

Submission
No 383

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

Name: Name suppressed (PC)

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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.

Over the past 10 years, in my role as Learning and Support teacher (LaST) , Learning and Wellbeing Officer in corporate services and Head Teacher Special Education at

I offer my perspective and those of my colleagues on the current situation for staff, and students with disability in a regional setting. Firstly, we see evidence of increased caseload for both LaSTs, class teachers and school counsellors. In a large rural school such as ours - there are difficulties in supporting individuals across multiple subjects and settings. Support staff make recommendations but do not have the time or resources to carry through and this causes stress school wide. There are increasing numbers of students and more classes that need support. The number of students receiving individual funding has decreased, despite high needs. SLSO's to support students and classes are stretched to the limit. Behaviour is included as a Learning and Support responsibility - There are not enough resources or time to address serious behaviour and mental health concerns - especially with traumatised children and more complex cases. There are not enough school counsellors on the ground and school social workers don't have the skills to carry out assessments. Therefore it takes a lengthy period of time to have a student identified for support purposes. We currently have lost our school counsellor every Tuesday which has a huge impact on access for our students. Staff at have noticed an increase in the number of students in OoHC settings and the paperwork and support required. There has been a steady increase in Disability Provisions across all stages - more vigorous paperwork required -which is time consuming and takes away the support from other students. There are increasing numbers of students in mainstream with mental health concerns and many staff feel ill equipped to manage the complex needs of these students. Added to teacher workload is the greater demand to track and map students on literacy and numeracy continuums with no time provided to do so and minimal training. There is more pressure to increase literacy and numeracy skills across all KLA's - but not enough teacher support in terms of time to team-teach and plan strategies and prepare lessons. There are more students not

managing illnesses/disease - eg diabetes In place are mandatory costly resources for testing and assessing student achievement in literacy and numeracy, but very little time (if any) is provided to analyse and target students for support. There are not enough staff or funds to adequately implement and sustain programs such as MultiLit or other whole school literacy and numeracy programs. There are administrative increases in collection and tracking of data and managing day to day activities and excursions for students. When incorporating whole school initiatives such as How2Learn/PBL and other wellbeing programs - staff find it difficult to find the time to stretch across all of these programs and there seems to be a deluge of initiatives that schools must bring in without the necessary support . Consequently the risk of program failure is high. There are more students staying on to year 11 and 12, but options for creative and varied pathways for students with disabilities are limited, TAFE does not cater well for students with disabilities, yet offers courses that would suit these students if adjustments were offered and funds to support them made available. There is an ever increasing number of EAL/D students at also with learning needs and trauma related disability requiring targeted support and differentiated teaching practise, especially when out in mainstream classes. Crowded classrooms impact on staff and students - particularly affecting students with anxiety, autism, in a wheel chair or with learning difficulties - There is not enough adequate help or supportive learning spaces to address students with trauma or significant disability. We are basically teaching a 19th century education model in 21st century schools and we wonder why students are not engaged! Access Request processes are cumbersome and slow. The local Directorate Office wellbeing staff have been depleted over the last few years and the turn around for student placements and Integration Funding Support applications has increased in time. The Learning and Wellbeing Officer role has grown considerably and consists not only of disability support, but now involves complaints handling, behaviour support, literacy/numeracy support and the number of schools on caseload has increased to the extent that there is little time for officers to visit schools and support staff and families. The loss of Itinerant Support Teachers has had a detrimental effect on the provision of service for students with disabilities in schools. There is no longer administrative support for officers, which means the process is even slower. From a school perspective, the local office no longer provides the support we need at our school , which creates friction between the school and the corporate services sector.

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 LaST position workload has increased to the extent that it is impossible to fulfill the requirement of the role, especially since it now incorporates all the previous itinerant positions, such as learning difficulties, autism support, integration support, behaviour support. While there may have been an increase in LaST allocation, the role has expanded across learning, disability and wellbeing to the extent that these staff are spread so thinly that they feel unable to carry out their duties effectively. The absence of a AP Behaviour has also had a detrimental impact on schools, who continually deal with an increasing number of disengaged , students with significant behavioural issues , coupled with disability. The APL&S is so busy meeting the needs of schools where there are huge learning and behaviour issues., that they don't appear to have time to develop networking opportunities for LaSTs or offer training packages for new LaSTs like they did in the past. The ESES initiative for The Centres for Expertise projects developed by Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)has been slow in coming. The Highlands Behaviour School website is the only one that has really reached out across the state. In regards to NAPLAN being linked to decisions around resources for students with disability..these students often stay away from school on testing days, so the NAPLAN results are not always an accurate indication of the needs of a particular student or cohort. The online learning (OLT) courses ,while good, are time consuming for staff and mostly have to be done in own time, which is not always possible, given the amount of TPL mandated for other programs. PLASST has not been taken up in at because of a lack of training and time for implementation.Our NCCD results

indicate that there are far more students needing support than is able to be provided. ESES has not delivered. The inclusive model, while admirable, has not been adequately resourced. Staff are inadequately prepared for the inclusion of students with disabilities, Although concerned and willing, they struggle to find time to provide differentiation in instruction and they don't feel they have the training or skills to do so, despite the best efforts of LaSTs to assist them. There are also too few SLSOs in mainstream classes to support 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.

From discussions with staff at SSPs in the _____ it is apparent that the current funding model is totally inadequate and totally inappropriate. These schools cater for students from K to 12 and should be funded as such. The NSW Government MUST address the current anomaly in which Schools for Specific Purposes are staffed and funded on a primary school formula, even though they cater for a large number of high school aged students. The current model of assessment of students to determine level of disability and eligibility requirements for Integration Funding Support and / or support class placement is flawed and highly inequitable. The Department of Education MUST move rapidly towards the development and application of a functional assessment tool which has been independently monitored and assessed. This tool should be used to inform decisions about access to disability funding and to further enhance educational outcomes for students with disabilities and special needs. A needs based approach is urgently required. _____ Learning and Support team was involved in a pilot program more that 5 years ago to look at a functional assessment approach and it received a positive response from participants., including both parents and teachers. Where is it now?? Why has this not happened? It is also paramount that the Department of Education provide additional resources, including relief time for teachers to develop Individual Education Plans and that the DoE provide permanent SLSO positions to schools on basis of number of students with disability in mainstream setting , to support teachers in their management of students with Mental health, autism and intellectual disability (mild and moderate).

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

staff : - attempt to establish meaningful relationships with parents/carers of students with disability. However, time constraints make this difficult at times. -work with and consult with parents/carers of students with disability during planning and review meetings, but as staff are not provided with release time, these meetings are brief and only done annually. -respond to concerns and complaints raised by parents/carers of students with disability on as needs basis rather than on a proactive basis,due to time constraints and lack of resources, including staff and funding.

E) Any other related matters.

Staff at _____ -wish to deliver excellence in education to every student through the provision of a fair system of resourcing that enables us to deliver equity for all in a timely manner, without causing undue stress on both teachers and students as is currently the case because we just don't have the resources to meet current needs of students with disability.

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.