

Submission
No 407

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 5 April 2017

Partially
Confidential

Submission

My daughter is 11 years old and has a moderate intellectual disability and Level 2 (moderate) autism.

She was initially enrolled for Kindergarten in a 'special school for autism' - private school that was government funded. I had to take her out of there because the other students were extremely violent. She was bitten with blood drawn, hair ripped out of her head, arms twisted and bruises every day of the week. I complained to the school that there was not enough supervision on the playground. Their response was that her being hit was good opportunity to teach the hitter that they shouldn't hit. She was outnumbered with the boy to girl ration being 4/1. The hitters were always boys.

I removed her from that school at the end of Year 1 and put her in a public school IO class. There was 10 kids in the class. Half the class of kids was had Autism and the other half was Downs Syndrome. The school had 6 double gates wide enough for a car and a number of smaller gates. I was at the school every lunchtime to help my daughter with hygiene and toileting. I saw kids from that IO class disappear outside the gates, my daughter was lost one lunchtime and came back on her own with the school not alerting the police. The kids in that class all absconded and the gates remained open. I requested that the double gate closest to their class be closed during school hours. The principal refused and we argued through the anti-discrimination board for 12 months before Occupation Health and Safety became involved and ordered the school to lock all the gates during school hours.

My daughter was indecently assaulted as were other girls in the IO class by the boys. They were also assaulted by having their nipples pinched until they cried, had their skirts lifted and indecently touched under their pants, punched, kicked, pinched and pushed. My daughter was completely non-verbal at school due to the noise and stress in the class. Boys in the class regularly masturbated in the middle of the classroom with teachers and principal refusing to do anything to stop the masturbation and assaults from the boys on the girls. The principal said she could do nothing about the goings on in the class.

I removed my daughter from public school IO class because, as per her paediatrician's letters of support - her mental health was being impacted by the assaults and the disruption in the class.

I applied for distance education (DESU) with Dept Ed - that my daughter is entitled to because she is considered an isolated child due to her disability. Dept of Ed refused my application and again refused on appeal - despite medical letters making the request and explaining that my daughter was unable to attend school for medical reasons.

I am now having to Homeschool my daughter because Dept of Ed have not provided a quiet and safe class for my daughter to study in, so that she doesn't have mental health issues at school. I have had to design and deliver to my daughter, her adapted homeschool curriculum. Dept of Ed refused to provide distance Ed for my daughter, that is linked to a Special Needs school, providing a teacher and optional school attendance for social events. This would have provided my daughter with the social contact she needs to develop

social skills. Instead I have had to privately pay for my daughter to attend dance class so that she can socialise, have physical activity with other kids, pay for piano and singing classes, so she can learn music. I do not have Government funding for these costs despite the Dept of Ed putting me in this position. The NDIS has not approved activities.

My ability to provide for my daughter has been cut off with my now full time job of home educating my daughter. I have to rely on a carer payment from Centerlink. My ability to earn an income and provide for my daughter has been devastated. I have a degree in Counseling, but can't work. I also am unable to attend to a Law degree that I have been offered by UNE.

CatholicCare and Aspect organisations have identified the need for girls only classes and each provide a monthly art class for Special Needs Girls since they both recognise that there is a need to provide for the different learning needs of girls. This means providing a safe and quiet class so the girls can express themselves and be involved in learning instead of retreating into themselves.

My experience is that my daughter would be fine attending school if a Special Needs Girls Class was provided for her.