



The Association of Independent Schools
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**Submission to the
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and
Education Committee**

for its inquiry into the

Education of Students with Disabilities

Introduction

The Association of Independent Schools in NSW amongst other things,

§ provides services to Independent Schools throughout NSW to support their provision of education to students with disabilities (SWD).

- these schools provide for the education of 120,000 students of whom xxx have classified disabilities and many more have learning and behavioural disabilities and difficulties.
- the schools are “non profit”, registered and accredited by the Minister of Education in NSW

§ administers (on behalf of the Commonwealth) the funding programmes designed to assist Independent Schools in NSW in their provision of education to this “targeted” group of students.

The AIS is also a constituent member of the National Council of Independent Schools Associations and supports its (the NCISA) submission which provides an excellent overview of the complex support arrangements for students with disabilities and analyses the implications of them.

This submission draws on the views of administrators and professional staff with expertise and decades of experience supporting the education of students with disabilities. It seeks to inform the Senate Committee of the goals that we think should be set by governments for the provision of support for the education of students with disabilities.

As the Executive Director, I am available (with the support of the AIS specialist staff) to provide further information, and to answer questions if requested.

T. W. Chapman
Executive Director
26-04-02

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This Association of Independent Schools (AIS) recommends the following goals to be pursued by governments to support the provision of school education to students with disabilities.

Goal 1. The full cost of each student's schooling should be met by governments irrespective of the school selected by the parents.

Rationale:

- a. the nation as a whole should meet the cost of educating students with disabilities.
- b. the Federal Government underscored this obligation by establishing the Disability Discrimination Act and in particular by the clauses providing for the enrolment and schooling of students with disabilities.
- c. the significant cost obligations should not have to be borne alone by the parent community of that particular school.

It is noted that the full cost of educating students with disabilities in government schools is funded entirely by governments.

Goal 2. Governments should provide the funding to meet the cost of adapting buildings and equipment to meet the access and participation needs of students with disabilities.

This should apply particularly:

- a. to meet the Building Code of Australia requirements related to access and participation;
- b. to meet the DDA requirements where these exceed the Building Code requirements.

Goal 3. Governments should provide adequate funding for:

- a. the inclusion in pre-service teacher education of appropriate courses for all teachers to enable the provision of the education of students with disabilities in all regular schools.
- b. the provision by appropriate organisations of professional development programmes for teachers and parents.
- c. the provision by appropriate organisations of competent external consultancy support to schools and their teachers and parents in the education of students with disabilities.

Alternative

Goal 4. If the achievement of these three goals is not possible in respect of all schools, then

- a. the Disability Discrimination Act should be amended to provide that the provisions related to schooling should be limited to apply to schools that are selected and funded appropriately by governments (as in goals 1-3)
- b. a publicly available register be established of the schools selected for this preferential funding treatment.

The Association of Independent Schools in NSW is confident that the achievement of these goals would enable all schools (Government, Catholic System and Independent) to significantly improve the education of students with disabilities and to more effectively operate within the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Executive Director and specialist staff of the AIS stand ready to discuss the implementation options available in the pursuit of the above goals.

T. W. Chapman
Executive Director