

I have just received a copy of a media release regarding this inquiry by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee. I understand public submissions are due by 28 April. Impossible. So let me just say:

1. As a regionally based occupational therapist working with Education Queensland, I value the excellent support that has been offered by the Brisbane-based Principal Education Officer (PEO), Occupational Therapy, and the Occupational Therapy Advisors based at the Low Incidence Unit in Brisbane, since the advent of the employment of therapists by Education Queensland in 1990. The PEO and Advisors have assured a ready and high-quality support service which attracts therapists to Education Queensland, and helps to retain these same therapists over many years. The processes, support materials and services, and model of service delivery developed are a model for other states. This approach to supporting occupational therapists (and physiotherapists) in the field is currently undergoing review and could be threatened. In looking at the education of Students with disabilities in other states, I would urge the Inquiry to be guided by the excellence of the model adopted to date in Queensland. There are still many students who would benefit by having greater access to occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists, but the basic model on which to develop these services is sound and merits retention and expansion. There is a need in this region (Far North Queensland) for more well-trained and experienced special education teachers, and support mechanisms for professional development for these same teachers, for teacher aides, and administrators; and for inclusion.

Keila Waksvik

Occupational Therapist
Cairns North State School
(keila.waksvik@cairnortss.qld.edu.au)