

Subject: Inquiry into students with disabilities

Re-Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Comm

My son Jared Colley is now 19 years old was diagnosed with Neuro-fibroma-tosis (N.F.) at the age of 11. N.F. is a genetic disorder where various size benign lumps grow around nerves throughout the body these lumps are visible and cause problems such as;-

- abstracting normal body functions
- restricting sensitivity of hands etc.
- scoliosis
- optic glioma
- and learning difficulties

Jared attended Tathra Primary School on the far south coast where nothing was known of N.F. On commencing High School (in Bega) we were able to provide information on N.F. to his teachers. Jared then attended a special reading class and learned to read , which was not done at primary school. Being a slow learner Jared was then entitled to a helper in exams ie(helper - being a student who can read the questions in exams to make questions more understandable and fasten the process) This helped greatly but now Jared who is seeking employment through Workways , Mission Employment etc.has to sit tests to assess his ability for employment . He doesn't go that well in these tests because there is no helper therefore is discriminated against because he has a disability so finding employment is hard.

I feel the main areas to be addressed are

- educating teachers about disabilities - so the child isn't treated as the dumb kid up the back of the classroom
- early detection of disabilities so as help can be given at a young age
- after their education devise programs to assist disabled students to enter the workforce

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