

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE
RELATIONS AND EDUCATION REFERENCES COMMITTEE**



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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities.

The purpose of this submission is to describe current Commonwealth policies and programmes related to children and students with disabilities across all levels and sectors of education. In adopting this approach, DEST's intention is to provide the Committee with concise, factual background information, including the latest available data, relevant to the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

The submission consists of five sections:

- Section 1 provides information on key aspects of the legislative framework that underpins Commonwealth policy;
- Section 2 describes support for students with disabilities in schools;
- Section 3 describes support for people with disabilities in relation to vocational education and training;
- Section 4 describes support for people with disabilities in relation to higher education; and
- Section 5 comments on the emerging issue of access to online education for students with disabilities.

It is important to note that responsibility for education and training is shared between State, Territory and Commonwealth governments and individual students and their families. The States and Territories have primary responsibility for the funding and delivery of school education and vocational education and training (VET). While the Commonwealth Government provides the bulk of public funding for universities, the institutions themselves are responsible for ensuring that higher education is accessible to people from all equity groups, including students with disabilities, and that these students receive quality education. To support the efforts of the States and Territories and educational institutions, the financial assistance provided by the Commonwealth includes specific programmes to assist students with disabilities.

It is also worth noting that other government agencies with responsibilities for health and family and community services have important roles in relation to students with disabilities. In particular, their non-educational support needs must be adequately met if they are to achieve their potential from education.

1. DISABILITY LEGISLATION

1.1 Legislative framework

Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992

The Commonwealth Government recognises that people with disabilities should, as far as possible, have access to the same services, facilities and opportunities as their fellow citizens. This concept is reflected in the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (the DDA). The objects of the DDA (section 3) are:

- (a) to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of:
 - (i) work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and
 - (ii) the provision of goods, facilities, services and land; and
 - (iii) existing laws; and
 - (iv) the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and
- (b) to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and
- (c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

Section 22 of the DDA makes discrimination against a person on the ground of the person's disability unlawful in the area of education. In summary, it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability:

- by refusing or failing to accept the person's application for admission as a student, or in the terms and conditions on which the authority is prepared to admit the person as a student; or
- by denying or limiting the student's access to any benefit provided by the authority, or expelling the student, or subjecting the student to any other detriment.

It is not unlawful for an educational authority to refuse an application for admission from a person who would require services or facilities that are not required by students who do not have a disability where the provision of such services would impose an unjustifiable hardship upon the authority.

State and Territory legislation

Education providers must comply with the DDA and the relevant disability discrimination legislation of their State or Territory. Complementary legislation at the State and Territory level is included in the following Acts:

- New South Wales - *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- Victoria - *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*.
- Queensland - *Anti Discrimination Act 1991*
- Western Australia – *Equal opportunity Act 1984*
- South Australia - *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*
- Tasmania – *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*
- Australian Capital Territory - *Discrimination Act 1991*
- Northern Territory - *Anti-Discrimination Act 1994*

A number of other Acts, including Education Acts and Disability Services Acts and the like, may also have regulatory impact on the operation of education and training providers.

1.2 Development of Disability Standards for Education

The DDA deals only in broad terms with what is required of institutions to comply with the legislation. For this reason, section 31 of the DDA provides for the formulation of standards in relation to a range of areas, including the education of persons with a disability, to more clearly explain the objects of the legislation.

In 1995, the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) established a Taskforce to develop Disability Standards for Education (the Standards). The Taskforce comprises representatives from the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, the vocational education and training sector, the higher education sector and the disability community and is chaired by DEST.

The primary purpose of the proposed Standards is to:

- clarify the rights of people with disabilities in relation to their participation in education and training; and
- make more explicit the obligations of education and training providers under the DDA.

Work on developing draft Standards has been an iterative process involving on-going consultation with education, training and disability stakeholders. The current draft specifies how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disabilities. They cover the following areas:

- enrolment;
- participation;
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- student support services; and
- elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Each area describes the rights of students with disabilities, the legal obligations of education providers and measures which indicate the kinds of actions or provisions that would enable the providers to meet their legal obligations. A Regulatory Impact Statement is also being prepared to assess the implications in terms of costs and benefits of implementing the draft Standards. It is expected that MCEETYA will consider the draft Standards later this year.

2. SCHOOLS

2.1 Overview of Commonwealth role

The Commonwealth Government works cooperatively with the State and Territories to secure better educational outcomes from schooling. School education is a shared responsibility, with the State, Territory and non-government school authorities having primary responsibility for funding. Under the Australian Constitution, the responsibility for the delivery of school education, including school curriculum, rests with the States and Territories.

The Commonwealth Government is a key partner in setting national goals and priorities for schooling. It seeks to improve quality in schooling and enhance educational outcomes for all students by providing support for education systems and schools through its general recurrent, capital and other specific purpose programmes, and its policy development and research in relation to nationally significant educational issues.

Improving the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged school students, including students with disabilities, is a major Commonwealth priority and the Government provides targeted funding to the States and Territories for this purpose. The major factors which are usually seen as placing educational outcomes at risk include socio-economic disadvantage, poverty, low parental expectation, disability, language background other than English, family or personal difficulties, geographical isolation, Indigenous background and gender.

The Commonwealth provides the majority of its funding for school education under the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000* (the SGA).

2.2 Definitional issues

The SGA defines a student with a disability as:

- a student who attends a government or non-government school (whether or not as a distance education student) and in respect of whom a disability assessment has been made.
 - A disability assessment means an assessment by a person with relevant qualifications, that the child has an intellectual impairment, a sensory impairment, a physical impairment, a social impairment, an emotional impairment or more than one of those impairments to a degree that satisfies the criteria for enrolment in special education programmes, provided by the Government of the State or Territory in which the student resides.
 - Special education means education under special programmes, or special activities, designed specifically for children with disabilities and/or students with disabilities.

Disability assessment processes and criteria for enrolment in special education services may vary between the States and Territories. The definition does not include students whose only impairment is a specific learning difficulty.

2.3 Data and trends

Data collected on the number of students with a disability in the government and non-government school sectors are based on the above definition. For the government sector, data are provided to the Commonwealth by State and Territory education departments on the basis of State and Territory census collections. For the non-government sector data are collected through the Non-Government Schools Census conducted each year.

These data are used to calculate the per capita funding component for students with disabilities under the *Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes (SAISO) Programme* (see Section 2.5 for further details of this Programme).

Table 1 shows the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students with a disability over the years 1997-2001 in the government, Catholic and independent sectors. It also shows the percentage change in numbers between each year for each sector and overall. The number of students with a disability has increased each year overall and in each sector. The rate of increase has consistently slowed in the government and Catholic sectors and has fluctuated in the independent sector.

Table 1: Number of funded FTE school students with a disability and percentage change each year by sector, 1997-2001

Year	Govt No.	% change each year	Catholic No.	% change each year	Indep No.	% change each year	Total No.	% change each year
1997	69115		11329		4064		84508	
1998	79126	14.5	12396	9.4	4477	10.2	96000	13.6
1999	85024	7.5	13270	7.1	4823	7.7	103118	7.4
2000	89807	5.6	13993	5.5	5573	15.6	109373	6.1
2001	94167	4.9	14158	1.2	5924	6.3	114250	4.5

Table 2 shows the numbers of FTE students with a disability by State and Territory and sector over the years 1997-2001.

Tables 3 and 4 present the same data for the years 1997 and 2001 respectively but also include total student numbers. The tables then show for government, Catholic and independent sectors in each State and Territory and nationally, the percentage share of total student numbers and of total student with disability numbers. They also show the within State/Territory percentage shares of student numbers and student with disability numbers, and the numbers of students with a disability as a percentage of student numbers in each sector for each State and Territory and nationally.

In both 1997 and 2001 the government sectors' percentage share of students with disabilities is well above their percentage share of total student numbers. For the independent and Catholic sectors it is well below. This is the case across States and Territories and within States and Territories. The number of students with a disability as a percentage of total student numbers is highest in the government sector followed by the Catholic sector and then the independent sector. It has increased nationally and across all sectors between 1997 and 2001.

Table 2: Number of funded FTE school students with a disability by State/Territory and sector, 1997-2001

State	Sector	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
NSW	Govt	20596	28119	30472	31963	31706
	Catholic	5278	5864	6186	6797	6507
	Indep	1273	1479	1567	1799	2013
	Total	27147	35463	38225	40560	40227
Vic	Govt	13066	14269	15997	18134	19205
	Catholic	2266	2583	2891	2991	3314
	Indep	998	1115	1250	1381	1464
	Total	16331	17968	20139	22506	23984
Qld	Govt	9089	10511	12480	13316	15183
	Catholic	1735	1859	1778	1697	1661
	Indep	667	587	607	694	694
	Total	11492	12958	14866	15708	17539
WA	Govt	6511	6511	7372	7040	7567
	Catholic	771	803	878	1006	1008
	Indep	275	280	274	282	328
	Total	7558	7595	8525	8329	8904
SA	Govt	11776	11463	10349	10864	11487
	Catholic	815	873	1088	1071	1206
	Indep	580	722	838	1099	1140
	Total	13172	13059	12275	13035	13833
Tas	Govt	3081	3052	3077	2990	2956
	Catholic	136	131	151	155	185
	Indep	114	120	105	106	118
	Total	3332	3304	3333	3251	3260
NT	Govt	3341	3695	3821	4404	4622
	Catholic	161	103	88	73	87
	Indep	101	113	111	138	91
	Total	3603	3911	4020	4616	4800
ACT	Govt	1653	1505	1454	1095	1440
	Catholic	163	177	209	200	189
	Indep	54	59	68	71	71
	Total	1871	1741	1732	1366	1701
Totals	Govt	69115	79126	85024	89807	94167
	Catholic	11329	12396	13270	13993	14158
	Indep	4064	4477	4823	5573	5924
		84508	96000	103118	109373	114250

Table 3: Total number of FTE students and number of funded FTE school students with a disability by State/Territory and sector, 1997

State	Sector	Total student no.	% share of total student no.	Within State % share of total student no.	No. of SWDs	% share of total SWDs	Within State % share of SWD's	Within State/sector SWDs as a % of total student no.
NSW	Govt	764,172	23.7	71.0	20596	24.4	75.9	2.7
	Catholic	220,740	6.8	20.5	5278	6.3	19.4	2.4
	Indep	90,718	2.8	8.4	1273	1.5	4.7	1.4
	Total	1,075,632	33.3	100.0	27147	32.1	100.0	2.5
Vic	Govt	519,538	16.1	66.4	13066	15.5	80.0	2.5
	Catholic	177,355	5.5	22.7	2266	2.7	13.9	1.3
	Indep	85,699	2.7	11.0	998	1.2	6.1	1.2
	Total	782,592	24.3	100.0	16331	19.3	100.0	2.1
Qld	Govt	435,798	13.5	72.7	9089	10.8	79.1	2.1
	Catholic	98,583	3.1	16.4	1735	2.1	15.1	1.8
	Indep	65,442	2.0	10.9	667	0.8	5.8	1.0
	Total	599,824	18.6	100.0	11492	13.6	100.0	1.9
WA	Govt	242,515	7.5	72.8	6511	7.7	86.2	2.7
	Catholic	58,127	1.8	17.4	771	0.9	10.2	1.3
	Indep	32,696	1.0	9.8	275	0.3	3.7	0.8
	Total	333,339	10.3	100.0	7558	8.9	100.0	2.3
SA	Govt	179,332	5.6	71.5	11776	13.9	89.4	6.6
	Catholic	40,243	1.3	16.0	815	1.0	6.2	2.0
	Indep	31,369	1.0	12.5	580	0.7	4.4	1.9
	Total	250,945	7.8	100.0	13172	15.6	100.0	5.3
Tas	Govt	63,996	2.0	75.1	3081	3.7	92.5	4.8
	Catholic	13,241	0.4	15.5	136	0.2	4.1	1.0
	Indep	8,016	0.3	9.4	114	0.1	3.4	1.4
	Total	85,255	2.6	100.0	3332	3.9	100.0	3.9
NT	Govt	28,527	0.9	77.7	3341	4.0	92.7	11.7
	Catholic	5,025	0.2	13.7	161	0.2	4.5	3.2
	Indep	3,180	0.1	8.7	101	0.1	2.8	3.2
	Total	36,733	1.1	100.0	3603	4.3	100.0	9.8
ACT	Govt	39,596	1.2	64.6	1653	2.0	88.4	4.2
	Catholic	16,358	0.5	26.7	163	0.2	8.8	1.0
	Indep	5,305	0.2	8.7	54	0.1	2.9	1.0
	Total	61,261	1.9	100.0	1871	2.2	100.0	3.1
Totals	Govt	2,273,478	70.5		69115	81.8		3.0
	Catholic	629,677	19.5		11329	13.4		1.8
	Indep	322,429	10.0		4064	4.8		1.3
	Total	3,225,585	100.0		84509	100.0		2.6

Table 4: Total number of FTE students and number of funded FTE school students with a disability by State/Territory and sector, 2001

State	Sector	Total student no.	% share of total student no.	Within State % share of total student no.	No. of SWDs	% share of total SWDs	Within State % share of SWD's	Within State/sector SWDs as a % of total student no.
NSW	Govt	756,740	22.7	68.7	31706	27.8	78.8	4.2
	Catholic	233,418	7.0	21.2	6507	5.7	16.2	2.8
	Indep	110,809	3.3	10.1	2013	1.8	5.0	1.8
	Total	1,100,968	33.1	100.0	40227	35.2	100.0	3.7
Vic	Govt	533,894	16.0	65.8	19205	16.8	80.1	3.6
	Catholic	180,098	5.4	22.2	3314	2.9	13.8	1.8
	Indep	97,245	2.9	12.0	1464	1.3	6.1	1.5
	Total	811,237	24.4	100.0	23984	21.0	100.0	3.0
Qld	Govt	455,259	13.7	71.5	15183	13.3	86.6	3.3
	Catholic	104,516	3.1	16.4	1661	1.5	9.5	1.6
	Indep	77,208	2.3	12.1	694	0.6	4.0	0.9
	Total	636,983	19.1	100.0	17539	15.4	100.0	2.8
WA	Govt	241,762	7.3	70.5	7566	6.6	85.0	3.1
	Catholic	60,925	1.8	17.8	1008	0.9	11.3	1.7
	Indep	40,196	1.2	11.7	328	0.3	3.7	0.8
	Total	342,884	10.3	100.0	8904	7.8	100.0	2.6
SA	Govt	176,221	5.3	69.6	11487	10.1	83.0	6.5
	Catholic	42,529	1.3	16.8	1206	1.1	8.7	2.8
	Indep	34,349	1.0	13.6	1140	1.0	8.3	3.3
	Total	253,100	7.6	100.0	13833	12.1	100.0	5.5
Tas	Govt	63,470	1.9	75.2	2956	2.6	90.7	4.7
	Catholic	12,823	0.4	15.2	185	0.2	5.7	1.4
	Indep	8,089	0.2	9.6	118	0.1	3.6	1.5
	Total	84,383	2.5	100.0	3260	2.9	100.0	3.9
NT	Govt	29,753	0.9	77.9	4622	4.1	96.3	15.5
	Catholic	4,993	0.2	13.1	87	0.1	1.8	1.7
	Indep	3,468	0.1	9.1	91	0.1	1.9	2.6
	Total	38,214	1.1	100.0	4800	4.2	100.0	12.6
ACT	Govt	38,008	1.1	62.6	1440	1.3	84.7	3.8
	Catholic	16,887	0.5	27.8	189	0.2	11.1	1.1
	Indep	5,868	0.2	9.7	71	0.1	4.2	1.2
	Total	60,763	1.8	100.0	1701	1.5	100.0	2.8
Totals	Govt	2,295,110	69.0		94167	82.4		4.1
	Catholic	656,192	19.7		14158	12.4		2.2
	Indep	377,234	11.3		5924	5.2		1.6
	Total	3,328,536	100.0		114250	100.0		3.4

Table 5 shows the number of students with a disability in non-government special schools and the number of non-government special schools for the years 1997 and 2001. The numbers of students with a disability in non-government special schools has increased between 1997 and 2001 by 18 per cent, although numbers have decreased slightly as a percentage of the total number of non-government students with a disability.

Table 5: Number of non-government special schools and number of funded FTE school students with a disability in non-government special schools, 1997 and 2001

Year	No. of non-govt special schools	No. of SWDs in non-govt special schools	% Change 1997-2001	As a % of total non-govt SWDs
1997	59	1523		9.9
2001	61	1798	18.1	9.0

Note: Catholic includes systemic and non systemic special schools. Data on government special schools are not available.

2.4 National commitments

National Goals for Schooling

In 1999, MCEETYA agreed to revised *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (the National Goals). The National Goals are set out in full at [Appendix A](#).

The National Goals are designed, among other things, to:

- be student centred, focussing on the learning outcomes of students rather than the strategies and processes of education providers; and
- be inclusive in approach. They are concerned with improving the educational outcomes of all students, acknowledging the capacity of all children to learn and the right of all young people to success in learning and to the knowledge, skills and understanding essential to effective participation in Australian civic life.

Goals that are particularly relevant to students with disabilities are:

- *that schooling should be socially just so that students' outcomes from schooling are free from negative forms of discrimination; and*
- *that the learning outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.*

Under the SGA, all State and Territory education authorities are required, as a condition of funding, to commit to the National Goals and achieve any performance measures, including targets, incorporated in the SGA.

Measuring performance against the National Goals

The National Goals provide the framework for the reporting of comparable educational outcomes. The MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) is developing key performance measures so that progress in meeting the National Goals can be reported in agreed areas, namely, literacy, numeracy, student participation, VET in schools, science, information technology, civics and citizenship education, and enterprise education.

The intention is that the performance information should be disaggregated by various sub-groups in the student population, including students with disabilities.

Currently, definitions used by States and Territories to identify students with disabilities vary markedly. A nationally agreed definition that can be applied uniformly is therefore needed before comparable data on the educational outcomes of students with disabilities can be collected.

The PMRT recently approved a project to investigate definitions and approaches that are currently in use and identify issues relevant to nationally comparable reporting of educational outcomes of students with disabilities. It is expected that a report detailing the project findings will be provided to the PMRT later this year.

2.5 Commonwealth funding and support

Commonwealth financial assistance to the States and Territories to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities in the school sector largely comprises:

- the *General Recurrent Grants Programme*, which is the principal source of Commonwealth funding;
- the *SAISO Programme*, which provides additional targeted funding to achieve outcomes for those students with the greatest need; and
- the *Special Education – Non-government Centre Support (SENCS) Programme*, which is for non-government centres to provide services to children with disabilities.

The current arrangements for the Commonwealth funding programmes for schools were introduced in 2001. Changes introduced in 2001 included the introduction of the Commonwealth's socio-economic status (SES) needs-based funding formula for general recurrent funding of non-government schools and the introduction of the SAISO Programme.

Funding provided under other Commonwealth targeted programmes such as the Country Areas Programme, English as a Second Language - New Arrivals Programme and various Indigenous education programmes, may also be used to assist students with disabilities.

Commonwealth targeted funding is generally provided to State and Territory school education authorities (government, Catholic and independent), who are responsible for the administration and distribution of the targeted funding according to State and Territory priorities and within broad Commonwealth guidelines.

It is not intended that the Commonwealth funding should meet all the costs for schools to achieve outcomes for students who are educationally disadvantaged, including students with disabilities. Moreover, Commonwealth funding provided in respect of students with disabilities is not attached to specific students. It is provided to individual schools or school sectors or systems which make the decision as to the level of support available to support the needs of these students.

In the case of government schools, the resources available to support students with disabilities include State or Territory government allocations, which represent the bulk of funding, and the supplementary Commonwealth general recurrent and targeted assistance.

In the case of non-government systems and schools, the resources which can be drawn on to support students with disabilities include fees paid by parents, income from any investments and donations, Commonwealth recurrent grants and targeted funding allocations, and funding provided by State and Territory governments.

The precise quantum of funding that is provided to support a particular student with a disability is a matter for State or Territory government and non-government education systems and/or schools to determine, depending upon available resources and assessment of the student's needs.

General Recurrent Funding

General recurrent grants provide the principal source of Commonwealth funding to systems and schools supporting the education of all students, including students with a disability. Funding is linked to the Australian Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) Index, which is calculated in a way that includes the recurrent government expenditures associated with the provision of assistance for students with a disability. General recurrent grants are allocated on a per student basis at the following rates:

- Government schools:
 - \$ 479 for a primary student, representing 8.9 per cent of AGSRC.
 - \$ 711 for a secondary student, representing 10 per cent of AGSRC.
- Non-government schools:

an amount according to the rate payable for a particular non-government system or school, which is determined on the basis of the Commonwealth's SES needs-based funding formula. This assistance ranges from:

 - \$ 737 to \$ 3,765 for a primary student, representing 13.7 per cent to 70 per cent of the AGSRC.
 - \$ 973 to \$ 4,971 for a secondary student, representing 13.7 per cent to 70 per cent of the AGSRC.

Non-government special schools

Under the new SES funding arrangements, schools which cater mainly for students with intellectual, physical, social and/or emotional difficulties, and which are registered as 'special schools' by the relevant State or Territory government, are eligible for maximum funding of 70 per cent of AGSRC in respect of all their students. Non-government special schools are therefore not assessed for Commonwealth general recurrent funding on the basis of the SES of their school communities.

The new funding arrangements for special schools are being phased in over the 2001-2004 quadrennium at a rate of 25 per cent of the increase each year, so that by 2004 special schools will be funded at 70 per cent of AGSRC. This will represent a per capita increase of around 11 per cent for students with disabilities attending these schools by 2004.

Non-government special schools are also eligible for other targeted funding including under the SAISO Programme.

Targeted Funding

Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes Programme

The SAISO Programme is the Commonwealth's major targeted programme. It aims to help government and non-government education authorities and schools to improve the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the educational participation and outcomes of students with disabilities. The SAISO

Programme commenced in 2001 in the context of strengthened accountability and reporting arrangements for the Commonwealth's programmes for schools for the 2001-2004 quadrennium. It combines funding previously provided under the literacy and numeracy – grants to schools programme and the special education school support fixed and per capita programmes. New outcomes-focussed programme arrangements were introduced to reduce input controls and provide education authorities with increased flexibility to better target those students with the greatest need.

The new arrangements were informed by the research report, *Literacy, Numeracy and Students with Disabilities* (see Appendix B for further details) which suggested that the separation of funding for students with disabilities from other targeted programmes could place limits on the amount of learning support that these students could receive.

Under the SAISO Programme, the Commonwealth is making a very substantial contribution of some \$1.4 billion over the 2001-2004 quadrennium. Over \$327 million will be provided nationally in 2002. This includes almost:

- \$220 million for government schools;
- \$74 million for Catholic schools; and
- \$34 million for independent schools.

The SAISO Programme includes the following elements:

- a strategic assistance amount of \$589 for every eligible non-government student with a disability and \$116 for every eligible government student with a disability. The funding differential between the government and non-government amounts is of an historical nature. Eligibility is determined by the definition set out in section 2.2. The amount per student is not intended to represent a ceiling or benchmark level of support for students with disabilities. It is a means for the Commonwealth to calculate allocations for education authorities under this element of the Programme, which can be used with other elements to provide support for students with disabilities. It is estimated that, in 2002, \$11.3 million will be provided to government education authorities and \$11.8 million to non-government education authorities.
- funding (made up of the former special education schools support fixed programme and the literacy and numeracy - grants to schools programme) that is allocated to education authorities to assist educationally disadvantaged students, including those with disabilities. Approximately \$208.7 million is distributed nationally each year to government education authorities and \$92.3 million to non-government education authorities.
- funding of \$4.1 million for each year of the 2001-2004 quadrennium to compensate those non-government (independent and non-systemic Catholic) schools financially disadvantaged by the introduction of the single strategic assistance amount from 2001.

State and Territory government and non-government education authorities are responsible for the detailed administration of the SAISO Programme in their systems and schools. They have the flexibility to determine which schools and students have the greatest need for additional assistance for educationally disadvantaged students and to determine appropriate funding amounts for those schools and students.

This means that if support for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties is seen as the highest priority then a greater portion of SAISO funds can be redirected for these purposes. Education authorities also have the flexibility to address the needs of students with multiple educational disadvantages such as those students that have a disability and are also Indigenous or from a low socio-economic background, without being constrained by artificial divides between programmes.

Special Education – Non-government Centre Support Programme

Under the SENCS Programme the Commonwealth provides financial assistance to non-government centres that provide education, therapeutic or other services to improve the educational opportunities, learning outcomes and personal development of children with disabilities. Funding under this Programme is targeted to:

- support the learning and development of children with disabilities who are below school age to prepare them for integration into regular pre-schools or schools;
- assist school-aged children with severe disabilities by improving their access to educational programmes; or
- assist children with disabilities in residential care i.e. establishments that provide counselling, education or guidance services.

As defined in the SGA, a 'non-government centre' is a non-government body that is not conducted for profit and is not a school, which provides special education. A non-government centre may be, but is not limited to, a pre-school, an early intervention centre, a registered charity, a religious organisation, a local government instrumentality or a community organisation.

In 2002, \$25.5 million will be provided under the SENCS Programme. The State/Territory allocations are provided to an 'agent' in each State or Territory, which is responsible for the detailed administration of the funding. The agent is the State/Territory department of education or equivalent, except in Victoria where it is the Department of Human Services. In determining priorities for allocating the funding to individual non-government centres, agents are expected to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including education authorities and community groups.

Support for Indigenous students with hearing loss

In March 2000, the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee released the *Kata Kalpa* report on the Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Education and Training Programmes for Indigenous Australians. The report made significant references to the high incidence of fluctuating, conductive hearing loss attributed to Otitis Media among Indigenous children.

The Inquiry was advised that:

- screen testing for hearing at Indigenous schools revealed that on any given day an average of half to two thirds of Indigenous children suffered Otitis Media-related hearing loss in one or both ears (*Hansard Precis*, Cairns, 2 August 1999, p4).

The World Health Organisation considers that the occurrence of Otitis Media in anything over four per cent of a given population requires urgent attention. One survey revealed that over twenty per cent of all northern Australian Indigenous children are affected by Otitis Media. Evidence gathered by the Committee indicates that in many communities there is a much higher incidence than this.

A student with chronic Otitis Media is disadvantaged because what he or she experiences is akin to placing earplugs in the student's ears.

Under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy the Commonwealth provides limited support for Indigenous students experiencing learning difficulties due to Otitis Media. The primary aims of the Strategy are to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and attendance for Indigenous Australians. It is recognised that any reduction in the incidence of

Otitis Media, and early detection that enables corrective action, will serve to enhance the aims of the Strategy.

2.6 Research and development initiatives

School education

The *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects (NLNSP) Programme* and the *Quality Outcomes Programme* support strategic and collaborative initiatives to further the Commonwealth's agenda for schools.

The Minister recently announced a major initiative to be funded under the NLNSP Programme that will focus on more effective teaching and learning practices for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Funding of \$4.5 million will be provided for projects at the national and State levels in both the early and middle years of schooling. The initiative will be implemented over the remainder of the 2001-04 quadrennium.

This initiative will build on recent research projects which have explored issues relating to students with specific educational needs. Further details of the projects are provided at [Appendix B](#). The findings of these projects were disseminated to State and Territory government and non-government education authorities, professional bodies and parent groups. In recent years there has been an emphasis on producing user-friendly information that will assist schools and teachers to more effectively address the educational needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Enterprise and Career Education Foundation Disability Initiative

The Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) encourages and supports effective school - industry partnerships to link schools, businesses and communities to create a diversity of learning experiences. The ECEF aims to help young Australians acquire enterprise and career knowledge and experience before they leave school.

The Commonwealth Government is providing the ECEF with over \$100 million over four years from 2001-02 to 2004-05 to cover a range of innovative activities, including support for work placement coordination programmes, in line with its profile and role within vocational, enterprise and career education.

The ECEF Disability Initiative was launched in 2000. It evolved from the ECEF's goal to identify the processes needed to make structured workplace learning accessible and responsive to the individual needs of students with a disability. Under the initiative, the ECEF is supporting three innovative "lighthouse" projects to increase structured workplace learning opportunities for students with a disability. Further details of the projects are provided at [Appendix C](#).

The three projects have demonstrated best practice that others can emulate and provide a range of models that can be incorporated into mainstream structured learning programmes. A unique aspect of the projects is the alliance of education, industry and Commonwealth Employment Placement and Training (CEPT) agencies. Benefits derived from these projects include:

- increased participation of students with a disability in structured workplace learning;
- positive training and employment outcomes;
- increased participation in the size, type and quantity of employers;
- production of valuable information and resource materials;

- increased awareness of the cross-portfolio concerns relating to funding of education and employment for people with disabilities;
- encouraging CEPT agencies to support early intervention;
- co-operation and integration between VET and specialist education teachers; and
- encouraging discussion of issues by relevant departments at the State level.

3. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 Overview of Commonwealth role

Under the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Agreement 2001-2003, State and Territory governments are responsible for their own training systems. This includes State-level planning, regulation of training providers and the apprenticeship and traineeship system – now combined into *New Apprenticeships*, allocation of funds to individual providers, setting student fees and charges and managing the Technical and Further Education system. States and Territories are also responsible for the delivery of VET to people with disabilities.

The Commonwealth contributes funds to the States and Territories through ANTA, provides ongoing funding for ANTA's operational costs and funding for several ANTA national programmes, and plays a role in national policy setting. The Commonwealth has direct responsibility for some VET programmes, such as employer incentives for New Apprenticeships and the associated operation of New Apprenticeships Centres.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for VET meet as the ANTA Ministerial Council to decide on national policy issues and oversee ANTA and the associated funding arrangements. The Ministerial Council is chaired by the Commonwealth Minister.

The Commonwealth will provide \$1.03 billion in 2002 under the *Vocational Education and Training Funding Act 1992* for allocation by ANTA to the States and Territories and for national projects. This represents about one-third of the total public funding for VET.

3.2 Definitional issues

VET statistics are collected nationally by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard is used to provide a nationally-consistent standard for the collection, analysis and reporting of VET throughout Australia. The Standard classifies a disability to be both significant and permanent and differs from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition which defines disability as broadly encompassing restrictions or impairments which had lasted, or are likely to last for six months or more. VET clients are asked to self-identify whether they have a disability.

3.3 Data and trends

As shown in Table 1, the number of people who reported a disability in VET has increased from about 37,600 in 1995 to 62,100 in 2000. In 2000, this figure represented 3.5% of the total VET student population. In 1995, the figure represented 2.9%. It should be noted, however, that the participation rates are likely to be an under-estimate of the actual numbers of students with a disability since they do not take into account the large numbers of students who do not identify whether or not they have a disability.

The breakdown of people with disabilities by non-English speaking background (ESB), Indigenous, rural and remote clients is set out in Table 2. Data for low SES are not available. The data show that in most cases participation by people with disabilities in VET for each of these groups has increased in each of the years 1995-2000.

Table 1: Number of people with a disability in VET, 1995-2000^(a)

Year	No. of people who reported a disability ^(a)	Proportion of total population (%)
1995	37,601	2.9
1996	47,311	3.5
1997	48,236	3.3
1998	53,870	3.5
1999	63,178	3.8
2000	62,082	3.5

Source: Supplied by NCVET on 3/4/2002.

(a) Note that for all years non-reporting of disability is very high, for example, 20.3% of clients in 2000 did not indicate whether or not they had a disability.

Table 2: Vocational clients with a disability by non-ESB, Indigenous, rural and remote regions for Australia, 1995-2000

Type of client	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Non ESB clients with a disability	4,686	6,070	5,166	5,639	6,415	6,248
Indigenous clients with a disability	1,459	1,899	2,329	3,075	3,373	3,289
Rural area clients with a disability	11,957	15,822	15,630	17,452	20,209	20,637
Remote clients with a disability	833	908	1,030	1,238	1,410	1,545
All clients with a disability	37,601	47,311	48,236	53,870	63,178	62,082
All clients (total)	1,272,748	1,347,385	1,458,600	1,535,236	1,647,179	1,749,364

Source: Supplied by NCVET on 3/4/2002.

The *ANTA Annual National Report 2000* (the Report) states that people who report having a disability are more likely to do lower-skill-level courses than those who do not report having a disability. Of those students reporting to have a disability, 36.1% were enrolled in the Australian Qualification Framework Certificate I and II courses. This compares with 27.9% of those students not reporting a disability. Around one-third (33.7%) of students reporting a disability were undertaking multi-field education programmes, compared with 14.8% of students not reporting a disability. Such programmes are more generic or preparatory in nature and mostly include generic rather than specific occupational skills.

The Report also states that students who reported having a disability had lower load pass rates than those students who did not report a disability (67.1% compared to 76.0%).

The number of people with disabilities in New Apprenticeships has risen from 1,000 in 1995 to 5,600 in 2000 (see Table 3). The proportion of all apprentices and trainees who have reported a disability has risen from 0.8% in 1995 to 2.0% in 2000.

In relation to people with disabilities gaining access to New Apprenticeships, the profiles of their occupations and the qualification levels are similar to occupations and qualifications of New Apprenticeships undertaken by people who have not reported a disability. The major occupations for people with disabilities are tradespersons and related workers and clerical, sales and service (see Table 4).

Table 3: Number of people with a disability in New Apprenticeships training, 1995-2000

Year	No. of people with a disability in training ('000)	Proportion of Total (%)
1995	1.0	0.8
1996	1.6	1.0
1997	2.4	1.4
1998	3.5	1.8
1999	5.0	2.0
2000	5.6	2.0

Source: NCVET Australian Apprenticeships: Facts, Fiction and Future 2000 (from Table 41).

Table 4: Number of people with a disability in New Apprenticeships training, by occupation, 1995-2000 ('000)

Occupational group	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Managers & administrators	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
Professionals & associate professionals	-	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Tradespersons & related workers	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.7
Clerical, sales & service workers	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.9	1.7	1.4
Intermediate production & transport workers	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3
Labourers & related workers	-	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.9
Total	1.0	1.6	2.4	3.5	5.0	5.6

Source: NCVET Australian Apprenticeships: Facts, Fiction and Future, 2000 (from Table 119, Appendix 1).

As with New Apprentices who do not report a disability, Certificate III is the major qualification level of the New Apprenticeships being undertaken by those who reported having a disability (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of people with a disability in New Apprenticeships training, by level of qualification, 1995-2000 ('000)

Level of qualification	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Certificate I & II	0.2	0.4	0.8	1.3	1.6	1.5
Certificate III	0.7	1.0	1.4	2.0	3.3	3.9
Certificate IV or higher	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1
Not known	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0
Total	1.0	1.6	2.4	3.5	5.0	5.6

Source: NCVET Australian Apprenticeships: Facts, Fiction and Future, 2000 (from Table 120, Appendix 1).

3.4 National commitments

In May 1998, the ANTA Ministerial Council endorsed a *National Strategy for VET* for the period 1998-2003 – *A Bridge to the Future*. One of the key objectives of that Strategy is to achieve equitable outcomes in VET for all Australians, including people with disabilities.

To further support this objective, in June 2000 the ANTA Ministerial Council agreed to *Bridging Pathways: a National Strategy and Blueprint for people with disabilities in VET for 2000-2005* with the aim of increasing opportunities for people with disabilities in VET. These documents outline national strategies and actions at national, State and Territory level to increase opportunities for people with disabilities in VET. Specifically, the Blueprint aims to:

- increase access to VET for people with a disability;
- improve the successful participation and attainment in all fields of study and levels of VET;
- achieve employment and lifelong learning outcomes for people with disabilities; and
- create an accountable system that provides equitable outcomes for people with a disability.

Following the endorsement of the Strategy and Blueprint by Ministers, an Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) was established to monitor the implementation of the Blueprint and provide advice on emerging issues affecting access, participation and outcomes for people with a disability in VET. ADTAC includes representatives from Commonwealth and State and Territory governments as well as the disability sector. DEST is represented on this Council.

State and Territory Training Authorities, who are responsible for funding programmes for people with disabilities in VET, are required to report in their annual VET plans on progress towards achieving the strategies/actions in the Blueprint.

3.5 Commonwealth funding and support

The Commonwealth has provided \$2 million to ANTA for national actions outlined in the *Disability Blueprint*. Commonwealth funds are also provided to ANTA to manage a national programme, *Equity Development and Training Innovation Programme*. In 2001-02, \$750,000 from this Programme is being used to assist States and Territories to achieve the outcomes of the *Blueprint*.

In addition to participation in, and funding support for, the national initiatives outlined above, DEST funds a range of initiatives to improve access by people with a disability to VET. These include the following:

- the *Disabled Apprenticeship Wage Support (DAWS) Programme*, which is part of the *New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme*, provides weekly wage support to employers who take on a person who has a disability as an apprentice. Assistance may also be provided with tutorial assistance or interpreter services. Funding for workplace modifications or the hire and leasing of special equipment is available to disabled apprentices and trainees.

A review of the DAWS Programme and associated assistance to disabled New Apprentices was conducted in 2001. It is expected that recommendations arising from this review will be considered in the context of the outcomes from a review of the overall *New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme*, which is to take place in 2002.

- the *New Apprenticeships Access Programme*. The primary focus of the Programme is to assist job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Other successful outcomes are employment, further education or training. The Programme works on the premise that, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance, disadvantaged job seekers, can access and maintain a meaningful career. People with disabilities are eligible for assistance under the Programme.

In addition, in the Commonwealth Budget for 2001-02, as part of the *Australians Working Together* package, \$28.2 million over three years from July 2002 has been provided to increase

participation by people with disabilities in mainstream VET and to improve service coordination for people with disabilities. The funding is comprised of:

- additional funding for VET (\$24.4 million over 3 years from July 2002) to contribute to State and Territory efforts to assist people with a disability, which are managed as part of the overall funding to the States and Territories through ANTA, to enter and complete VET. Planning and accountability arrangements for these funds have been determined and relate to improvements over time in participation and outcomes for people with a disability.
- establishment of a *Disability Coordination Officer Programme* (\$3.7 million over 3 years for fifteen positions) to assist people with disabilities move between school, VET, higher education and employment, and to succeed in their chosen studies. The Programme will commence in July 2002 and will complement the *Regional Disability Liaison Officer Programme* which is a component of DEST's higher education funding (see Section 4.5 for further details of this Programme).

The Disability Coordination Officers will provide information, co-ordination and referral services for people with a disability interested in or enrolled in post-school education and training. The Programme will aim to increase the awareness of post-school options, supports and services available for people with a disability, their families and support networks and the successful participation by people with disability in post-compulsory education.

The Programme will also facilitate coordination of services for people with a disability in education and training within a region and improve linkages between schools, VET providers, higher education providers and providers of disability programmes and other assistance, such as the Commonwealth's Career Counselling Programme, Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service and those funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 Overview of Commonwealth role

Australian universities are generally established under State and Territory legislation with the authority to accredit their own programmes. They have primary responsibility for their own academic standards and quality assurance processes. The capacity to responsibly exercise this authority is among the criteria for recognition as a university of Australia.

The Commonwealth Government substantially funds universities, monitors and publishes performance data and provides the sector with a range of tools and incentives to enhance the quality of outcomes. The relevant Commonwealth legislation is the *Higher Education Funding Act 1988* (the HEFA).

The promotion of equality of opportunity in universities is addressed by section 22 of the HEFA, which is set out below:

“Promotion of equality of opportunity

- (1) In this section: *equal opportunity project* means a project designed to promote equality of opportunity in respect of higher education.
- (2) The Minister may approve a proposal for expenditure by an institution to which this section applies on an equal opportunity project as a proposal deserving financial assistance under this section in respect of a year to which this Chapter applies subject to such conditions as the Minister determines.
- (3) Where the Minister approves a proposal for expenditure by an institution in respect of a year, the Minister is (subject to section 23C) to determine an amount, not exceeding the estimated expenditure on the proposal in that year, as the amount of the approved expenditure in relation to the proposal and as from 1 January in that year, the amount specified in a determination under section 15 or 16, as the case requires, in relation to the institution in respect of that year is to be taken to be increased by the amount of the approved expenditure. “

4.2 Definitional issues

Since 1996, university enrolment procedures have included a request for a range of information from prospective students including whether they have a disability, an identification of the type of disability (defined disability types are categorised) and whether they require support for that disability. Each university reports this information to DEST as part of regular reporting processes and the information is stored in the higher education student statistical collection. We are aware that not all students with disabilities declare their disability as part of enrolment procedures and therefore, that numbers identified in higher education student statistical collection are an undercount.

4.3 Data and trends

The numbers of commencing domestic (non-overseas) students with disabilities and all domestic students with disabilities for the period 1996 to 2000 are shown in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. In 2000, there were 18,755 non-overseas students with disabilities of whom 6,414 were commencing students.

Table 1: Commencing domestic students with a disability, 1996-2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Commencing students with disabilities	4,647	5,761	6,126	6,149	6,414
Percentage of non-overseas commencing students (%)	1.9	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.7

Table 2: Domestic students with a disability, 1996-2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Students with disabilities	11,572	14,903	17,436	17,941	18,775
Percentage of non-overseas students (%)	1.9	2.4	2.8	2.9	3.0

The numbers of students with a disability, by type of disability, as reported in the higher education student statistical collection are shown in Table 3. The difference between the totals in this table and the total shown above reflects students with multiple disabilities.

Table 3: Students with a disability, by type of disability, 1999 and 2000^(a)

Type of disability	1999	2000
Students with hearing disability	1,940	1,943
Students with learning disability	1,516	1,652
Students with mobility disability	2,508	2,547
Students with visual disability	3,327	3,505
Students with medical disability	6,526	7,044
Students with other disability	3,808	4,246
Total	19,625	20,937

(a) The differences between the totals in this Table and the totals shown in Table 2 are due to those students with multiple disabilities.

Students with a disability show a slightly different age profile to all other domestic students with smaller proportions of students with disabilities under 25 years of age and larger proportions over 40 years. Approximately 60 per cent of all domestic students are under 25 years compared with about 40 per cent of all students with disabilities in this age group. Only about 12 per cent of all domestic students are 40 years and older whereas approximately 23 per cent of students with disabilities are in this age group.

Compared with all domestic students, a slightly greater proportion of students with disabilities study part-time. In 2000, approximately 34 per cent of students with disabilities studied part-time compared with 28 per cent of all non overseas students, and approximately 51 per cent of students with disabilities studied full time compared with almost 57 per cent of all domestic students. Just over 15 per cent of students with disabilities and all domestic students studied externally.

Almost 60 per cent of students with disabilities are also identified with other equity groups, reflecting multiple educational disadvantage. (Other equity groups are students with a low SES background, rural or isolated home background, students who speak a language other than

English and have arrived in Australia within the last 10 years, Indigenous Australians; and women studying non-traditional courses such as Engineering and Architecture.) Approximately 6 per cent of Indigenous Australians, 5.5 per cent of low SES students 25 years and over, and 3.4 per cent of rural students have also identified as having a disability.

A higher proportion of students with a disability are studying at Bachelor or Associate Degree level compared with the proportion of all students studying at this level and a smaller proportion are enrolled in postgraduate studies (see Table 4).

Table 4: Students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, 2000^(a)

Level of qualification	Students with a Disability (%)	All students (%)
Bachelor and Associate Degree	81.4	76.1
Postgraduate	15.7	20.5

(a) Excludes students with disabilities in diploma and non-award courses.

Data on the distribution of students with a disability by field of study are shown in Table 5. The majority of students with a disability are studying in the Arts Humanities field and quite high proportions are studying in Business / Administration / Economics and in Science. The proportion of students with a disability studying in the Arts / Humanities field is greater than the proportion of all students, and the proportion studying in the Business / Administration / Economics field is smaller than that of all students.

Table 5: Distribution of students with a disability and all students, by field of study, 2000

	Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences (%)	Business, Administration, Economics (%)	Education (%)	Engineering, Surveying (%)	Health (%)	Law, Legal Studies (%)	Science (%)
Students with a disability	38.2	16.4	11.1	5.1	10.0	6.1	16.3
All students	24.5	26.0	10.6	7.3	11.5	5.2	16.6

Two key measures of the sector's performance in equity are the success (progress) rate and retention rate of each identified equity group. The success rate or progress rate of each equity group is the proportion of units passed within a year compared with total units enrolled. Retention is about the number of students in the equity group who re-enrol at an institution in a given year, as a proportion of those who were enrolled in the previous year, excluding those who completed their course. Students with disabilities are not performing quite as well as other students against these measures. The success rate for students with disabilities in 2000 was 81 per cent (i.e. 81 per cent of those enrolling at the beginning of the year passed their study) compared with 87 per cent for other students. The retention rate for students with disabilities in 2001 was 75 per cent compared with 77 per cent for other students (i.e. 75 per cent of students who had enrolled in 2000 and had not completed their course re-enrolled in 2001).

4.4 National commitments

Universities are required to report student information to DEST as part of accountability arrangements. This information includes identified equity characteristics and covers the information related to disability provided by students on enrolment. DEST maintains reported data on the higher education student statistical collection and monitors the participation and performance of students with disabilities as part of the general monitoring of higher education students.

Each year, as part of profiles discussions between DEST and each higher education institution, institutions are required to report to DEST on their plans for the education and support of students in identified equity groups, including students with disabilities. Equity plans generally give an outline of the strategies to be undertaken to achieve identified objectives and report on performance outcomes. These plans are ultimately published on DEST's web site. The equity plans for 2000-2001 triennium can be accessed at

http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/equity00_02/index.htm

The sort of strategies identified by universities are the provision of special equipment and educational support, disability advisers, the promotion of distance education, modification of materials and curriculum, flexible timetabling and the provision of information about available services.

4.5 Commonwealth funding and support

Higher Education Equity Programme

Universities are allocated annual operating grants from which they are required to meet the needs of all their domestic students including those with disabilities. Fees set by universities for overseas students should be sufficient to cover the needs of all international students. The *Higher Education Equity Programme* (HEEP) is supplementary funding allocated to institutions as part of operating grants.

In 2002, \$5.9 million of HEEP funding was allocated to universities. Universities are encouraged to use HEEP allocations as seed funding to undertake strategies aimed at increasing the participation of higher education students from equity groups.

HEEP allocations are calculated according to a set formula that initially allocates \$80,000 base funding to each institution. The remainder is then divided amongst equity groups with 15 per cent being apportioned for students with disabilities. In 2002, this was \$312,750. Each portion is then shared among institutions according to the formula which takes into account both number of students in the equity group and their performance as determined by success rates and retention rates. (The Australian Maritime College and the University of Notre Dame Australia receive a set amount of HEEP allocations rather than an amount calculated by the formula.)

Additional Support for Students with Disabilities Programme

The *Additional Support for Students with Disabilities Programme* was announced in the 2001 Budget in recognition of the fact that increasing numbers of students with disabilities requiring high cost support are entering university and that these students are spread unevenly across the sector. These new funds supplement operating grants which are allocated to universities to meet the needs of all domestic students, including those with a disability.

The Programme commences in 2002 and will provide ongoing funding. Amounts to be allocated in the first three years of the Programme are:

- \$1.834 million in second semester 2002;
- \$2.951 million in 2003; and
- \$3.054 million in 2004.

Whilst the funding model is yet to be cleared by the Minister, the planned approach is to allocate funds twice a year with allocations being a partial reimbursement of university funds expended in the previous semester on students with disabilities with high cost needs. Eligible disability types and types of disability service as well as equipment types are defined.

Regional Disability Liaison Officer Programme

The *Regional Disability Liaison Officer Programme* (RDLOP) provides practical support and assistance to students with disabilities making the transition from school to university or TAFE and then on to employment. The Programme was expanded in 2001 and an additional \$2.4 million is being provided over three years for 10 positions. As discussed in Section 3.5, this Programme will be complemented by the new *VET Disability Coordination Officer Programme*, which commences in July 2002.

Other programme support

Two other higher education programmes, the *Higher Education Innovation Programme* (HEIP) and the *Evaluations and Investigations Programme* (EIP) have been used to fund several initiatives in the disability field in higher education. Key initiatives in recent years are the Liberated Learning project, the Learning Disabilities Resource Package project and the Transition to Employment project. Further details of these projects are provided at Appendix D.

5. ACCESS TO ONLINE EDUCATION

Teaching and learning materials can be presented in many forms, such as paper, audio and videotapes, CD-ROM, television, and over the Internet. In the new millennium, however, online delivery has become the most prevalent way of getting up-to-date information to students in the quickest and most flexible and innovative ways possible. Online courses can utilise a variety of technologies to facilitate learning and interaction between participants. These include:

- asynchronous and synchronous communication and collaboration tools (such as e-mail, listservs, bulletin boards, whiteboards, chat rooms, videoconferencing and teleconferencing);
- interactive elements (such as simulations, immersive environments and games); and
- various testing and evaluation methods (such as self-assessment and multiple choice testing).

Online educational content can be presented in many media: text on a website, multimedia such as digital audio, digital video, animated images, and virtual reality environments. This content can be created in a variety of ways, utilizing a variety of authoring tools.

There are many issues that affect the accessibility of all of these various technologies for learners with disabilities. These include, for example, the use of:

- captions on videos so deaf and hard-of-hearing users can access the content;
- audio descriptions of visual elements in videos for blind and low-vision users;
- suitable keyboard controls throughout an application for users with limited mobility; and
- alternative text (alt-text) labels for images on a website for users listening to the content of a site through screen-reading software.

Challenges also exist in relation to:

- providing for blind students to access mathematical equations presented as graphics, which cannot be read by screen readers;
- investigating limitations imposed by certain types of testing; and
- access to the administrative aspects of the online learning process, such as course listings and course registration.

Attention needs to be given to these and other accessibility issues to ensure access to online education for everyone.

Australia participates in and contributes to the IMS Global Consortium (formerly known as Instructional Management Systems), which is developing Accessibility Guidelines. IMS Accessibility Guidelines advise technical design considerations addressing the needs of learners and educators with disabilities. They guide the development of IMS technical specifications, which in turn, facilitate reuse and interoperability of online educational content and learning applications. All education sectors are being kept informed of these developments.

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Responsibility for the provision of education for students with a disability is shared between governments (Commonwealth, State and Territory), institutions, parents and the community. Primary responsibility for the delivery of education and training for students with disabilities (as with all students) rests with State and Territory education authorities and educational institutions. Whilst arrangements for the provision of education vary between sectors, the Commonwealth plays a significant role in funding in all education sectors.

The Commonwealth's role in the education of students with disabilities must be understood in this context. It does not deliver services directly and is not responsible for the regulation and quality assurance of service delivery. In terms of funding, the Commonwealth is a contributor rather than sole provider. Its role is, therefore, one of influence and partnership.

The bulk of Commonwealth funding is used to meet the general operating costs associated with providing education for all students. In addition, the Commonwealth provides specific purpose or targeted funding for each sector. There is a range of programmes which are targeted for increasing participation of, and support for, people with disabilities undertaking study or training. The overall aim is for improved outcomes for people with disabilities.

The importance of the education of students with disabilities is clearly acknowledged in Commonwealth policy, a fact reflected in the significant amounts of targeted funding allocated to support the education of students with a disability. It is important to recognise that Commonwealth policy in this area is not static and has evolved in response to changes in practice and delivery such as increasing inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education and training. Commonwealth policy will continue to evolve as community needs and expectations change and as educational practices develop.

NATIONAL GOALS FOR SCHOOLING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Commonwealth, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally.

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community;
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession;
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialing that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued; and
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/> - top international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

The National Goals

1. Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave schools they should:

- 1.1 have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others;
- 1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members;
- 1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions;
- 1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life;
- 1.5 have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning;
- 1.6 be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society;
- 1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development; and
- 1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:

- 2.1 attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:
 - the arts;
 - English;
 - health and physical education;
 - languages other than English;
 - mathematics;
 - science;
 - studies of society and environment; and
 - technology;and the interrelationships between them;
- 2.2 attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level;

- 2.3 participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies; and
- 2.4 participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location;
- 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students;
- 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students;
- 3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- 3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally; and
- 3.6 <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/> - top all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.

RESEARCH PROJECTS RELATING TO SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Recent research projects that address issues relating to school students with specific educational needs include:

- *Literacy, Numeracy and Students with Disabilities Project* - This project was undertaken by researchers at the Schonell Special Education Research Centre at the University of Queensland, the Department of Special Education and Disability at Flinders University of South Australia and the Deafness Student Unit at the University of Melbourne. The project identified effective practices to enhance the literacy and numeracy learning of students with disabilities in Australian primary schools. The executive summary of the report is available at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/literacy&numeracy/publications/disabilities/swd.pdf>. A brochure summarising suggestions for practice in schools and classrooms based on the outcomes of the project was produced as part of this project and distributed to every school in Australia. The brochure can be accessed at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/literacy&numeracy/publications/disabilities/brochure.htm>.
- *Mapping the Territory, Primary Students with Learning Difficulties: Literacy and Numeracy Project* - This project was undertaken by researchers at Edith Cowan University, the University of Newcastle, the University of Melbourne, and the University of Queensland. The primary purpose of the study was to provide a national picture of how students with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported in their literacy and numeracy learning in regular primary school settings and to identify successful strategies for addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of these students. The report concluded that clear policies and systematic instruction were essential to achieving successful outcomes for students experiencing learning difficulties. The research report is available at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/Literacy&Numeracy/publications/mapping/index.htm>. A brochure summarising effective programs and strategies for children with learning difficulties was also produced as a part of this project and distributed to every school in Australia. This brochure can be accessed at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/literacy&numeracy/publications/mapping/brochure.htm>.
- *Assessment and Reporting of Student Achievement for Students with Specific Educational Needs against Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks* - This project was undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research and was completed in 1999. The main objective of the project was to identify and provide information on key issues in relation to the assessment and reporting of school student literacy and numeracy achievement against the national benchmarks, for students with specific educational needs, including:
 - Indigenous students, particularly where English is a second or later language;
 - learners of English as a second language; and
 - students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

The project produced an issues paper which was written in the context of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan encompassing the national literacy and numeracy goal, the development of benchmarks, and state-wide testing to be used in reporting aggregated student achievement data. Copies of the paper are available through the Clearinghouse for Literacy and Numeracy Projects on phone (07) 3875 6832.

- The *Technology for Learning: Students with Disabilities Project* - This project was undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, South Australia. The project investigated the impact of computer-based learning programs for students with disabilities and the implications for governments and education sectors in relation to relevant and effective policies and practices for this group of students. Copies of the report were sent to education authorities and peak national interest groups in all States and Territories. It is available at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2000/index.htm>.

**“LIGHTHOUSE” PROJECTS UNDER THE ENTERPRISE AND CAREER
EDUCATION FOUNDATION’S DISABILITY INITIATIVE**

The following “lighthouse” projects are being funded under the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation’s Disability Initiative to increase structured workplace learning opportunities for students with a disability:

- *Youth Connections Work-out Project* - This project (formerly known as the *Central Coast Business Education Network Work-out Project*) is based in Gosford on the New South Wales central coast. It was created to address the growing need to develop accessible pathways to VET study and sustainable employment for students with a disability. The project builds on the existing industry and education alliances already developed through the Central Coast Business Education Network. The project has successfully raised awareness about the need for disability support structures.
 - In 2001, more than 50 students from 15 government, three independent and two Catholic schools participated in the programme, undertaking structured work placements with almost 30 employers across industries including hospitality and tourism, business services, information technology, building and construction, metals and engineering and retail.
 - Some students have secured employment as a direct result of their structured work placements, and others have chosen to return to schooling, undertake further post-school VET and utilise support agencies.
- *Gateway to Awareness for Training and Employment Disability Project (TAS)* - Based in Launceston, Tasmania, this project was created to raise industry awareness of the employment potential of young people with disabilities and to increase the vocational opportunities available to these young people. The project builds on the existing education and industry alliances formed by the Launceston Workplace Learning Programme.
 - In 2001, more than 20 students from two state secondary colleges, Launceston College and Newstead College, undertook structured work placements with more than 50 employers in industries including food processing, hospitality and community care.
 - The project has resulted in a 200 per cent increase in the VET in schools participation rate by students with a disability.
 - A number of students have gained part time employment as a result of the program and one student has secured a traineeship.
- *Western Adelaide Vocational and Enterprise Services and Email Training Services* - This project is based in the western region of Adelaide. It was created in response to the need to increase access to structured workplace learning (and subsequently job placement) for students with a disability and has provided unprecedented personal and career opportunities to many students, leading to a transformation in their attitudes and behaviour.
 - A total of 45 students from 11 government (generic and specialist disability) and Catholic schools participated in the program. Students undertook structured work placements in the manufacturing and retail industries with 13 employers.
 - Approximately 18 students have secured some form of employment as a direct result of the programme and several students who were at risk of leaving school have decided to return to school and one student has secured a school-based apprenticeship after participating in the programme.

**PROJECTS RELATING TO STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The following recent projects funded under the HEIP or the EIP address issues relating to students with disabilities in higher education:

- In 2001, the University of the Sunshine Coast was contracted to undertake a trial of automated speech recognition technology (the brand name is Liberated Learning) over three years with \$500,000 allocated from the HEIP. Automated speech recognition is a software application that converts spoken lectures into electronic text. Text is displayed so that students can simultaneously see and hear a lecture as it is delivered. The text can subsequently be used as a resource and can be produced in Braille or audio forms to better accommodate people with sight or hearing impairments. Potentially, it will be able to be developed for tutorials and seminars, to allow students with hearing or language difficulties to actively participate.
- In 2001, under the EIP, the University of Tasmania was contracted to undertake research into learning disability in higher education. The research was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, \$32,659 was allocated to research the incidence of learning disability and report on the implications of this in higher education. The report from this stage concluded that universities could improve the way they teach and support students with a learning disability if their staff had access to a comprehensive, up-to-date information package and received associated training. The second stage, to develop a resource package to support good outcomes for students with a learning disability at university, has now commenced at a cost of \$46,321.
- In 2001, DEST contracted the Regional Disability Liaison Officer at Central Queensland University to undertake research aimed at enhancing opportunities for students with disabilities to make the transition to employment and to attract the support and cooperation of employers in facilitating the transition. An amount of \$10,000 was allocated from the EIP for this project.
- In 1999, \$75,000 was allocated to Deakin University to establish a National Clearing House on Education and Training For People with Disabilities. (The funding was allocated under the *Disability Initiatives Programme*, now replaced by the RDLOP). A further \$120,000 was allocated in 2000 for this project. The project resulted in the establishment of a website which contained much useful information and the establishment of a list server which continues to be active and facilitates discussion and the sharing of ideas by disability practitioners. The project, however, did not fully meet its objectives in the time frame and did not achieve its goal of long-term financial viability. A further \$75,000 has therefore been committed from the HEIP to complete this worthwhile project and tenders are currently being let.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADTAC	Australian Disability Training Advisory Council
AGSRC	Australian Government School Recurrent Costs
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
CEPT	Commonwealth Employment Placement and Training
DAWS	Disabled Apprenticeship Wage Support
DDA	<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
ECEF	Enterprise and Career Education Foundation
EIP	Evaluations and Investigations Programme
ESB	English-speaking background
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HEEP	Higher Education Equity Programme
HEFA	<i>Higher Education Funding Act 1988</i>
HEIP	Higher Education Innovation Programme
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
Minister	Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training
National Goals	National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NLNSP	National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects
PMRT	Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce
RDLOP	Regional Disability Liaison Officer Programme
Report	ANTA Annual National Report 2000
SAISO	Strategic Assistance for Improving Students Outcomes
SENCs	Special Education - Non-government Centre Support
SES	socio-economic status
SGA	<i>States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000</i>
Standards	Disability Standards for Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training