

REDLAND DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTAL UNIT

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INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I am writing in response to the Senate invitation to address Terms of Reference in the above enquiry.

I am writing this on behalf of the staff at Redland District Special Education Developmental Unit.

The Terms of Reference states:

- (1) whether current policies and programs for students with disabilities are adequate to meet their education needs, including -
 - (iv) the effectiveness and availability of early intervention programs.

Staff have put forward the following issues and concerns -

- Early Intervention is most valuable and vital in preparing students and their families for formal school. The students go to Year One prepared and adequately resourced because of the ascertainment and reports provided.
- Education Queensland does provide Early Intervention programs through S.E.D.U.'s (Special Education Developmental Units). They cater for students 0-6 years of age.

CURRENT CONCERNS

- Facilities – do not meet the needs of all our students due to either complexity of needs or in our case – growth. Redland SEDU and Special School are very overcrowded putting staff students at risk.
- Staffing – is very stressful and always an unknown factor until the last minute. Formula concept for staffing is good but student teacher ratio is 1:10. Very impractical and an unsafe practice – Actuality is 1:5 or 1:6.
- Staffing Expectations –
Teachers in early intervention are required to
 - run their intervention classes
 - provide Outreach support to other centres
 - liase across several departments
 - home visit
 - ascertainment reporting – we average 7-10 per teacher per year each
 - IEP (Individual Education Plans) We can do between 10-25 per year depending on our workload

- counselling of parents trying to come to terms with their child and the disability. We are working at initial levels with parents from initial diagnosis.
- Lack of therapy support –
 - huge expectations of ascertainments, IEP's and reports for agencies
 - limited Speech, Physio and Occupational therapy time
 - they are to provide extensive reports with limited time also.
- Guidance Officers –
 - provide a valuable service in counselling and assisting our parents
 - they too, are weighed down with reporting
 - more time would bring back valuable programs like MYCP (Managing Young Children's Problems) and Triple P Parenting Program.

Education Queensland does provide Early Intervention Services and the teachers and staff are very qualified and committed. What they do is very important in being pro-active in assisting the child's access to learning and preparing them for formal schooling. What is provided is good.

The above recommendations would enhance what is essentially a good and valuable program to a quality service to meet the needs of our clients in our community.

Thank you,

Kathy Johns

Head of Early Special Education Services
Redland District Special Education Developmental Unit

29th April 2002