



Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

File Ref

2002/1

23 April 2002

Mr John Carter
Secretary
Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee, Australian Senate
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CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Dear Mr Carter

RE: SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Thank you for the invitation to respond to the above Senate inquiry.

This Archdiocese (Canberra/Goulburn) has system schools in both the ACT and NSW and is therefore represented by two system authorities:

- (a) The Catholic Education Commission – ACT; and
- (b) The Catholic Education Commission – NSW

This response is on behalf of the Catholic Education Commission ACT. We have also contributed to the discussions and inputs that will form a response on behalf of the Catholic Education Commission NSW.

As with all Catholic Education authorities across Australia, we consider the issues of this inquiry to be of great importance and would welcome the opportunity to discuss and expand further on the contents of our following submission.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

For further information and or follow up please contact Michael Traynor, Coordinator Special Needs Education Services, Education Services Division, phone 6234 5485, fax 6234 5496.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Mark Hogan
Acting Director

CC. Dr Brian Croke, Executive Director – Catholic Education Commission NSW
Mr David de Carvalho, Chief Executive Officer – National Catholic Education Commission

Attachment – Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn response – Senate Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN RESPONSE

Senate Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities

1. Background

- 1.1 This Archdiocese has a strong commitment to the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) in regular schools. This is reflected by a 40% increase in enrolled SWDs over the last five years (in the context of a 2% increase in overall student enrolments).
- 1.2 Increases in Commonwealth Special Purpose Program funds (eg the Strategic Assistance for Improving Students Outcomes Program – SWDs element) are indexed annually from an historical allocation and do not reflect the significant needs of the increased enrolment of SWDs across the Archdiocese in the last five years.
- 1.3 In the context of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) it should be noted that while the obligations of providers in the Catholic sector would be identical with those of providers in the Government sector, the circumstances of providers vary. Accordingly, Catholic school providers, including those whose operations are both systemic and free-standing, have expressed concerns that the level of resources available to them to respond to the needs of students with disabilities do not compare with the resources available to the Government sectors.

2. Issues

- 2.1 This system authority has participated in a number of recent State/Territory/Commonwealth processes inquiring into the educational provisions for SWDs, eg.
 - (a) The 1999 Act Legislative Assembly Inquiry (See Attachment A) and
 - (b) The 1997 -- 1998 Commonwealth (DEETYA) Special Education Review process that examined how the Commonwealth provides funding for SWDs and determining the means of improving the operation, clarity, allocative mechanism, equity and transparency of this support.
- 2.2 This system authority (in addition to other Catholic system authorities, including the National Catholic Education Commission) has requested the public release of the Commonwealth Review (see 2.1 (b)) as made available to the minister, Dr David Kemp. This report has not been made available.
- 2.3 In addition to the issues raised by this system authority in the recent review processes (see 2.1) we highlight the following as issues of urgent and immediate concern:
 - 2.3.1 Common understandings and agreements need to be reached at a national level regarding the use of definitions when describing Students with Special Needs (most importantly the sub-set of SWDs).
 - 2.3.2 Under the DDA the term disability covers a much larger cohort (argued by some education authorities as being up to 20%) of students as compared to the current DEST SWD definition. This has great resourcing implications and 'possible imperatives' given the current MCEETYA drive to produce Education Standards to accompany the DDA as subordinate legislation.
 - 2.3.3. A problem with the current SWDs funding process in Catholic (non-government schools) is that there is little clarity regarding the respective responsibilities of State (Territory) and Commonwealth Governments as to their respective roles in supporting SWDs. This situation is compounded by a range of ambiguous servicing arrangements from Government therapy services in relation to Catholic schools eg in the ACT, Child health services (for SWDs) are administered through ACT DECS (the Department of Education and Community Services).

- 2.3.4 The current Commonwealth funding allocations (SAISO program) are a result of an amalgamation of historical programs. The funding amounts and relativities between government and non-government sectors are not based on any considered rationale or resource analysis.
- 2.3.5 This system authority suggests that the Commonwealth should be considered a partner with all educational authorities in meeting the costs of the education provision implied by the DDA and the costs from the release of the Education Standards as subordinate legislation.
- 2.3.6 Additional cost factors relating to the provision for SWDs in the Catholic sector including:
- Improvements and development in technology leading to increased options available to SWDs
 - The increasing profile of and costs for therapists and para professionals in mainstream school provisions for SWDs
 - The movement away from institutional based care for high support SWDs to mainstream placements.
- 2.3.7 The ACT Catholic Education Commission believes that funding for SWDs in Catholic schools should be equal to the additional funding available to SWDs who attend Government schools. This Commission also believes that the establishment of equitable Government funding in the ACT should not be achieved by a reduction in funding for Government schools but by an overall increase (at State (Territory) and Commonwealth levels) in Education funding which recognizes that Catholic and Government schools are partners in achieving the public good and our local and national interest for students with educational disadvantage, particularly SWDs.

23 April 2002



Attachment A
FILE COPY
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

File Ref 99/156

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23 March 1999

Ms Judith Henderson
Secretary
Standing Committee on Education
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Henderson

**RE:INQUIRY INTO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH
A DISABILITY – ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 February 1999 inviting a submission from the ACT Catholic schooling sector in relation to the inquiry into educational services for students with a disability.

Please find attached the submission from this office. For further information and/or clarification please contact Michael Traynor, Coordinator - Special Needs Education Services phone (02) 62345485 fax (02) 62345496 email michael.traynor@ceo.cangoul.catholic.edu.au

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Geoff Joy
Director

Attachment: Inquiry into educational services for students with a disability (Standing Committee on Education of the ACT Legislative Assembly) – Submission from the ACT Catholic schooling sector.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

Inquiry into educational services for students with a disability (Standing Committee on Education of the ACT Legislative Assembly) — Submission from the ACT Catholic schooling sector

Summary

The ACT Catholic schooling sector, while acknowledging the recent financial support of the ACT Government through the ACT Non-Government Schools' Special Education Program, informs of the ongoing and pressing school and system needs in relation to the education of students with a disability in this sector. The Catholic Education Office (Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn) requests that ACT Government provide the Special Education funding allocations as indicated in our response to the Chief Minister's 1999 – 2000 budget consultation process.

1. Background

1.1 This system authority sector expresses their thanks to the ACT government for recent funding allocations (97-98,98-99) through the ACT Non-Government Schools' Special Education Program.

1.2 This sector has had a long history of including students with disabilities in regular class settings (no special schools or units operate within this Archdiocese).

1.3 There has been a noted increase in the number of students with disabilities enrolled within this sector over the last five years.

1.4 As well as this increase (total number and % of student population) there has also been an increase in the nature and level of individual student needs as indicated by the degree of the disabling condition(s).

1.5 This sector commits to authentic partnerships with individual school communities in meeting the needs of Special Education students and fostering more inclusive schools.

2. Current contexts/issues

2.1 This system has formulated a series of long term plans to address the inclusion needs of students with disabilities within ACT Catholic schools (see at-

tached the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn 1999 Special Needs Plan).

2.2 Key aspects of system planning, as indicated in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn 1999 Special Needs Plan – see attached, are:

2.2.1 the acknowledgment of the demands put on the schools/system in light of Disability Discrimination Act legislation and parents exercising their rights of choice in relation to student schooling options (see 2.5 of plan);

2.2.2 addressing the learning needs of students with disability through systematic planning and evaluation of learning outcomes (see section 9 of plan); and

2.2.3 maximising the effectiveness of limited resources (see 7.1.1 of plan).

2.3 This system continues to apply rigorously the Commonwealth definition for students with disabilities in relation to formal census requirements/obligations.

2.4 A significant number of students, not eligible per the strict application of Commonwealth definitions/guidelines, also present with major learning needs. Funding to support the needs of these students is also inadequate.

2.5 There is no parity of support/services between Government and Catholic schools for students with disabilities because of the inadequate resources available to ACT Catholic schools.

2.6 Significant Professional Development is provided by the system authority/other sources in relation to students with disabilities. Additional funds are required for schools to access (eg via funded teacher relief) needed Professional Development opportunities.

2.7 Parents are involved as key members of the school based inclusion team (see section 6 of plan).

2.8 The Catholic schools/system should have equitable access to and provision of services from ACT Government support agencies eg from CHADS (Child Health and Development Service).

3. Conclusion

3.1 The system wishes to maintain a flexible and viable approach to the inclusion of students with disabilities in ACT Catholic schools.

3.2 Appropriate resources are required to maintain and develop an inclusive schooling agenda which takes into account the needs of the total school community.

3.3 Current resourcing needs are not being met.

3.4 There is an increasing demand on the ACT Catholic schooling sector to:

3.4.1 provide adequately for students already enrolled;

3.4.2 provide additional and supported placements for other students with disabilities; and

3.4.3 provide the diversity of services which are available to students with disabilities in the Government sector.

3.5 Academic research and international trends indicate that, due to technological advances, there will be increases in the numbers (and percentages) of students with disabilities with higher funding support needs. A status quo funding position, in light of this reality, will make an already difficult inclusion agenda untenable.

3.6 Relevant government bodies are encouraged to request the release of the Commonwealth funded (DETYA) research of 1997-1998 which reviewed at a national level the funding issues relating to students with disabilities.

3.7 This system requests as a matter of urgency and priority the release of ACT government funds to support the needed inclusion initiatives in ACT Catholic schools as detailed in the Catholic system response to the Chief Minister's 1999-2000 budget consultation process.

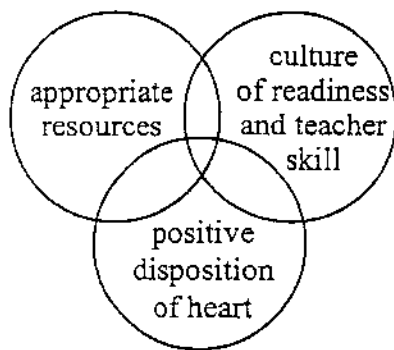
ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN 1999 SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN

1. BACKGROUND

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn 1999 Special Needs Plan is a response to promoting quality learning outcomes for students with Special Needs. As well as being an accountability document for the use of annual Government Special Education funds, the implementation of this plan is intended as a catalyst in fostering more inclusive schooling practices across the Archdiocese.

The promotion/achievement of an inclusive schooling community is often seen as a vision or reference point as opposed to a series of events or strict criteria.

One suggested model for successful inclusive schooling is:



Simply stated, all elements (as described above) need to be synchronised and working together if true inclusion is to be a reality.

While the inclusive schooling agenda covers a great diversity of student/community perspectives (eg as indicated in section 2 of the Archdiocesan Special Needs Handbook 'Special Needs students who are they?') *this plan restricts itself primarily to a focus on the needs of students eligible for support through the Commonwealth Special Education Program.*

Students with significant educational/learning needs, not eligible for support through specific Special Education Government programs are considered in light of other system (CEO) and Government programs, eg the 1999 Special Needs (Literacy and Learning Outcomes) Program and Commonwealth Literacy Program.

2. RATIONALE

2.1 The Catholic Education Office acknowledges the need and importance of a system response in relation to both promoting an inclusive schooling agenda and the responsibilities involved in maximising the effectiveness of Government (Commonwealth, State and Territory) Special Education funds.

2.2 The Catholic Education Office commits to authentic partnerships with individual school communities (and, where appropriate, other non-system supports/agencies) in meeting the needs of Special Education students and fostering more inclusive schools.

2.3 Development of a system plan provides an interactive and collaborative base between the system authority (CEO) and all school communities.

2.4 This plan is situated in the reality of a busy school agenda and is intended to be a companion document to other school and system plans (eg the principles and directions sought in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn 1999 Literacy and Numeracy Plan).

2.5 This plan acknowledges the commitment of school communities to students with Special Needs (Special Education/other) and, in particular, notes:

2.5.1 the increasing demands made on schools regarding the enrolment options sought by parents of students with Special Needs;

2.5.2 the resilience and resourcefulness of staff in making provision for students within finite resourcing boundaries;

2.5.3 the school/system responsibilities under Disability Discrimination Act legislation in light of limited resources being made available to meet these responsibilities; and

2.5.4 the role of parents as key members of the school based team.

3. RESOURCE BASE

3.1 Funding sources to support the learning outcomes of Special Needs students (Special Education) are detailed in section 4 of the Archdiocesan Special Needs Education Handbook. Some significant points to note in relation to the provision of 1999 funds are:

- 3.1.1 Special Education funds are directed to individual students on an annual (not recurrent) basis;
- 3.1.2 the system authority contributes a portion of general recurrent funds to establish parity of funding levels for students with similar needs across both sectors (ACT and NSW) of the Archdiocese;
- 3.1.3 the ACT Government has continued to support the ACT independent schooling sector for the '98-'99 financial year through the ACT Non-Government Schools' Special Education Program;
- 3.1.4 the allocation of Special Education funds (capital) has a different range of procedures for NSW schools due to particular requirements of the Catholic Block Grant Authority;
- 3.1.5 the system authority allocates some Commonwealth funds for system management/service delivery needs (eg some of the Education Officer salary component for Special Needs Education Services); and
- 3.1.6 the major source of funds for annual allocation to schools is the Special Learning Needs (Special Education) component of the Commonwealth Targeted and Quality Schooling Programs.

3.2 The annual CEO staffing formula also includes considerations/provisions for school based staff (eg Special Needs Resource Teachers) on behalf of students with Special Needs (see 6.3 of the Archdiocesan Special Needs Education Handbook)

3.3 Other 1999 system resources including funds from the Special Needs (Literacy and Learning Outcomes) Program.

4. PRINCIPLES FOR ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDS (COMMONWEALTH/OTHER)

4.1 Key principles for allocation of 1999 funds to individual Special Education students are:

- 4.1.1 funds are allocated on an 'in principle' basis during Term 4, 1998 for 1999 planning purposes;
- 4.1.2 funds are allocated on the basis of established need as indicated through the annual application/review processes;
- 4.1.3 during Term 1, 1999 an allocation process provides for the distribution of any unexpended funds (eg as related to individual students leaving the program);
- 4.1.4 this allocation process is based on data provided to the system authority from individual schools; and
- 4.1.5 the Archdiocesan Special Education Committee reviews the processes detailed above and makes the recommendations for the allocation of funds.

5. USE OF 1999 SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDS

5.1 1999 Special Education funds will be used as follows:

- 5.1.1 system support costs (see 3.1.5);
- 5.1.2 school based salaries (teacher/teacher assistant support) – the major proportion of funds are used for this purpose;
- 5.1.3 purchase of essential capital equipment/minor capital works;
- 5.1.4 provision of consultancy services (eg costs for psychometric (IQ) assessments);
- 5.1.5 funded relief for school staff to participate in Special Needs Education Services Professional Development programs; and
- 5.1.6 provision of system resources (eg updates to the Special Needs Resource Package and 3.2, 3.3).

6. CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 The following arrangements form the ongoing processes/conversation between the persons/groups that make up the Archdiocesan inclusion perspective:

- 6.1.1 parent representation on the Archdiocesan Special Education Committee;
- 6.1.2 parent participation in enrolment processes, relevant workshops, panel reviews and the Individual Education Program (IEP) process;
- 6.1.3 regular networking and professional exchange with CEO and school specialist/generalist staff through PD, use of system resources etc;
- 6.1.4 broad community representation on the Archdiocesan Special Education Committee;
- 6.1.5 participation with and support of a wide range of Special Education associations/support groups (eg AGOSCI, AASE etc);
- 6.1.6 positive outcomes from the CEO/Centacare Committee; and
- 6.1.7 the planning, delivery and interaction generated by the suite of Professional Development organised through the CEO Special Needs Education Services Team.

7. 1999 SYSTEM PRIORITIES

7.1 The major 1999 system objectives for this plan are:

- 7.1.1 maximising the effectiveness of limited resources on behalf of Special Education students;
- 7.1.2 promoting/achieving enhanced learning outcomes on behalf of Special Education students (eg through ongoing Individual Education Program processes etc);
- 7.1.3 achieving a cultural reality of more inclusive schools;
- 7.1.4 valuing and fostering the unique abilities and talents of Special Education students in the context of the whole school community;

7.1.5 providing a realistic and relevant range of Professional Development activities to support school staff in the inclusion process; and

7.1.6 promoting the rationale detailed in Section 2 above.

8. KEY INITIATIVES (AT SCHOOL/SYSTEM LEVEL)

8.1 School/system initiatives include:

8.1.1 development/delivery of major Professional Development (see 10.0 following);

8.1.2 ongoing focus on effective enrolment processes (see section 5—Archdiocesan Special Needs Handbook);

8.1.3 ongoing delivery of CEO services through Special Needs Education Services (eg panels, reviews, observation/assessment services, school based Professional Development);

8.1.4 ongoing delivery/refinement of psychometric (IQ) assessment processes;

8.1.5 promotion/delivery of the system course – ‘Including students with Special Needs in the regular classroom – a whole school PD program’; and

8.1.6 further development of reporting student outcomes (eg IEP reporting etc—see 9 below).

9. COLLECTION OF ASSESSMENT DATA/REPORTING STUDENT OUTCOMES

9.1 Collection of assessment/outcomes data will include:

9.1.1 1999 Benchmarking data (Year 3 and Year 5 students) including Special Education students as a subset;

9.1.2 1999 IEP outcomes data for Semester 2 (see Appendices A and B—Archdiocesan Special Needs Education Handbook);

9.1.3 outcomes/planning data as collated and agreed to at review meetings for Special Education students during 1999; and

9.1.4 ongoing updates at school/system levels of all relevant documentation (including assessments) for Special Education students.

indicated in the 1999 Special Needs Education Services Professional Development calendar (see attached);

10.1.3 1999 school/system participation in other Professional Development on offer through other sources (eg associations/agencies/other systems); and

10.1.4 ongoing delivery of the system's inclusion course (see 8.1.5).

10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10.1 Major 1999 Professional Development will include:

10.1.1 relevant Professional Development as indicated in the 1999 Archdiocesan Literacy and Numeracy Plan;

10.1.2 specific Special Education Professional Development as

Attachments

Visual organiser – 1999 Archdiocesan Special Needs Plan
Special Needs Education Services – 1999 Professional Development/Courses

For further information or clarification regarding the 1999 Archdiocesan Special Needs Plan please contact

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