

**Submission
No 18**

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES EDUCATIONAL
SETTINGS**

Name: Mr Nicholas Lapsley

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Nicholas Lapsley

Submission to the Children and Young People with Disability in NSW Educational settings

Hi, my name is Nicholas Lapsley, I have bilateral hearing impairment and ataxic cerebral palsy. I went through the public school system from kindergarten to year 12. I had support from teacher aides and support teachers trained in educating children with hearing impairment. This continued through high school alongside being part of a dedicated hearing support unit.

I am putting in this submission to strongly encourage changes to the process of disability provisions for the HSC. My experience with the NESA board was daunting and overwhelming at an already recognised stressful time for high school students. It required extensive assessments from both occupational and speech therapists which were lengthy, exhausting, and time-consuming. Not to mention the cost to my parents. There were large amounts of paperwork and even an appeal process for me to go through. I was extremely lucky during this time to have a great support team that included my therapists, my schoolteachers and support staff alongside my parents, all of whom consistently advocated for me. Without this, I would more than likely not have completed the HSC successfully.

My lasting memory of the HSC provision process is the filling in of paperwork and completing many OT assessments to prove that my handwriting is not easy to read to the unfamiliar eye and deteriorates when tired, stressed or writing over a long period. Because of this, the school and I were requesting for allowance to use a laptop during these exams and have several other provisions. I had used a laptop from primary school and written exams and assessments were always submitted this way. When I received the decision that the provision for using a laptop for written exams was denied it was a very stressful time and hard to see a way to reach my full potential in the HSC and as a result, affect my future aspirations of going to university. We had sent in all the required OT assessments and speech therapy reports to prove that I needed this provision. It must be remembered that the use of a scribe was not an option either as I have a speech impairment secondary to both my hearing loss and cerebral palsy and was something that had never been utilised during my schooling years because of this.

When my initial application was denied, the school requested an appeal, and we were asked to provide even more assessments which ultimately meant more time spent in appointments with specialist therapists not to mention the extra pressure and concern this caused. Thankfully we finally received the approval for the use of a laptop during these exams after a long and daunting process which included the appeals process.

This bureaucracy occurred during a very stressful time as I was preparing for the final HSC exams and is something that any person shouldn't have to go through.

I strongly recommend the following changes.

1. Look at past evidence and doctor/medical professional/ teacher/school support staff reports instead of asking for OT reports/assessments. This evidence should already exist for the majority of cases.
2. Set up a meeting between the assessor and the student/relevant support staff to get a better understanding of what they need to complete the HSC to the absolute best of their ability.
3. Review the need for appeal. I feel in my case it was unreasonable to be asked to go through the appeal process. I had submitted extensive and comprehensive evidence to the NESAs board supporting the use of technology that had been approved throughout my schooling years.

I would be very happy to further discuss this process and my experiences with the inquiry panel. I am also happy for my name to be disclosed.

Kind regards,

Nicholas Lapsley