

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

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Partially
Confidential

1. My son, _____ was diagnosed with autism at age 2. The diagnosis was that _____ is on the severe end of the autism spectrum, and has intellectual impairment which causes him to be non-verbally communicative, he also has epilepsy as a complication to his autism, and several other comorbid conditions.
2. _____ was enrolled at _____ in 2015, at the age of 4, to begin his schooling life in the support unit as a kindergarten student.
3. Upon enrolment, _____ school was notified of _____ learning difficulties and I therefore was confident that he would receive the attention and care required of someone with his needs, and was assured his needs would be met.
4. I first noticed a change in _____ behaviour fairly soon after starting, particularly with me (his mother)
 - when in my presence, he would behave erratically, and refuse comfort and affection, whereas before starting school his bond with me was excellent.
 - meltdowns and pica increased, his vocal sounds decreased, as did his eye contact and his ability to demonstrate a want or need
 - frequent seizures at night and increased in frequency during the day (day seizures went for about one every six months to at least one every month, night seizures went from 2-3 times a week to almost every night)
5. After noting several events that seemed to be amiss, such as lunches coming home completely sealed (he cannot open his own food), a teacher mentioned that he was being kept in a “therapy pool” (a fenced off section in the playground with a concrete floor and lockable gate). In 2016 I learned that he was being restrained in the classroom using specially made chairs for him specifically. Those chairs were shown to me by the principal upon my asking. A witness told a meeting with the principal and education department representative present, that she had seen the straps secured behind the chair, and he was growing quite distressed the longer he was in it and couldn’t get himself free.
6. _____ was removed from _____ school in March 2016 and since then we have experienced extreme resistance from other local schools to enrol him as a student. He is currently enrolled in another town’s support unit (which only came about after I brought _____ situation to the attention of the media), where he is starting to recover from his traumatic ordeal, however that unit is not equipped to cope with him for a full day due to his high needs.
7. The teachers and SLSO’s at _____ were almost all women, the two men were only dealing with him in short bursts in happy times such as excursions. In the time since he was withdrawn from the school, he is showing signs of recovery. His behaviour towards his mother is very slowly returning to what it was, his epilepsy is starting to reduce in events and severity, his vocal sounds are returning, his face gazes are returning, his ability to take somebody by the hand and show them what he wants is starting to reappear. He has associated his treatment at that school with women, hence mum became his target for his anger. He cannot speak so he cannot say what is happening.

8. As is his right, I wish to ensure [redacted] is educated and socialised to a standard that is fair for someone of his high needs, he requires a one-on-one aide full time in an inclusive school environment. Funding from the NDIS would assist in ensuring this, however I have had difficulty in securing this as the process has been rather long and haphazard. An open dialogue with educators etc would be a great start, but that has so far been unattainable in what has been a drawn out, difficult and stressful experience.

9. I have so many unanswered questions regarding this. I have no idea how long it takes the Department to investigate itself, it seems like I'll never see an outcome? Getting any information is like pulling teeth. There seems to be very much an "us and them" attitude applied which is counterproductive for the students who ought to be the focus.

11th April 2017 (I do apologise for my lateness, hoping this is accepted and has some impact)

Georgina Maker