

Submission  
No 52

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

**Name:** Mrs Ciara and Mr Tim McKillop  
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Partially  
Confidential

It's my first born child's first day of kindergarten. He is disabled.

We attended the information session but of course he is disabled and attending the LSU so they didn't have any information for us nor could they show us the classrooms he may be in.

We chased up his enrollment because he is disabled and we didn't get to enroll him in our zoned school. He didn't get a place there. The school he received a place never contacted us.

We his parents chased up and made happen transition days because you see he is disabled so he couldn't be included in mainstream transition days. He is in a learning support unit.

He is the only kindergarten kid starting in the LSU in 2023 at this primary school.

We have worked really hard to get here.

We worked with 3rd parties to create social stories.

We purchased secondhand uniforms as soon as we knew where he was going so he could feel comfortable in them.

We reached out to the school so we could meet his teacher a talk about expectations etc.

We were nervous, scared and so excited and proud.

We met with the assistant principal and teacher the week prior to school starting we discussed his strengths and challenges. We told them everything we knew about our child. We were vulnerable and we wanted nothing more than open communication to work together for the best of our child.

We put together an about me book, we supplied reports from therapists.

We did everything we thought we should do. We were really conscious of becoming 'those' parents.

Our child started a week before his kindy peers because that is when LSU classes returned to school. They had the school mascot at the front gate and the relieving principal welcoming families.

Our welcome was

'your gate is over there' the relieving principal said pointing the the side gate learning support unit use.

No....hello, welcome to your first day of primary school. Not even addressing our child.

We got a photo with the mascot and walked our child to the learning support gate.

When the mainstream kindy kids started the following week he had to be apart of the crowd welcoming them to the school not actually with his peers being welcomed.

We received a welcome to kindergarten letter via an app which had all the information about the kindy schedule etc. our child is in the LSU there was no information about that.

Our child didn't get the first day of school experience like his peers did. We were left feeling disappointed and sad. It felt like our child wasn't seen or valued by the school.

We spoke to his teacher every afternoon. This didn't work out as our child became distressed and we were not comfortable having negative conversations Infront of our child.

They implemented a communication book.

This book was somewhat useful when it was filled in.

When filled in alot of the time would say things like

Was rough start but settled in the afternoon.

Or

Had a good day.

This doesn't really tell us anything about what is happening and where the struggles are. What was doing to support him to be settled, what worked, what didn't work.

We had prepped the school that our child would seem settled at the start and then when he was comfortable things might become challenging.

We waited 5 weeks to be given an opportunity to discuss his progress.

Our child received there first suspension After a week of dysregulation.

A call everyday with him being unsettled and non compliant yet nothing changing and the staff failing to recognise something isn't right.

The principal calling to advise he is making our child pick up rubbish in the main playground because he needs to know who's in charge.

Id love to see the research on why shame is still being used within the education Department as punishment.

Why the life skill of compliance as a vulnerable person is being praised and rewarded and not self advocating and self awareness being celebrated.

A child who has already expressed his discomfort and overwhelm in the main playground, being made to go there as punishment and pick up rubbish in front of his peers he is already secluded from only further isolates and excludes him. It taught him nothing, it taught him he will be forced into uncomfortable situation when he isn't coping.

It's taught him people in positions of power have the right to control and force you to do things that make you feel unsafe.

He was suspended for 2 days and we were given a suspension letter. Yet it was called a reset and we were never offered a reentry meeting or an action plan to support him further.

Second suspension was 5 days and he was not even told he was being suspended until we took him home. He had no idea it was happening. There was no meeting regarding the incident.

The segregation my child has experienced because they are in an LSU class is really disappointing. He was never offered a pass at lunch time to go to the library for quiet time.

He was never offered small group tutoring before school to help him with the curriculum.

We as his parents were never given information regarding other groups within the school like choir so we could support him to participate if he wanted to. As far as we are aware he was never offered support in these areas.

My child sometimes uses a bear (stuffed animal) to regulate by chewing on its ear. The school on the advice on the NSW education department behaviour therapist banned all outside belongings including regulation tools.

Before being aware of this. I accompanied my child 2 school on 2 occasions and explained to staff he felt like he needed his bear today and that he will have this with him. They agreed and said that's fine.

During the school day he was then told to put it in his bag and not bring it to school again.

They justified this by supplying regulation tools whenever needed. This is not the same thing. No one else gets to decide what's regulating for a disabled person except the disabled person.

He has never used his bear to regulate at school again and is too scared to take it. This is not okay. They took away his safety.

Having the school bring in a behaviour therapist without parental consent and parents requesting to know what has been reported and being denied this is not okay.

We requested to know what model of therapy was being used and were denied. A lot of behaviour therapists practise ABA therapy which goes against our family values, morals and beliefs yet our child is able to be subjected to this against his will with no consent or discussion.

It's another way the NSW education department gatekeeps information and isolates parents and carers disempowering them to make decisions for their children.

Not to mention the direct violation against the best practice guidelines for early intervention.

Things witnessed by other parents were children being locked (with a key) inside a classroom alone during a meltdown.

Locked outside classrooms alone.

Our child's teacher yelling at our child during class.

"You are not listening, I am sick of it. You will sit down and listen"

Our child removes himself from room, co regulates with another parent rejoins the class only to be yelled at again by the teacher.

"No you don't always get to make choices."

Imagine having to send your child to place like this 5 days a week. How can they feel psychologically safe in an environment where they are so misunderstood.

My child is truly disabled by the environment of the NSW education system, and the failings they continue to ignore or address.

The refusal to admit PBL is not helpful to these kids and truly acknowledge that by listening to lived experience and acknowledging trauma they could continue to grow and change but refuse by further investing in a broken system.

It's a disgrace to the country to treat it's most vulnerable in a way that marginalises them further.

It's oppression.

The gatekeeping by the department staff hiding behind policy is a clear indicator of systemic oppression.

Waiting weeks to have a complaint addressed only to have such a cut and copy reply (sometimes even with the wrong details, clearly leftover from the last use of the template) is yet again a slap to the face of families crying out for help and support.

Nsw education still has scripture and also provides non scripture which we had chosen for our child.

During non scripture our child was forced into a mainstream class as there wasn't any other options. They had not provided him with support not done any preparation to support him in this environment. He ended up having to attend scripture because that where his teacher was and he didn't feel safe anywhere else.

And if you think 2023 could get any worse or if you think oh hasn't this child been through enough.

It was even reported to CPS and it never went any further than the school. The victim and family were not ever contacted. The school handled it. They did nothing.

My child or us didn't receive an apology or acknowledgement that the incident most likely did happen.

Again nothing was actioned to help support our child through.

2024 isn't shaping up to be any better.

Trying to speak with the school staff and executives only to never be given a straight answer always dancing around the issue, tells me there is a lack of confidence.

School principals refusing to respect a communication preference of email.

Changing the class names from supported learning and teachers name to supported learning and a colour because the teachers change so often and being proud of this change instead of recognising the change actually needs to be dropping the support learning part to be inline with the rest of the school and naming the classes the same to not further the difference and othering the children and experiencing.

Having scheduled toilet breaks every hour for the whole class.

Not having a suitable play area after they school moved the LSU classrooms to a different part of the school. Not being allowed to go to other play areas like the basketball courts during playtime as it's out of bounds to them.

Only having access to a sandpit (no equipment) and a sloped grass area with no shade and a hall (not allowed anything in the hall) after ALL the children having the school provided balls confiscated due to incidents, but not allowed to bring their own things from home.

My child having to request a pass to have a brain break when feeling dysregulated. Even though having those executive functioning skills impaired when heightened is part of his disability.

Not wanting to go to school because his peers require more support than him so when he asks for help no one helps him. But being praised in his IEP meeting because he is understanding his peers need more support than him. This is not okay and completely undermines his need for support.

Yes the children with higher needs require support but that doesn't mean his needs vanish or that he needs less support himself.

He is learning that when he asks for help or is struggling and is not helped that he will eventually stop asking for help.

While people judge and say I would never send my child to a school like that, you need to change schools. What choices do we have? My child was given a place at an out of zoned school, we don't have any choices in this. He goes on a list, he goes in front of a panel, he gets given another place at another NSW school. The grass isn't always greener.

I regret having to send my child into the NSW education system everyday. I worry for the long term trauma it's inflicting. I worry for all the children that suffer in the same way.

I worry for the teachers in these situation and how awful it must feel to not be able to give these kids the support they need. I don't blame them for being burnt out and unsupported.

In another life I would have the financial security to home school and support my child in the way he needs.

I'm sad for my son and I'm angry that a system is so far behind on the needs of the community.

Thank you for reading.

Kindest regards

Tim and Ciara McKillop

Please accept my apologies for the tone changing in my writing, I'm angry retelling what is happening.

I'm sorry if it doesn't make sense. There has been so much this is just what I can get out right now.