

INQUIRY INTO MEASUREMENT AND OUTCOME-BASED FUNDING IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS

Organisation: RMIT University Melbourne

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Submission: The NSW Dyslexia Award

I ask that the inquiry consider this submission regarding outcome-based budgeting for primary school students with disability, specifically those affected by the common disability, dyslexia.

This proposal is in response to the inquiry terms of reference: a) Improving NSW school results relative to other countries and; c) Consequences of outcome-based budgeting, most particularly sub-points ii); iv) and v).

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common, lifelong, form of learning difficulty affecting the reading, writing and study skills of 10% or more of the population in Australia. This means that 2 or 3 children in each class in NSW schools will be affected by dyslexia. Teachers report they are under-equipped to support affected students and offer the specialist support required. Many professionals express frustration that they do not have the remit, knowledge or confidence to help students with dyslexia to learn. Individuals with dyslexia are over-represented in the prison population, often unemployed as adults and typically have a miserable, unproductive time whilst at school.

What can be done to help affected students achieve better outcomes?

In response to this pressing educational issue, Sir Michael Rose produced an independent report for the UK Government (Rose, 2009) on how schools could better meet outcomes for students with dyslexia, reducing the substantial flow-on economic and social costs.

Recommendations were accepted by the UK Government in 2009 and 15 million pounds (GBP) (approximately 27 million AUD) funding was provided by the UK Government to address recommendations. A key recommendation by Rose (2009) was that willing primary school teachers should have access to specialist training to enable them to: identify affected students as early as possible; provide 1:1 specialist support (literacy, numeracy and study skills); orchestrate evidence-based reading instruction across the whole school; and advocate for the needs of affected students and their families.

Feasibility of a funded state-wide initiative in NSW

Via a competitive tender process I won 2.3 million GBP (approximately 4 million dollars) of funding from this larger amount, working for my employer (Edge Hill University) at that time and I led a large scale workforce development program which was rigorously monitored by the Department of Education (DFE) in London. Project outcomes were highly successful with 1800 primary school teachers receiving specialist, accredited PG training and achieving specialist teacher status (AMBDA) 2010-2012.

I wrote this book detailing the successful outcomes of this large project and providing a blueprint for how it could be applied to an Australian context in light of established international best practice.

- Armstrong D. and Squires G. (2014) *Key Perspectives on Dyslexia: An Essential Text for Educators*. Abingdon: Routledge. [Dyslexia Book](#)

This publication sets out the skills, knowledge and role of a funded specialist teacher program, calling on sound research evidence and referencing an Australian policy context: it is designed to be effective here at a statewide or national level.

Benefits and Recommendation

I request this inquiry considers recommending a funded program of specialist professional learning so that every primary and infant government school has or has access to a specialist primary teacher who: provides 1:1 specialist support (literacy, numeracy and study skills); orchestrates evidence-based reading instruction across the school; and advocates for the needs of affected students and their families.

Publicly available 2017 data suggests this initiative would involve 1000 + teachers from the 1606 primary and infant government schools in NSW, with small rural schools potentially working together to nominate a shared candidate. Educational outcomes from this initiative could be monitored and measured to ensure strong take-up and successful completion of the program. The program itself would be at postgraduate [PG cert] level, accredited by a chosen university based in NSW or elsewhere. 'The NSW Dyslexia Award' could be a suitable title.

Funding and promoting this initiative would enable schools to better meet the needs of students with this common disability and showcase progressive policy in action. Existing evidence already indicates implementing this initiative would make a major difference to educational outcomes achieved by primary-age children with dyslexia in NSW.

I would be honored to speak to the committee further, in person, about this submission if called as a witness.

Dr David Armstrong

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