



**THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Julia
Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2008 referring a petition from residents of Victoria and requesting action on funding for students with disability. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Australian Government strongly supports the rights of students with disability to have the same educational opportunities as other children and is committed to providing ongoing funding for this purpose. I appreciate how important it is for these students to receive appropriate support in meeting their special needs.

For the first time, all Australian governments have agreed to work together on a reform agenda focusing on improved teacher and school leader quality, high standards and expectations, greater accountability and better directed resources. The Australian Government is working with states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments and its working groups to develop a new funding framework for schools that will support the reform agenda and generate better learning outcomes for all students.

The current lack of nationally comparable data on students with disability limits the Government's ability to target resources to support those students who are most in need. As part of our national reform agenda, I am committed to working with states and territories to improve data collection and transparency of information for these students, to ensure that the Australian Government can direct funding support to where it is most needed. Consultation with key stakeholders is an important part of the process and is currently underway.

I trust that this information will be useful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Julia Gillard
Minister for Education