

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
**Date received:** 26 February 2017

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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.**

There is inequitable access to resources in our experience within our school context. •For those students who need additional support, including adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment activities: Students do not receive adequate and timely access to this support. There are not sufficient funds, expertise or time to follow and apply recommendations supplied by professionals. •Do teachers feel equipped, confident and supported to provide this support? No, teachers do not feel equipped, confident and supported to provide support needed. Teachers do not have the time to meet the recommendations of specialists. •What inhibits and enables access to this support? It appears when parents are able to fund additional services such as OT and Speech students have access to these appropriate services whilst others with the same need do not have the funds and school funds can only go so far. For example in Week 4 of Term 1 2017 eight students have been identified out of a cohort of 60 mainstream students requiring support for their significant additional needs. These students do not attract funding to support their learning. Instead school resources need to be allocated to cover this need. We have a support unit at our school. When transitioning students to High School placements are not offered in a timely manner due to a lack of resources in the Department. This delay results in highly anxious students and parents and students who are ill prepared for their future learning. Yes the LaST has been asked to resubmit AR's as well as re-assess the domain level for a number of students. Specifically in 2 instances whereby lowering the domain level adversely affected the outcome. When completing the access request process, if a student is not offered a placement, this information is not forthcoming. We do not receive an email or any other communication to say that an application has been declined. The AP Special Education or the LAST end up having to follow up and determine if there is a need to adjust the application and resubmit. Yes students have been deemed suitable and eligible for support placement and not been offered a placement although placement was offered within a few weeks as some positions became available. If this was not the case these three students would have been placed in mainstream. Students

requiring specialised equipment do not receive appropriate funding and it is not approved in a timely manner. At our school basic toileting needs are not being met and this impedes upon the student's independence and dignity. This student does not access all areas of the school due to WHS concerns which is limiting the student's development. These adjustments are beyond what the school can or should be asked to provide. Equipment for these students requires constant teacher supervision to ensure safety and WHS concerns are met. Schools would be better equipped if we had a culturally sensitive liaison person dedicated to work with families for language, cultural and intellectual reasons in order to get parents on board to better understand their children's particular needs. This is a need to assist parents to match the appropriate service or medical intervention appropriate for their child.

Transition funding for students is extremely limited. This year we have 6 students transitioning to high school from our support unit. Assuming these students are offered a placement in a timely manner, we do not have adequate funds allocated to give these students an adequate transition to properly prepare them for high school.

**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.**

Unfortunately even though the LaST has the experience needed to provide direct specialist assistance to students in regular classes with additional learning and support needs and their teachers, there is not enough funding or time to provide the adequate support that is needed for the students requiring adjustments or the teachers requiring support. Last year 49 IEP's were written and implemented. More funding to employ SLSO's would have allowed for more students in need to access extra support. In 2016, 53 out of approximately 320 students were identified with a DDA disability with adjustment levels ranging from supplementary, substantial and extensive. Even though there were students requiring adjustments the NCCD deemed them below the threshold of need. Our school has a support unit so there is already expertise in the school. The regional staff have also supported us in working with a special school to assist some of our staff in learning new skills.

**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.**

The DEC used to have a funding program called 'resource based staffing'. One of our staff was involved in assessing schools/students using this tool. This staff member also worked in a school that had been allocated this funding. In this staff member's experience this tool was a step in the right direction. Student's were funded not simply based on a diagnosis, but rather the whole child and their individual needs were considered and funded accordingly. Whatever happened to this tool/funding? It is unfortunate that it is the Principal's discretion as to whether a school has a Support Unit on school grounds as there is such a great need for these placements. These students are then placed into mainstream or attending schools with Support Units that are a distance from their homes.

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

**E) Any other related matters.**

The NSW primary curriculum does not adequately address the needs of students with severe and moderate intellectual disabilities. Often these students are unable to meet any of the early stage 1 outcomes by the time they finish primary school. Teachers are then let to develop their own outcomes. We are currently reviewing the early years framework to see if this will work for our less able students. Outcomes need to be developed for each KLA that will ensure these students are able to access the curriculum in a meaningful way.