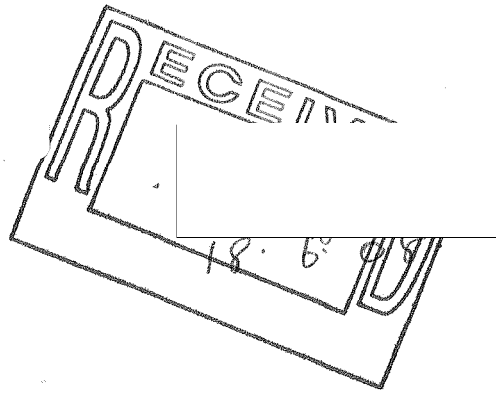


Submission No. 965  
(Inq into better support for carers)



THE HONORABLE Annette Ellis, M.P.  
C/O PARLIAMENT HOUSE Canberra.

Dear Annette,

My name is Elizabeth [redacted]. I have been a teacher in the QLD Education System for 45 years and I've loved every minute of it the good and the not so good. I retired on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2007. As I retire I would like to advocate on behalf of all intellectually and physically disabled people and their parents. Before I do I would like to present you with my credentials.

1957/58 I received a teacher's scholarship to complete my Senior. There was no Senior high school in Childers so I had to travel to Maryborough by train, board privately and attend Maryborough girl's High School. I went home by train every weekend.

1959. I attended Kelvin Grove Teacher's College.

1960 I was posted to Childers State School. I shared a Grade 2 Class.

1961/62 I taught Grade 2. I had 50 students in my class. We had no teacher's aides.

1963 I taught Grade 4.

1964 I taught grades 1/2 10 beautiful Grade 1's 18 wonderful Grade 2's.

1965/1968 I was transferred to Cordalba State School [a 2 teacher school]. I had 40 students in Grades 1 2 and 3. The Staff included the Principal The Cleaner and me. I loved it. I was young and enthusiastic and that's where I learnt to be a teacher. My Principal, Mr Trott was so supportive. In 1968 I had 3 students who came from a Special School. They were a challenge. I thought if I had them on their own I could get them to achieve. I applied to go into Special Education, [a career defining moment.]

1969 I was transferred to Baroona Special School.

1970 I completed the first 10 week course in Special Education at Mt Gravatt Teacher's College.

1971 In first term I introduced a program "An Integrated Day" with my preschool group.

1971 Transferred to Inala Special School.

1971/1973 I taught cooperatively with other teachers.

1974 I taught students expelled from their classroom [Behaviour Modification]. The plan was to modify the student's behaviour and return them to their classroom. I designed a scarf dance display which my students performed at Inala, Biloela, Kuraby, Nambour and Mt Isa. I am very proud of it as it showed the students from a special school in a wonderful light.

1975/1976 Opened Special School Classes with my husband. We worked cooperatively with the primary school.

1977 first term Caboolture Special Classes. I retired to have my son.

1978 I did supply teaching at Inala special, and Goodna Special and W.R.Black now Mt Ommaney Special School.

1979 I became a permanent employee at W.R.Black.

1980/1981 Transferred to Nambour Special.

1982/1983 Transferred to Mt Isa Special. 1982 Organized an Art Expo round Commonwealth Games involving all primary schools. 1983 Organized an Art Expo [Shadows] involving all state primary and Catholic schools.

1984/1986 Transferred to Red Hill Special.

1987 Completed Graduate Diploma Special education at Griffith University Mt Gravatt Campus.

1988/2005 Transferred to Inala Special School.

The Endeavour schools closed and students were transferred to special schools. I taught older [16/18 year old students] with high support needs. I loved it. That's my passion.

In 1990 I received an AST1 position. This was an initiative of Education Queensland to encourage experienced teachers in the classroom. I am very proud of that achievement. From 1988 to 2005 I was a

teacher mentor to students from Griffith University completing their Education Degree in Special Education.

In 1997 The Federal Government instituted the Moving Ahead Program which provided funding for high support needs students exiting school. I applaud the Federal Government for this initiative. The Queensland State Government continued the program after 3 years and I applaud them for that. I was involved in applying for and successfully attaining funding for students 1997 to 2005 and I have 100% success rate of which I am very proud.

My philosophy is that all children that are born are precious jewels. If adults love them, cherish them, support them, believe in them they shine and achieve their full potential. If we don't love them, cherish them, support them and believe in them they become dull, lifeless, angry people who do not believe in themselves, don't like themselves or anybody else and cause themselves and everyone else great harm and sadness.

I believe that teaching is the most honourable profession and I am proud to have had the privilege to teach. I have met the most wonderful people, colleagues, students, parents with whom I have an ongoing relationship.

Because I have worked with families to get funding for students after they leave school, I have developed an intimate knowledge of the students their disability and its effect on the family. Every family situation is different but all are challenging, constant and ongoing.

In my experience parents have felt secure while students are at school. They are secure in the knowledge that their son/daughter is well taken care of. The students are taken to and from school by free bus and at school we, as teachers plan programs in consultation with parents then implement them to develop the student's skills in areas to make them functional and independent and able to operate in the community and to make a contribution. During the last year of school, parents need to apply for Adult Life Style Support Post School Funding. I have always enjoyed filling in the application working with parents.

A verifying interview follows the application. This takes place with a Disability Service's Queensland officer. I have always enjoyed working with parents to apply for Adult Life Style Support [formerly Moving Ahead] In this interview the teacher and parent have to back up the information in the application. I found this process very satisfying with parent and teacher working together to provide a total profile of the student and the effect on the family. When the student received funding the parents and I met with a DSQ officer to set goals and decide which service provider would be best to control the funding, to plan and implement programs to build on the skills already learnt and to continue to provide programs to help the student learn new skills to increase their independence. The student and their family are out in the big wide world but this is not the end of the story. It is a new, challenging story and these are just a few of the challenges parents and families face.

The parents have to be vigilant in checking that the goals agreed upon with the service provider are being worked on. The parents are entitled to know how the hours and the money are being spent. This can be a difficult and harrowing task for parents. Service Providers should be held accountable.

Often parents aren't aware of their entitlements at Centrelink. There needs to be officers at Centrelink who are sympathetic to the needs of parents of a child with a disability and who give the parent confidence so they will approach Centrelink. The officer and the parent would work together to get the parent all their entitlements.

If the State or the Nation had to care for all people with a disability in a facility it would cost many millions more than it does now. To help keep their child with a disability at home we need to provide many more respite places and this requires much greater funding.

.Some students with a disability are able to work part time but they need support from a supported employment agency eg Comepas. This is an area that needs a big increase in funding. What is the use of supporting a student in a job for a short period then withdrawing only to have the student fail? Some students with a disability require support until they feel secure in the knowledge that they can do the job.

Parents have to make plans for their child when they can no longer look after them. This is a very stressful decision for parents to make. When children move out of home they need to be in excellent care so funding is needed to provide the best facility and quality staff.

Each year the number of applications for adult life style support increases but the number of packages has remained the same [150] since the inception of the program. The funding needs to be increased so that more packages are available to give students more chance to be successful.

In the past students who received funding were able to complete work experience ,supported employment or volunteer work part-time.I believe this is no longer possible.As a teacher who worked with students with high and complex needs I can only stress how important it is for students who can , to complete work experience,supported employment or volunteer work. It makes the student feel worthwhile .It does wonders for the person's self esteem and also gives the parents a sense of pride.If a student receives a part package that provides 1or 2 days support that leaves 3 days a week for students to be supervised at home by a parent who would not be able to work .It seems to me that if a student is capable of contributing to the community by completing work experience ,supported employment or as a volunteer it makes an enormous difference to the student's whole life and that of their parents .

I urge you not to lump all people with a disability together. There are people who have a disability due to an accident.Some of these people can be rehabilitated back into the work force maybe part -time depending on the severity of the disability and whether the disability involves brain damage.Special consideration is needed for people with a permanent disability eg intellectual impairment. Their disability is permanent but that does not mean they cannot contribute to their community.

My relation ship with my families is ongoing.Problems arise and parents ring me for help and I'm glad to be useful.Parents have said to me they would be happy for their student to stay at school for ever because both parents and students feel supported and secure .This is not an option .What I have tried to do is make the process of exiting school as seamless as possible .My fervent hope is that with the Government's and the community's support we can achieve good outcomes for students with a disability and their families.

Yours sincerely ,

Elizabeth