a Masters In Special Education and over 20 years experience to draw on but, it seems it is of no value to many of my colleagues who do not understand the potential difference this expertise can make to their attempts to teach the students in their class. The very broad guidelines of the role of the LaST are not helpful because they can be interpreted to mean a range of roles. From my personal perspective, the roll-out of the ESES and the subsequent withdrawal of the Department's

commitment to the framework, combined with the introduction of Local Schools Local Decisions, has been an ongoing demoralising experience. It is an opportunity lost!

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.