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My name is Sue Van't Wout and I have seen the Education system from both sides of the fence.

I have been a Teacher Aide for Disabled Students for over 6 years at Karalee State School and a parent of a young man with a disability after he was hit by a car and received severe head injuries. He could walk with an Easy Walker but needed a wheelchair for distances, his assessment was level 5, I.I. and 5, P.I..

Integration began when my son was a school student in Montrose Special School and I had my son enrolled in Bundamba State School for two days a week. Then I placed him at Redbank Plains High School fulltime until half way through grade 9 when I transferred him to Claremont Special.

When he started at Bundamba the teacher came to me and asked “**How do I teach this child?**” This was repeated by the teacher he had the following year. There was **no** training at all for these teachers and my son was basically left to be involved as little as possible. There were **no** teacher aide hours available to us, Integration was a joke. School trips arose and I was told to **keep him home!**

My son was bullied and taunted at high school and treated very badly by other students. He did however get some aide hours (3) at high school which helped, but it was left to us to provide the financial support for an aide to ensure he had some involvement in P.E. In short my experience was that all the promises were rhetoric, the support was nearly non-existent for the student and the teachers! My son is now 19 and I am pleased to see some things have changed but sad to see there is still a long way to go.

There are not enough aide hours! I work with a Cerebral Palsy student who is unable to do anything at all for himself and yet is given only 15 hours a week in aide time! He is a level 6 P.I. He has to be toileted and fed and needs one on one support in the classroom. He even requires assistance to communicate so 15 hours is a joke, this child needs support for the entire day. The teacher has very little input into the classroom life of this student as she has a large class to teach, with several students with behaviour problems. What happened to the promise of lower class numbers for teachers who have a special needs student included in their class?

Where I work at Karalee State School, the students are very much a part of the school. They go on all trips and camps, and are not left out of anything. They are looked after tremendously well **but** it is a constant struggle to manage with the aide hours available. Our school is a cluster school and we have been provided with the facilities to cater to the needs of all our students. However, the young man I work with has an electric wheelchair and as he has a visual impairment he has a tendency to bump into poles, drive off the path into gardens etc. He is gradually gaining in proficiency however his vision will not improve and the lack of ability to maintain a head position because of his Cerebral Palsy will always cause him problems. We have a set of stairs from the undercover area that are a huge safety issue for him. However we have been denied a ‘gate barrier’ to a stairway. It is only a matter of time before this boy is involved in a serious accident, there has already been two near misses. We need to look after our special needs students in all facets of their lives during their attendance at school. If this child goes down those stairs they will be seriously injured or worse. The parents could well sue for negligence, and the Education department is guilty of not providing a safe environment for the student.

In conclusion I would like to say inclusion and integration is a great thing but only will work successfully when,

- a) both the student and teacher have support.
- b) Aide hours become more realistic.
- c) There has to be support for schools in that if an area is seen to need improvement or facilities need to be installed or modified it can be done without the need to beg.