

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO
STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

Organisation: Disability Advocacy Network
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COMMENTS (in general) TO MATTERS AFFECTING PROVISION OF EDUCATION

1. The nature, level and adequacy of funding for the education of children with a disability.
Our comment: Funding in the rural areas for children with special needs does not meet the needs, the rural areas do not have the resources that are available within the metropolitan area, i.e. if the services funding is not sufficient, and the consumers can go to another suburb to gain a similar service delivery. This is not possible in the rural areas – isolation.
Best practice approaches in determining the allocation of funding to children with a disability.
Our comment: Government should consider having ‘on the ground’ consultations within the rural areas on a regular basis – not just as a ‘token one-off’. This would give a better idea of the needs of children with a disability, as well as the ‘hidden’ need in these areas.
3. The level and adequacy of current special education places within the education system.
Our comment: Not sufficient – with the number of Special Needs Schools losing their funding recently. Mainstream schools have to pick up the ‘slack’, additional money needs to be allocated to mainstream schools to cover this, especially within the rural areas.
4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms.
Our comment: As with above, children with ‘Special Needs’ require extra support within the classroom, ‘one-on-one’ support, i.e. Teacher’s Aid. Having one Teacher Aid to support two to three children with a disability is not productive and the children are not getting quality education.

When they eventually leave school, what employment can they hope to gain, if they cannot get a quality education at school?

Teacher’s Aids need to have formal disability training in how to deal with or support children with disabilities within the classroom, i.e. not all children with autism require the same support, the condition manifests/effects on the child can differ from child to child and so does the level and type of support required.

5. The provision of a suitable curriculum for people with an intellectual disability and conduct disordered students.
Our comment: suitable curriculum within this area, should be thoroughly researched locally, include all the latest international trends that has been implemented in other 'progressive countries', then tailored to meet the needs of the students. Funding should not be the first criteria – children's education should be placed above this.
Student and family access to professional support and services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and school counselors.
Our comment: Access to these services, especially in the rural areas at times is non-existent, at the best the waiting list for these services is months long.
6. The provision of adequate teaching training, both in terms of pre-service and ongoing professional training.
Our comment: this area is also in need of additional funding (rural areas in particular). Within the rural areas distance/travelling is an issue. Not all areas have a large TAFE facility and those that do may not offer the training required, due to funding constraints.

				ACTIONS
In NSW the teacher's aides who assist children in helping with individual needs at school do not have to have any formal training.	Because this is a specialist area that they should receive formal education	Although most people can provide the caring role required to attend the needs of children with a disability at school, it would be more suited for this person to have some formal training in how to appropriately deal with certain disabilities, especially the behavioral problems that can be associated.	That it becomes law for aides in school to have a trained certificate in this area or be willing to undertake it once employment commence. Currently, we believe this is up to the schools discretion.	
A teacher teaching in special needs schools in NSW do not have to have any extra training in the disability field.	Children with disabilities often require specialized teaching- that should be recognised in the teachers being trained as such	Because of teachers lack of training children may not receive adequate/ appropriate support.	Put regulations in place that all special needs teachers require specialized training	
Primary school child was receiving transport assistance to and from school daily. (Taxi funded by Dept of Education). Single parent did not have vehicle/means to transport child across town to special education school when first approved. School became aware of 'Means of transport' and transport assistance was stopped.	The child's school transport should not have been stopped by the school	The assistance was taken away due to policy, the situation I believe should have been thoroughly investigated, the condition of the parent's car should also have been a relevant issue in the situation	That consideration of the parent's abilities need to be taken into account before a service is taken away & necessary strategies implemented	
A nine year old child with hearing impairment – both ears, one cochlear implant. Receives nine hour per week funded support from a Hearing Teacher. Child was suspended from school from bad behavior	Classroom, professional support and playground duty staff all needed to be made aware of child's circumstances /special needs.	If an IEP (individual Education Plan) had been put into place when the child first started school, most of these issues may have been avoided With all parties working with one plan resources better utilized not duplicated.	Annual 'needs' review of all known children with disabilities to be implemented during first half of first term. Department of Education's identification of support needs/availability for parent's to be able to assist in correcting bad behaviors of child from home	