

The Secretary,  
Senate Employment, Workplace, Relations & Education,  
References Committee,  
Suite 1.61  
PARLIAMENT,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.

29<sup>th</sup> April, 2002.

Dear Sir,

As the parent of a fifteen year old deaf child living in the north-west of Melbourne, I wish to respond to the Senate's survey into Special education.

My son's primary education has been well addressed by the Furlong Park Pre-School and School for Deaf Children in North Sunshine. Now, as a multi-handicapped teenager with deafness, visual impairment and mild autism, his secondary schooling needs are not being met by the Victorian State Government.

Currently he attends the Victorian College for the Deaf in St. Kilda. It would appear that the charter of this school is gradually becoming that it is a school for deaf children only and that multi-handicapped children are suffered rather than welcomed.

Despite adequate funding from the Victorian Ministry of Education, which should enable my son to have an aide within this setting, it has been a two year struggle to have the school meet the needs of my son.

I believe the only suitable school for visually impaired children is Carronbank, Glen Waverley, which is geographically impossible for us to attend. So too is the Bulleen Heights School which takes autistic children, but we live outside the catchment area of this school for subsidized travel.

An annexe for autistic secondary students exists at the Essendon Secondary College, but this has a long waiting list.

I strongly believe there needs to be an annexe to an existing school in the North West where these multi-handicapped children, whose I.Q. is sufficiently high to make them ineligible for Special Schools, can attend in a safe and caring environment and where their strengths are nurtured with the view to making them self sufficient and valued citizens.

Yours faithfully,



HELEN HEAGNEY (Mrs.)



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