



Opening Doors

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SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY ON PROVISION OF EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Presented by Access Inc.

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For contact :-

Access Inc. Vice President,
Beverley Michael

0412-291092 or bevmax@ozemail.com.au

Profile of Access Inc. and relevance to submission

Access Inc.(Victoria) is a voluntary group advocating for the full inclusion of Jewish people(children and adults) into the Jewish and broader communities. The organisation's members comprise Jewish people with disabilities, parents of Jewish people with disabilities and parents of people without disabilities (who assist support of the fundraising needs of the organisation).

Access Inc. "opens doors" for Jewish people with disabilities in order that their inclusion is mutually beneficial for both the disabled person and community.

Access Inc is not a service provider but it is illustrative to note that this organisation has initiated and been called upon to initiate services that are missing or inadequate in the Victorian Educational and Community systems.

Access Inc. has its "ear to the ground" in terms of needs of children in both the Jewish private and the public educational and community systems because it has members who are parents of children within those systems. The parents are well aware of the needs of their children and will report these to Access Inc. if there are provision deficits. Despite the fact that this organisation is not a service provider the urgency is so great that Access Inc. will consider these deficits and design programs to close the deficit gaps, then run these programs and work towards the programs being taken over by professional service providers.

This process begs two questions:-

1. the question as to why parents should be approaching Access Inc. with educational deficits in the first place. Why are these parents not approaching (or not continuing to approach) the formal educational system within which they are operating?
2. the question as to why the needs are not being met.

Major considerations for Senate regarding provision and support of education for disabled children

Access Inc considers it important that The Senate be aware that parents are turning to processes outside the formal educational system in which their *essential needs are inadequately met*. This informal system is forcing parents working on a voluntary basis, such as members of Access Inc. to further stretch their extremely limited financial, time and labour resources to create solutions to meet their children's educational needs. Access Inc. is working together with formal educational systems to try to meet the needs of individuals in a system that is *dismally underfunded and under-resourced*.

Access asserts that the Commonwealth and State of Victoria have a vital role to play in financing and supporting the infrastructure for the education of students with disabilities in Victoria by

DESIGNING AND SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS FOR THE TRAINING AND EDUCATING OF PERSONNEL TO WORK WITH DISABLED CHILDREN AND ADULTS

RECOGNISING THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF SUCH PERSONNEL WITHIN A WELL-DESIGNED SPECIALIST CAREER STRUCTURE OR WITHIN THE MAINSTREAM PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL CAREER PATH.

REWARDING THEM FINANCIALLY AT AN APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

SETTING UP SPECIALISED TEAMS OF SUCH PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT ON A CONSULTANCY BASIS:-

At a Macro level to

- redesign and refinance (on a ongoing basis) the needs analysis systems within the formal educational system
- to ensure that IEP's (individual educational programs) are designed, implemented and evaluated on an ongoing needs basis(including skills development and resource allocation)
- to train and educate personnel to ensure that those who manage the IEP's are well educated and trained in the fields of education, disability and the instructional technology needed to support and extend the educational needs of each child.

At a Micro level to support schools to

- ensure that IEP's (individual educational programs) are designed, implemented and evaluated on an ongoing needs basis(including skills development and resource allocation)
- ensure that those who manage the IEP's are well educated and trained in the fields of education, disability and the instructional technology needed to support and extend the educational needs of each child

Considering the terms of reference of the Senate Inquiry, Access Inc. will focus on those terms its members consider to be of highest priority and the management of which is long overdue:

Focus 1. Term of reference (v)

v) access to and adequacy of funding and support in both the public and private sectors,

Fundamentally funding and support are inadequate to meet the needs of members of our organisation.

Where funding is available it is inadequate.

Where funding is not available it is unfair as the child may be less than 2 standard deviations on a test, thus not meeting the criteria for funding but may still benefit markedly from intervention for which funding is needed.

In addition inexplicable inequities exist eg an inequity in the educational system in Victoria is that government funding for an integration aide available to a child in a government school is not available to that same child in the private school system. The money does not "follow the child". Whereas a child could be allocated eg. \$26,000-00 government funds at a public school, at a private school he would receive a maximum of \$3,000-00 from the Independent Schools Association of Victoria and parents would have to cover the gap of \$23,000-00 and more. It is inordinately expensive for parents to support financially the appropriate personnel to ensure the child's best quality inclusion. However it falls on the parent's shoulders to cover the costs if the child is to be optimally included to realize the child's potential within the school system of the parents' choice.

Focus 2. Term of reference (vi and vii)

vi) the nature, extent and funding of programs that provide for full or partial learning opportunities with mainstream students,
vii) teacher training and professional development

Access Inc considers both the nature, extent and funding of programs and teacher training and professional development inadequate to meet the needs of its members.

Facilitating the process of inclusion requires specialisation and professionalism.

Both teachers and aides need to be highly skilled and well trained.

This is typically not the case. With every best of intention, schools do not have the knowledge nor do they have the money or time to train staff. In private schools parents pay full or partial payments for courses for teachers to be trained in state of the art courses.

At present, teaching staff may be expected to deliver a comprehensive range of therapies after a short consultation. Teachers, like parents, are expected to deliver

complex behavioural interventions, speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy with only the most minimal training. The training comes in the form of brief in-service courses and short consultancies from personnel who may have little knowledge or skill in training adults.

Access Inc. asserts that the Senate should ensure that both State and Commonwealth funding and resources be mobilized to ensure that within the quickest possible time both public and private schools and other educational facilities are operating on the basis that

- their educational philosophy is that, regardless of severity of disability, the child's cognitive structures are mutable and that cognitive development can take place
- school principals fully understand the notion of inclusion and are fully prepared to accept and support the process of integration of disabled children in their schools
- school personnel fully understand the notion of inclusion and are prepared and trained to implement the notion in their classrooms
- parents fully understand the notion of inclusion and are prepared and trained to implement the notion in their homes in support of the school implementation
- parents have enough respite support at home to ensure that they can consistently implement programs designed in the school system
- parents have enough respite funding to train their respite workers at home to ensure consistency
- a pupil attains an ongoing extension of level of skills in the cognitive, social, and physical domains
- educational staff (teachers and aides) are trained to facilitate the child's interaction with the environment in order to develop these skills further
- children with special needs require individualised educational planning , teaching and evaluation on an ongoing basis to attain these skills
- professional specialised personnel may be required to evaluate, design and teach programs to staff members and parents in the interests of enhancing children's skills
- professional specialised personnel may be required to evaluate, design and teach programs to children to build their skills
- while the child is attaining these skills the educational staff and parents understand the processes of socialisation and communication to facilitate the successful implementation of inclusion programs.
- while the child is attaining these skills persons coming into contact with the child outside the school walls understand the processes of socialisation and communication to facilitate inclusion successfully

If one looks at problems arising for children on a day to day basis one is able to highlight the State and Commonwealth role and responsibility in the provision of education for disabled children.

Access Inc. has available many such case histories from children with a variety of disabilities including specific learning disability , autism, cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome, Dysautonomia, Developmental Delay and many others.

Access Inc. offers the following case history to illustrate a portion of a child's life and some state/Commonwealth suggested responsibilities which may be deduced from problems incurred.

Illustrative case history	Problem/s arising	Suggested solution/s	State/Commonwealth responsibility
<p>A child is ill at 13 months. He presents with severe ENT problems and stops communicating. An ENT specialist is visited. Medication is prescribed and hearing tests carried out intermittently for the next 6 months.</p>	<p>Parents could have been alerted by the ENT to the possibility of autism and the need to consult with a developmental paediatrician</p>	<p>Medical specialists other than paediatricians and para-medical personnel such as mother care nurses need to be educated in disability diagnosis so that there may be early detection of a disability in the face of apparently unrelated symptoms.</p>	<p>Training and educating cross section of specialists, paramedical personnel and broader community</p>
<p>At 18 months parents initiate visit to developmental paediatrician. Paediatrician diagnoses autism. Parents directed to Autism Victoria. Autism Victoria directs parents to Irabina Early Intervention Program.</p>	<p>The medical fraternity and educational system have an artificial barrier between them. Once the medical diagnosis is made the medical fraternity "hands over the child" to the educational system. The parent then hopscoches between the two systems where each system is unfamiliar with the other.</p>	<p>Artificial barriers between the medical and educational systems need to be identified and broken down</p>	<p>Restructuring of departmental responsibility for disability between educational and medical departments</p>
<p>Irabina financed to take child for 4 hours per week. Child attends Irabina 4 hours per week. Irabina is one hour away. Petrol costs are covered by parents. One hour trip there and back exhausting for 2 year old. Parents stressed by extreme distance.</p>	<p>Curriculum design cannot be done on an individual needs basis. Design has to be done on a time available basis as there are only 4 hours into which education can be fitted. This is poor educational practice.</p>	<p>The provision of early intervention is insufficient to support the intensive educational needs of the disabled child.</p>	<p>Increase funding to allow child to have intensive therapy required at early intervention stage so as to reduce government costs and responsibilities at a later stage in the child's life.</p>
<p>Parents use own initiative to research alternatives for provision of education for autistic child. 40 hours per week intensive behavioural intervention(ABA) is the only scientifically documented alternative.</p> <p>Parents implement ABA program 40 hours per week. Specialist fees for consultancy in ABA range from \$70.00 per hour to \$200.00 per hour. Parents cover the cost once per week for ongoing needs assessment required to implement the ABA program effectively.</p>	<p>This intervention is not financially supported by any government program in Victoria.</p> <p>Parents pay costs themselves. Parents drained of resources.</p> <p>Initial workshop \$1500.00</p> <p>Follow up workshop within year\$1500.00</p> <p>ABA fees consultancy fees p.a. \$4500.00</p> <p>Ongoing ABA therapy costs p.a</p>	<p>Financial subsidy required</p>	<p>Establish recognised ABA Australian body.</p> <p>Essential intensive behavioural therapy should be financed through government sources.</p> <p>Improve funding and subsidies to support parents</p>

<p>\$450.00 paid per month to ABA consultant.</p>	<p>\$7200.00 paid to therapists.</p> <p>Parents pay workcare, superannuation and insurance costs.</p> <p>Neither consultants nor therapists are registered with recognised Australian ABA Body</p>		
<p>Speech therapy and occupational therapy professionals called in privately to do assessment of child as parents consider multidisciplinary team best to support curriculum design of individualised program for child. Parents pay \$300.00 for cognitive assessment, \$200.00 for speech therapy and \$200.00 for occupational therapy assessment.</p> <p>Parents pay privately for ongoing speech and occupational therapy . Speech therapy \$90.00 per hour. Occupational therapy \$80.00 per hour. Parents pay \$360.00 per month for speech therapy. Parents pay \$320.00 per month for occupational therapy.</p>	<p>Neither Speech therapy, occupational therapy, nor psychology(cognitive) assessment <u>are effectively available</u> through the public sector as it is essential for therapy to start as early a possible and the waiting lists are inordinately and unrealistically long.</p> <p>If parents cannot afford professional costs, child does not enjoy benefits of therapy. This causes more problems later on in life making more demands on funding.</p>	<p>Not enough funding</p>	<p>These therapies should be fully financed through the government sector.</p>
<p>Parents not specialised in facilitation of multidisciplinary team however undertake this role as this function is vital for successful implementation of individualised education program of child. Mother gives up work income to support home program. Loss of income amounts to \$40,000.00 per year.</p>	<p>Overall income bases of parents drops.</p>	<p>Specialised teams of professionals to support on a consultancy basis are required.</p>	<p>Design of consultancy programs and financing of consultancy should be undertaken</p>
<p>Child improves on ABA home program. Child now 3 years old. Decision about kindergarten necessary. Parent requires help with long term educational planning. Irabina still only able to accommodate child for 4 hours per week. Parents decide to send child to both Irabina and local kindergarten, both being part time placements. Aide required full time to support teacher in facilitating skills development and socialisation at kindergarten. Teacher needs to be trained in ABA learning strategies to optimise child's skills development. Parents pay for advertisement for aide in newspaper (approximately \$80.00). Parents pay for ABA consultant to run workshop for aides and kindergarten staff (Approximately \$1000.00) Parents pay aide salary (approximately \$15.00 per hour) as well as ongoing training costs for aide. (\$80.00 per week for team meeting consultant's fee)</p>	<p>Specialised teams of professionals to support on a consultancy basis should be developed and supported by the government</p> <p>Available time at Irabina educational placement inadequate for skill development and socialisation needs of child relative to child's skill base.</p> <p>Parent plans, organises and pays for training of personnel involved with their child.</p> <p>Advert \$80.00 per time. This is ongoing whenever the aide leaves.</p> <p>ABA training workshop \$1500.00</p> <p>Aide salary \$90.00 per day + work care, superannuation and insurance .</p> <p>If aide is sick parent covers cost of locum worker. Locum worker difficult to find because specialised training is required to work with child.</p>	<p>More funding needed to support specialised educational placements or home program or specialised program within mainstream school</p> <p>Government funding is inadequate to meet educational needs of the child.</p>	<p>Specialised teams of professionals to support on a consultancy basis should be developed and supported by the government.</p> <p>More funding.</p> <p>Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment.</p> <p>Develop pool of locum workers with specialised skills</p>

Child improves in 3 year old kinder. Same costs and same system in place for 4 year old kinder and bridging program (5 year old education)	As before	As before	As before
Kinder provision ends. Parents look for appropriate primary schooling placement. Parents apply to local primary school. Child rejected as school does not consider itself able to educate child because child's needs are too individualised.	Parents consider this school philosophy non-accepting of individual differences and thus inadequate to meet international inclusion standards.	Schools need to be trained in the educational philosophy of disability. International human rights standards need to be upheld. International educational inclusion policies need to be upheld.	Training
Parents choose private Jewish Day school because child's family is Jewish and parents choose to be part of this community. This choice denies the integration aide funding of \$26,000.00 which would be available to their child if he attended the local public school.	Government funding is non-existent to meet educational needs of the child	Inequities in the system need to be addressed and more funding made available.	Address funding and other educational inequities (eg why a child with disabilities measuring less than 2 standard deviations from the norm are not funded - eg and Asbergers Syndrome child who is high functioning will get no funding.
Child continues ABA home program with attendant costs. ABA therapists used as integration aides in Prep class in private school. School teacher requires training in ABA instructional technology techniques. Parents pay for ABA workshop for teacher and aides (\$1000.00) Parents pay for ABA consultant to meet weekly with school to carry out ongoing needs analysis with teacher, aides and specialist therapists. Child receives State funded speech therapy of \$1200.00 per annum and Commonwealth funding for occupational therapy of \$10,000.00 per annum. Both funds are inadequate to cover annual therapy requirements. Child receives \$3000.00 per year from Australian Independent Schools of Victoria. Child receives \$1000.00 from Jewish Community funds. Parents pay for full time aide salary.	Government funding is inadequate to meet educational and support needs of the child. There are some sources of funding however the funding is dimly inadequate to meet needs of support for the child.	Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment.	Better funding principles and practices should be implemented
Parents seek support from local respite agencies. Council help available only 4 hours per week. Parents require at least 10 hours per week to normalise family living. The 4 hours per week are only partially subsidized. Parents pay 2/3 of this cost plus cost of extra 6 hours per week. Council help of poor quality. Parents decide to employ own respite staff and pay 10 hours per week respite to maintain quality of mental health and to be consistent with ongoing education of child in all aspects of his life including self-help skills. Parents apply to Interchange for respite. Five years later nothing has happened with Interchange.	Council help of poor quality. Council help subsidy minimal. Consistency of instructions between home and school needs to be met. Respite provision very poor.	Need to improve respite provision Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment.	Respite provision requires entire overhaul

The same costs are incurred in grade 1.	Government funding is inadequate to meet educational needs of the child.	Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment.	Increase funding
The same costs are incurred in grade 2. Meantime new aide is needed with attendant costs.	Government funding is inadequate to meet educational needs of the child.	Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment.	Increase funding
The same costs are incurred in grade 3 Behavioural problems of transitioning between mother and school cause child to be picked up from home to go to school with aide. Parents pays for transport costs in private system whereas government pays for transport costs in public educational system.	Government funding is inadequate to meet educational needs of the child. Inequities in the system exists where transport costs are paid in the public system but not in the private system.	Distribution of funding from government sources requires reassessment. Inequities need to be revealed and "ironed out"	Increase funding Get rid of inequities to reduce cost burden for parents
The curriculum design becomes even more specialised as the child gets older because typically the gap widens and it becomes more of a challenge to integrate the child into the regular child's curriculum	Specialised personnel need to be well trained and educated in curriculum design and instructional technology for disabilities in the inclusive setting.	Specialised personnel need to be well trained and educated in curriculum design and instructional technology for disabilities in the inclusive setting	Specialised personnel need to be well trained and educated in curriculum design and instructional technology for disabilities in the inclusive setting
As child develops language more sophisticated equipment needed to meet expressive needs. The equipment needed costs \$17,000.00 Child is basically non-verbal and needs a voice output device to ensure he can communicate with people and reduce his frustrations Child needs specialist equipment in the classroom to access the school curriculum.	Specialist services are needed to help parents choose most appropriate technology- software and hardware for classroom to access the curriculum and long term use. Parents have to pay for this service themselves as the waiting list is too long at COMPTEC. COMPTEC have set up a private service for this purpose but it is markedly more expensive than public services. Specialist such as speech pathologists need to help set up program to teach child to use technology and to ensure its effective long term evaluation	Funding for assistive technology required. Funding for specialist services required. Funding for training required.	Provide for funding allocation for communication equipment and technology needed in the classroom. (Approximately \$17,000.00 and \$6,000.00)
As child grows older- with life time educational planning issues such as youth groups, long term accommodation provision and recreation need to be addressed planned and evaluated	Inadequate provision at present	Provision needs to be improved on an ongoing basis	Strategic planning needs to be undertaken for each individual child to serve his long term needs through his entire life.

Conclusion

This submission is by no means conclusive. Not all the terms of reference have been discussed. This has been done intentionally as that would entail the preparation of a major document considering the enormity of the range and depth of issues and the severe deficits existing presently. Access Inc has written this submission to ensure that its voice is heard and is willing to participate in further research, documentation and planning where appropriate and required.

It is Access Inc's experience that the provision of education for disabled persons is inadequate to meet present and future needs (in Victoria) and is in need of major reassessment and change in the interested of the entire community. It is our hope that the Senate Inquiry will achieve this.