

Submission
No 78

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 4 April 2024

Partially
Confidential

Hi my name is



and I'm in

year 4! Please read my

submission!

Audio recording from

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings

Overview

describes her experiences, perspectives and ideas, as an Autistic person with ADHD (AuDHDer) attending a NSW public school, in a conversation with her Mum,

The recording is approximately 40 mins long, in narrative form. All ideas are entirely own, and she is making this submission on her own initiative, with full support from Mum.

Please note there are some side quests, which is a key feature of neurodivergent communication. The recording has been lightly edited to remove excessive pauses and 'ums' (mostly Mum), background noises from fidgets near the mic, identifying features e.g. names of individuals, and info not relevant to the Inquiry Terms of Reference.

Timestamp Summary of key highlights (approx.)

- 0:30 Describes what it's like to be an AuDHDer in her experience, sensitivities (including noise, light), and people not listening/believing her because they experience the world differently.

Describes what it's like to become overwhelmed at school, and why it's difficult - the impact on relationships, learning and participating in school activities.
- 4:00 Describes what situational mutism feels like, and how it feels being expected to speak but being unable to respond with mouth words. Describes what it feels like being forced to make eye contact. Describes being judged, misunderstood and shunned due to needing to communicate in different ways.
- 6:30 Describes masking to comply with school expectations (rules), 'fit in' and please teachers/peers.
- 6:45 Uses analogy of a brick wall being built throughout the day – each brick represents a negative experience. Describes exploding when arriving home - the brick wall falls down.
- 7:30 Describes the impact of having supports taken away e.g. earmuffs.
- 8:15 Elaborates on brick wall analogy – purple and pink bricks represent negative experiences, blue bricks represent happy experiences, and the number of bricks on each side depends on what happens each day.

- 9:30 Describes experiences with teachers and support teachers saying hurtful words, using put downs.
- 11:00 Describes needing to be alone and in silence. Describes needing brain breaks but being unable to take them sometimes.
- 13:00 Describes challenges with daydreaming and maths. Explains when medication is at its peak it's easier to learn.
- 15:00 Explains trauma/trigger words - number, 'no'. Observations of her AuDHD friend, his difficulties because he exploded at school causing class evacuations.
- Explains autistic kids need support not to be forced to stay still and process like a neurotypical person. Says people don't understand why they do things, and that communication has to happen at the right time i.e. when they can focus.
- Says her friend and her are the same, but she bottles it up and explodes at home because she doesn't want to end up like him because it's a very bad experience [note – after multiple suspensions over many years he was transferred to a support unit at a different school. His sibling still attends the original school]. Explains people don't want to be friends or interact with autistic people because they're scared.
- 19:00 Observations of Year 1 student who has a type of dwarfism. Describes how students and teachers treat her. Details the extensive physical changes made to the school to make it accessible to her. Wishes changes could be made to better support students with hidden disabilities. Outlines observations of support teachers having to leave.
- Gives examples of her ideas e.g. quiet room/s where students could go when they need a break (need to regulate).
- 25:00 Explains needing a break, and despite having explicit permission to take breaks anytime still expected to use mouth words but can't. Gives example of peer who hid in the toilets causing a school wide search, explains he just needed somewhere safe to have a break. Explains that teachers think she's just asking for a break to get out of work, but if she stays, she can't learn anyway. Describes what it feels like in her brain when she is forced to learn when she can't take any more in.
- 28:00 Describes how it feels holding it in and then exploding

30:00 Explains feelings of being misunderstood during social interactions with close friends. Wishes sometimes she wasn't autistic because it sometimes causes issues with communication.

Describes an interaction with a close friend due to a sensory trigger (strong smell) during free lunch time play in the nature play space. Describes realising she's hurt someone's feelings by being direct and truthful (no filter) and feeling bad, sad and worried she'd lose her best friend. (Example demonstrates autistic play vs neurotypical play and communication 'rules' in the playground).

33:00 Explains her need to chew (sensory input – oral stimulation), kids and teachers touching her silicone chew necklace and not understanding why they can't have one/it.

34:00 Gives advice for teachers and support staff regarding hidden disabilities such as autism. Thinks teachers need to “change the point of their mind” and gives ideas on how to understand, advocate for, and better help autistic students at school.

38:00 Describes what she'd change about school for students with hidden disabilities if she had a magic wand.