

27/04/02

Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities

This submission has been made on the behalf of several parents, of children with disabilities, accessing the Goondiwindi State Primary Special Learning Unit.

Background

- All students involved have an Ascertainment of 5 or 6 in either Physical, Intellectual or combined impairments.
- The Unit has recently been upgraded from a Special Learning Centre, due to an increase in enrolment.

Concerns

- The Unit does not have a qualified Special Education teacher.
- Current Teacher Aide time allocation is not meeting the level of need of the students, with extra funding for support being raised locally by the Special Learning Unit Committee. We find this arrangement unacceptable, and believe the monies raised could be better spent elsewhere within the SLC. We have been led to believe that Education Queensland has limited or no resources available to provide this essential support for our children for receiving an inclusive education, and to develop and maintain active roles within the classroom.
- Being a rural and remote location, access to relevant therapy services, such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech therapy is limited and in some cases non existent.

Individual Education Plan meetings will be held over the coming months and at this point there is no occupational therapist provided by Education Queensland to assist in the development of these plans. In the past, the school has relied upon private funding, from the Bush Children's Program, to provide this therapy service however, due to discrepancies with the administration of this funding we are now waiting, somewhat impatiently, to receive the necessary services for our children. After thorough investigation of the Education Queensland policies and procedures, we have established that the provision of therapy service to students with disabilities is the responsibility of Education Queensland, District and relevant persons within the Goondiwindi State School, through the Low Incidence Unit. We are now aware of the procedures for requesting these services and are shocked that they have not been requested. We believe

this to be true, as we have not been required to complete a Parent/caregiver permission form (required by the school before completing a Request for Therapy Services form).

We have been advised that there is no funding available to provide therapy services through Ed Queensland, but if this is true...who will provide imperative therapy services to our children? Disability Services Queensland will not (as they only provide services to children with disabilities aged 0-6), Goondiwindi Community Health does not, the Goondiwindi Hospital provides limited or in some cases no therapy services to those who require it. Where does this leave our children who are struggling to become independent and valued members of the community?

Recommendations

- The resources provided by Ed. Queensland will be allocated appropriately, within the Special Learning Unit, for developing and maintaining an inclusive education for the students with disabilities.

- Teacher training and professional development is essential for the staff at the Goondiwindi SLU, to ensure an increase in knowledge and skills, pertaining to students with disabilities, amid staff without specific qualifications. Understandably, the Goondiwindi SLU is small in comparison to Special Education Units in metropolitan areas. However, this is not an excuse for a poor education and learning environment.

We, the parents of students with disabilities, believe that our children deserve an education equal to their peers and we will continue to lobby for this right.

Thankyou for your interest in this matter and look forward to hearing of the results of this enquiry.

Yours faithfully,

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