



Catholic Education Commission, NSW

**SUBMISSION TO
SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO
THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

MAY 2002

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Summary of Recommendations

In this submission the Catholic Education Commission, NSW sets out facts and argument to recommend to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities that:

1. *it is essential to improve access to those specialist assessments and intervention strategies for children which are necessary for effective engagement with schooling. To achieve this aim interagency strategies will be required. Special service provision arrangements will need to be developed for rural areas.*
2. *the Senate review and adopt the outcomes of the work being undertaken by the MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce, through the Disability Definition Working Group, as the basis for a nationally consistent set of student disability definitions.*
3. *the mismatch between the legal (DDA) definition of disability and State-based funding eligibility be addressed. All schools in Australia need to be better resourced in order to identify and address the needs of all students who have a disability.*
4. *all students upon entering Kindergarten should be screened for learning disabilities. To achieve this aim the Commonwealth early intervention program should be expanded to ensure equal access for ALL children to early identification, support and transition services/programs irrespective of school of enrolment.*
5. *as the current Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program draws to a close in mid-2003 the Commonwealth Parliament and Government consider the establishment of a Nationally funded teacher in-service program to develop those teaching skills required to effectively educate students with disabilities, including behavioural disorders.*
6. *the MCEETYA Disability Standards development process advice that the defence of 'unjustifiable hardship' be extended in its application to the whole of schooling, rather than exclusively applying to the enrolment process.*
7. *since the Commonwealth has assumed responsibility for legal regulation in this area of disability, by virtue of Section 109 of the Constitution, it should also assume a more realistic level of funding responsibility.*
8. *the Commonwealth should allocate funds for each SWD in Catholic systems equivalent to 56.2% (51.2% in the ACT) of the national average cost of educating a student with disabilities in regular government system schools.*

1. INTRODUCTION

(a) The Role of the Catholic Education Commission, NSW

1. The Catholic Education Commission, NSW was established by the Bishops of NSW in 1974 and is responsible to them for coordination and representation in relation to Catholic schooling K-12 in NSW. The Commission also provides leadership in Catholic education, through the provision of services to Dioceses, religious congregations and parents.
2. In addition the CEC,NSW is the approved authority for the allocation of Commonwealth and State funding for NSW Catholic schools. It functions through consultation with Diocesan Directors, Religious Institutes, principal and parent associations and other educational organisations, both government and non-government. For further details about the role and function of the CEC see: www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au.

(b) Catholic Schools in NSW

3. In 2001, there were 233,284 students enrolled and 16,577 teachers employed in 588 Catholic schools in NSW (422 primary, 126 secondary, 33 primary/secondary combined, and 7 Special schools). There were 6,508 students identified as meeting Commonwealth/State criteria for ‘Students with Disability’ funding. Of these students, 318 attended the seven Catholic Special Schools in NSW.

(c) Students with Disabilities In NSW Catholic Schools

4. The number of students in NSW Catholic schools, who meet Commonwealth/State criteria for funding as students with disabilities (SWD), has increased from 2,792, in 1992 to 6,508 in 2001. This represents a growth trend in SWD enrolments from a situation where in 1992 these students represented 1.2% of total NSW Catholic sector enrolments to being 2.8% of enrolments in 2001 (See *Appendix 1*). As documented in *Appendix 1*, 2000-2001 saw an atypical decline in SWD enrolments. This is seen to be a one-off departure from long term enrolment trends brought about by the introduction of revised assessment criteria, consequent upon changes to DET, NSW assessment procedures. Under Commonwealth (DEST) funding guidelines CEC,NSW is required to apply DET,NSW funding assessment criteria (cf *Commonwealth Programs for Schools Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2001 – 2004*, page 111).

(d) Measuring Need

5. CEC is aware that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (*Australian Social Trends 2000*) estimates that 8% of all children aged 5-17 have a disability involving a specific restriction capable of impacting on their schooling. In addition, there are other students with learning difficulties enrolled in Catholic, and other, schools in NSW, who currently fall outside the criteria for “student with a disability’ funding. This group may represent an additional 12% of enrolments (cf. *Disability Standards for Education 2000, Draft Regulatory Impact Statement*, page 11).
6. In this context CEC,NSW is keenly aware that the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) creates service provider obligations in respect of a broad category of students with an educational impairment, whilst State and Commonwealth funding criteria/eligibility have a much narrower application (see *paras. 34-5*). This

mismatch between (i) the legal (DDA) definition of disability and (ii) the funding eligibility criteria, is a key issue which the Senate should address. All schools in Australia need to be better resourced in the first instance in order to identify and address the needs of all students who have a disability.

2. RESPONSES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

(i) The criteria used to define disability and to differentiate between levels of handicap

7. Over the last decade there have been a number of reviews undertaken to clarify and/or determine disability definitions and/or eligibility for disability funding. Four such reviews are worthy of detailed reconsideration by the Senate. These are:
 - ACER, *Schooling for Students with Disabilities* (1994);
 - DEET, *Review of Allocative Mechanisms for Commonwealth Equity Funds for Schools* (1994);
 - DET, NSW, *The Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study – The “McRae Report”* (1996);
 - *MCEETYA Discussion Papers on Disability Standards for Schools* (1998-2001).
8. Currently the MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) is attempting to develop nationally consistent disability definitions for application to school education across Australia. The Senate needs to consider this work and its impending impact on service delivery. Linked to this are the current variations across the States in regard to both disability definitions and resource allocation methodologies.
9. CEC recommends that the Senate review and adopt the outcomes of the work being undertaken by the MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce, through the Disability Definition Working Group. The Working Group’s outcomes should provide the basis for determining nationally consistent disability definitions.

(ii) The accuracy with which student’s disability related needs are being assessed

10. As noted above, assessment of student needs applies State-based and State required processes and criteria. Currently, in NSW, funding approval requires access to psychologists for assessment of cognitive disabilities. Similarly, access to a speech pathologist is required for the assessment of a specific language disorder. Other disabilities require assessment by medical rather than educational professionals. These professionals include doctors, psychiatrists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.
11. Access to these services depends on local facilities such as NSW Area Health Boards, hospitals, or associations such as the Spastic Centre or Autism Association. As well, for Catholic schools, the capacity of individual families to pay for appropriate diagnostic services is increasingly an issue of concern. Free services are becoming increasingly rare, with exceptionally long waiting periods. In NSW, Catholic schools have limited access to NSW State Government funded “Families First” initiatives/services relevant to disability assessment.

12. There can be a complicating disjunction between student performance assessment and the disability service provision needs of students. That is, while MCEETYA benchmarks and outcomes are performance-related in areas of academic learning (especially literacy and numeracy), many of the required outcomes for students with disabilities relate to access, participation, self-help, social and communication skills. Given, however, the community focus on measurable MCEETYA outcomes, student needs related to access to educational settings, as identified in the McRae Report (see *Summary of Findings and Recommendations*, page 7), risk being marginalised.
13. Consequently, needs assessment models which focus on educational attainment only can fail to identify and resource students who require support to both access, and function in, an educational setting (cf. McRae, cited above).
14. A preferred method of funding would be one that relates to the degree to which the disability impacts on a student's capacity to function effectively in the most appropriate educational setting. Such impacts might be cognitive, social, emotional, personal care, mobility or safety needs at a given point in time. For high-support students all impacts may be present simultaneously (Refer *Appendix 2* which provides some case studies of the educational needs of SWD students enrolled in NSW Regular Catholic schools).
15. CEC strongly advises, therefore, that it is essential to improve the access to those specialist assessments and intervention strategies which are necessary for effective engagement with schooling. To achieve this aim interagency strategies will be required. Special service provision arrangements will need to be developed for rural areas.

(iii) The particular needs of students with disabilities from low socio-economic, non-English speaking and Indigenous backgrounds and from rural and remote areas

16. Access to assessment and support services for all students with disabilities throughout Australia should be equal, irrespective of the socio economic, language or cultural background of the child/student.
17. Students with special education needs located in rural and isolated settings, who require specialist therapy services, should have the specific difficulties and costs of accessing these services included as part of their needs assessment. Assessment and service delivery costs are higher in rural areas (cf. ACER, *Schooling for Students with Disabilities* (1994) at page 104; and, HREOC *The Human Rights of Rural Australians*, Occasional Paper, 1996). These costs should be recognised by Government when allocative mechanisms for the distribution of targeted/strategic funds are developed (cf *paras.* 42-6 below).
18. In order to promote equality, there is an urgent need to assist rural areas/schools attract and retain therapists. CEC acknowledges that this need is part of the wider problem of providing access for rural communities to required health and welfare services. Alternatively, access strategies involving itinerant services should be developed and funded. One strategy that requires further development is the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams (i.e. speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, educators) to deliver outreach programs.

(iv) The effectiveness and availability of early intervention programs

19. Entry to early intervention programs requires the identification of disability. This does not always happen, especially in areas of high migrant density where knowledge of medical and support systems is limited. Amongst some ethnic groups there are also strongly inhibiting cultural taboos surrounding disability issues. Moreover in poorer, low socio-economic areas, most students with cognitive disabilities are only identified after school entry, due to lack of access to appropriate infant and early childhood assessment services. By the time students are identified it can be too late for enrolment in early intervention classes/programs.
20. Some pre-schools have access to very good intervention support but this requires that a child attends pre-school. Many poorer and rural parents cannot access pre-school services. Parents sometimes evidence a cultural opposition to institutional pre-school care, preferring models of extended family based care.
21. Given the above cited issues CEC,NSW recommends that all students upon entering Kindergarten should be screened for learning disabilities. To achieve this aim the Commonwealth early intervention program should be expanded to ensure equal access for ALL children to early identification, support and transition services/programs irrespective of school of enrolment.

(v) Access to and adequacy of funding and support in both the public and private sectors

22. As NSW Catholic schools enrol more students with greater support needs, funding support cannot be expanded rapidly enough to address all identified learning needs. For example, simply arranging for a student to be catheterised or otherwise toileted at school can cost up to \$6,000 per year (cf. *Appendix 2*). In this context it is relevant to note that the costs of this particular service provision through the Government funded Home Care service is often greater than through a private service provider. Also, capital funds necessary to enable physical access by students with mobility needs to older schools are minimal.
23. Similarly, as the number of students who enrol in NSW Catholic schools, particularly those with higher support needs, increases so do total support costs. All eleven NSW Dioceses have indicated that the cost of support provision for students with disabilities is far greater than the Commonwealth and state funds attracted by the student's enrolment. The cost of essential support for a student with a disability in a regular school can vary from \$1600 to \$32,000, depending on the level of need of the particular student. Available Commonwealth funds typically meet no more than 40% of service provision costs for students with mid-range service support needs. Or, to express this cost of service provision another way, one NSW Catholic school authority responsible for the education of 2,320 SWD receives \$3,602,904 in total government grants to support the education of SWD students, but expends \$9,298,801 from all sources.
24. Another key resourcing issue is the fact that the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* has a far broader definition of disability than that which applies in respect of the current Commonwealth/State funding criteria for students with disabilities. It would be impossible to service all students who meet the broader criteria with targeted funding, unless there was a corresponding substantial increase in total funding

allocations. This issue has been canvassed in the draft *Disability Standards for Education 2002: Regulatory Impact Statement*, refer page 11: ‘Some States, however, have argued that under the DDA definition of disability, up to 18% of school students may be able to claim support’. A key group of students affected by this difference in applicable definitions are those students with behavioural disorders not amounting to recognised medical conditions.

(vi) The nature, extent and funding of programs that provide for full or partial learning opportunities with mainstream students

25. In New South Wales, the Board of Studies has adopted the philosophy of an inclusive approach to curriculum development. It has applied this conceptual approach to the writing of new syllabus and support documents, including Life Skills outcomes for courses leading to both the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. While Catholic schools are supportive of this philosophy and the resultant curriculum frameworks, school administrators find the expense of service delivery arising from individualised curriculum programming for students with disabilities increasingly difficult to resource. In the past, many of these students would have attended Special schools, schools established with all the specific resources required for the education of students with high resource needs.
26. As interpreted by HREOC, the Disability Discrimination Act appears to create for all students the right to an ‘inclusive education’ in a Regular school, regardless of their disability or the cost of service provision. This legal expectation is not always supported by the best available assessments of educational need, nor by access to appropriate service provision.
27. Educational assessment can lead to a professionally based conclusion that specialist, or in some particular instances separate, provision is in the best interests of the child. This dilemma of a potential clash between legal and educational imperativeness has been clearly illustrated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in its consideration of the case of Hoggan (Matter 98/127, decision of 13 November 2000). Further consideration of this issue is set out at *paras.* 34-41 below.

(vii) Teacher Training and Professional Development

28. Currently, pre-service teacher training does not provide adequate special education training for all teachers. Whilst NSW undergraduates must complete an introduction to special education, there is still a need for further appropriate training at the pre-service level. It is important that the university staff who present these courses, themselves have special education qualifications and experience. The need to address the skills and competencies of teacher educators has been raised in the recent NSW Review of Teacher Education. (G. Ramsey, *Quality Matters* (2000), page 177f).
29. The change in school enrolment experienced over the last decade as a result of the introduction of the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* has meant that teachers are now trying to adapt curriculum and instruction for students whom they once would not have been expected to teach. With appropriate Commonwealth funding, all education providers could enter into joint training schemes to support teachers in all settings who face the demands of educating students with disabilities, particularly students with high support needs.

30. As the current Commonwealth *Quality Teacher Program* draws to a close in mid-2003 it would be timely for the Federal Parliament and Government to consider the establishment of Nationally funded teacher in-service programs to develop those teaching skills required to effectively educate students with disabilities, including behavioural disorders.
31. Such a program should develop:
- Links with pre-service training, delivered by experienced and knowledgeable educators.
 - Skills which enable teachers to understand, access and assess therapy programs.
 - Incentives for teachers to pursue accredited training in special education.
 - The knowledge, skills and understanding of all staff, including executive staff responsible for enrolment decisions.
 - Teachers who can adapt learning environments to the needs of children.
 - Individualised instruction based on best practice use of new learning technologies.
32. Recently the United States Government has acknowledged the importance of such initiatives by offering grants of \$12,000 (U.S.) to help school communities develop proactive responses to disability legislation (See USA Department of Education, <http://www.ed.gov/inits/commissionsboards/whspeiaeducation>). President Bush, significantly, has appointed a special commission to examine special education, which the President says has too often failed to ensure that children with disabilities achieve.
33. These American developments should be instructive for Senators since the Commonwealth DDA, as well as HREOC determinations arising, are significantly influenced by both the USA *Americans with Disabilities Act* and the USA *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*.

(viii) The legal implications and resource demands of current Commonwealth and state and territory legislation.

34. CEC,NSW notes that, given the operation of Section 109 of the Commonwealth Constitution, for all intents and purposes the DDA prevails over parallel State legislation relating to disability. Consequently, disability service provision by schools in NSW is for all practical purposes regulated by HREOC and the Federal Court through their administration/oversight of the DDA.
35. This reality raises a serious discontinuity between the Commonwealth responsibility for the setting of Disability Standards and State-based decision-making processes in respect of determinations regarding the provision of disability support services. This disjunction is evidenced in, and canvassed, through:
- Federal judicial determinations, e.g. the Hoggan Case.
 - State disability reviews, e.g. the NSW McRae ‘Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study’ (1996).
 - The Commonwealth Office of Regulatory Review, ‘Draft Disability Standards for Education 2002 Regulatory Impact Statement’.
36. As the Office of Regulatory Review notes, the DDA provisions relating to ‘Unjustifiable Hardship’ represent the critical point at which (i) Commonwealth legal obligations, and (ii) State/School authority provider capacities not only converge, but often clash.

37. The problems which arise when one level of Government (the Commonwealth) defines legal obligations, whilst another (the State) has primary responsibility for service delivery/resourcing is illustrated by a series of recent HREOC DDA determinations:
- Lutheran Schools (Refer HREOC Exemption Application 1996/97, www.austlii.edu.au/; www.hreoc/disabil/exem011.htm)
 - Hills Grammar (Refer HREOC No H98/60 of 1999)
 - Hoggan (Refer HREOC No 98/127 of 2000)
38. As State Registered entities NSW Catholic schools share all the service delivery imperatives and challenges of government schools in NSW.
39. CEC is of the strong view that the current statutory restriction in the DDA of the application of the service provider defence of ‘Unjustifiable Hardship’ to the actual enrolment decision making process/determination for any child/student is dysfunctional. This limitation overly separates educational decision making from a realistic assessment of the costs, both material and educational, of service delivery.
40. CEC strongly agrees with the MCEETYA Disability Standards development process advice that the defence of ‘unjustifiable hardship’ should be extended in its application to the whole of schooling. To quote the draft Regulatory Impact Statement:

‘Unjustifiable Hardship.

Probably the most significant change that the proposed Standards introduce is an expansion of the scope of the defence of unjustifiable hardship not only to encompass enrolment in an institution, as is current under the Act, but to include the total period in which a student is enrolled in an institution. The unjustifiable hardship exception and limiting the obligation to adjust to “reasonable adjustments” allows sufficient flexibility to take account of other important concerns providers may have, such as costs of adjustments and any consequential effect upon other students.

The expanded defence of unjustifiable hardship is likely to result in a saving for institutions and systems as it applies at any time after the student is enrolled at the institution, rather than just at the point of enrolment as is the current situation. The saving is hard to quantify, as it would take the form of litigation not commenced, and adjustments not made, on the basis that the outcome is more predictable than before the standards existed. Equally plausible though is an increase in litigation in the short term, as complainants and providers test the new and expanded scope of unjustifiable hardship, although any increase in litigation may be short-lived depending on the body of case law that would develop.’

41. In summary, CEC is concerned that the legal obligations of all schools with respect to disability education be more closely aligned with reasonable capacity of schools to respond as service providers to all enrolled children/students.

3. THE PROPER ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND STATES/TERRITORIES

42. As outlined above, currently the Commonwealth, through the DDA, determines the standards of service delivery. The State/Territories and Registered Private State-based

providers have responsibility for service delivery. Resourcing obligations are shared, but the Commonwealth has always resisted assuming full responsibility for meeting the educational costs arising from its DDA.

43. CEC believes that the separation of regulatory responsibility from service delivery responsibilities is dysfunctional. Since the Commonwealth has assumed responsibility for legal regulation in this area, by virtue of Section 109 of the Constitution, it should also assume a more realistic level of funding responsibility. In this context CEC supports the most recent SWD funding submission of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) which advocates:

'NCEC is seeking funding for Catholic systems in respect of these students as a percentage of the costs of SWDs in government schools, similar to the way in which the systems receive General Recurrent Grants by reference to the percentage of AGSRC'

44. CEC submits that, in place of the current Commonwealth funding arrangements for students with disabilities, whereby Catholic systems receive:
- a general recurrent grant of 56.2% of the AGSRC (51.2% in the ACT)
 - plus a per capita grant of \$588 per SWD, and
 - historical allocations of approximately \$20m, now rolled into the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes (SAISO) Programme,

the Commonwealth should allocate funds for each SWD in Catholic systems equivalent to 56.2% (51.2% in the ACT) of the national average cost of educating a student with disabilities in regular government system schools. It is proposed that \$20,000 be used as a reasonable estimate for this.

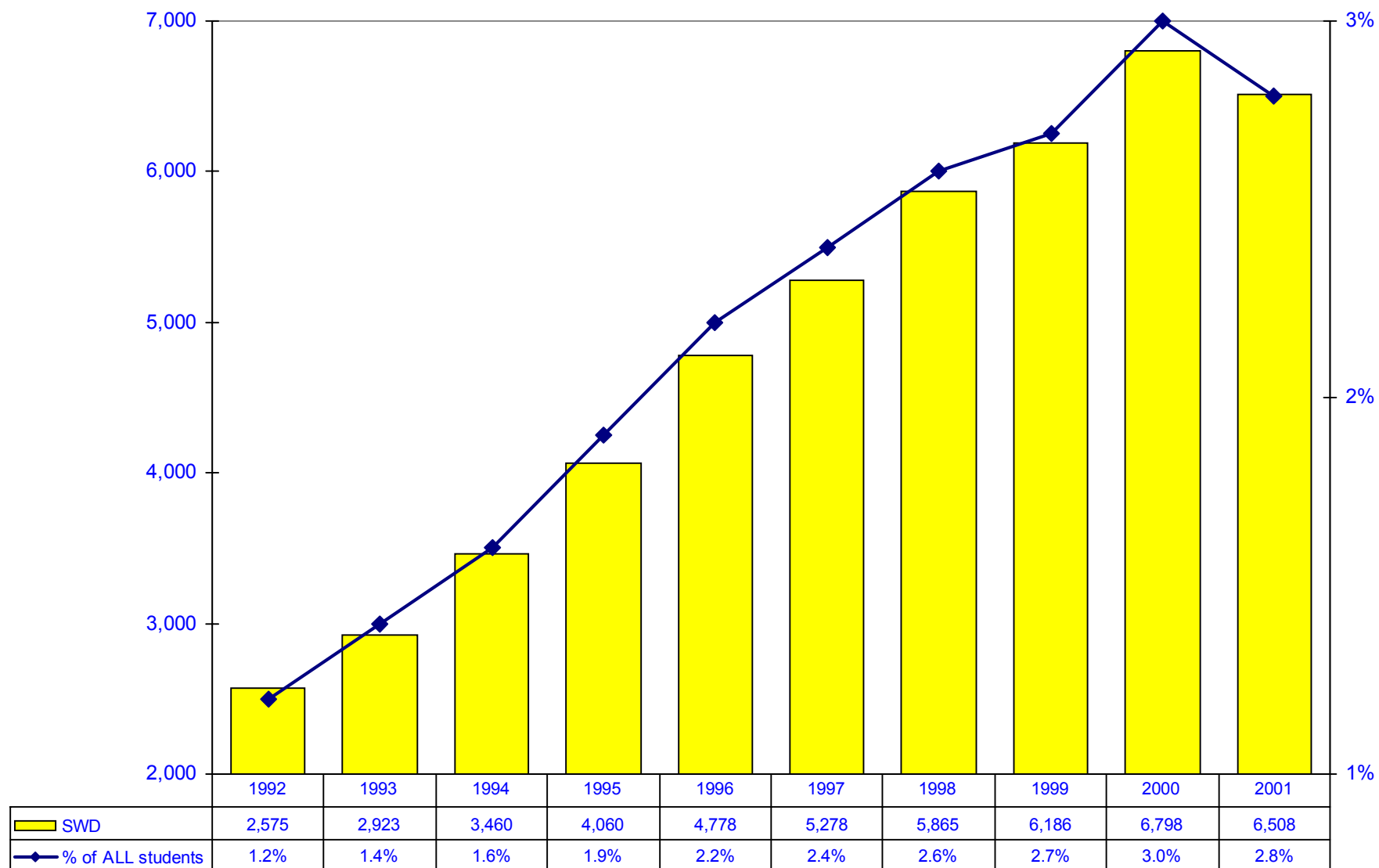
45. This would equate to per capita grants of \$11,240 for students with disabilities in Catholic systems, (\$10,240 in the ACT). This would require additional expenditure of approximately \$80m per annum (additional per capita funding of \$100m, less the \$20m currently allocated through SAISO). The magnitude of the figure reflects the magnitude of the burden that Catholic schools carry in order to provide students with disabilities with a quality education. NCEC suggests that this should be phased in over four years, with the requirement in 2003-2004 being **\$20m**.
46. This mechanism should be applied to all other non-government regular schools, so that they eventually receive, for each student with a disability, an amount equivalent to their SES percentage of the benchmark figure of \$20,000.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENATE CONSIDERATION

47. On the basis of the above considerations, the CEC recommends to the Senate Committee that:
1. *it is essential to improve access to those specialist assessments and intervention strategies for children which are necessary for effective engagement with schooling. To achieve this aim interagency strategies will be required. Special service provision arrangements will need to be developed for rural areas.*

2. *the Senate review and adopt the outcomes of the work being undertaken by the MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce, through the Disability Definition Working Group, as the basis for a nationally consistent set of student disability definitions.*
 3. *the mismatch between the legal (DDA) definition of disability and State-based funding eligibility be addressed. All schools in Australia need to be better resourced in order to identify and address the needs of all students who have a disability.*
 4. *all students upon entering Kindergarten should be screened for learning disabilities. To achieve this aim the Commonwealth early intervention program should be expanded to ensure equal access for ALL children to early identification, support and transition services/programs irrespective of school of enrolment.*
 5. *as the current Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program draws to a close in mid-2003 the Commonwealth Parliament and Government consider the establishment of a Nationally funded teacher in-service program to develop those teaching skills required to effectively educate students with disabilities, including behavioural disorders.*
 6. *the MCEETYA Disability Standards development process advice that the defence of ‘unjustifiable hardship’ be extended in its application to the whole of schooling, rather than exclusively applying to the enrolment process.*
 7. *since the Commonwealth has assumed responsibility for legal regulation in this area of disability, by virtue of Section 109 of the Constitution, it should also assume a more realistic level of funding responsibility.*
 8. *the Commonwealth should allocate funds for each SWD in Catholic systems equivalent to 56.2% (51.2% in the ACT) of the national average cost of educating a student with disabilities in regular government system schools.*
48. CEC thanks the Senate for the opportunity to set out its concerns about Disability education. Officers of the CEC can provide follow-up advice/clarification to the Senate if required.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ONLY



APPENDIX 2

A few examples of students presently enrolled in their local Catholic School

❑ North to Far North Coast of New South Wales

Brendan - born 1988: <i>Duchesne Muscular dystrophy</i>
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Steel rods inserted in spine due to scoliosis which then reduces his flexibility regarding reach. Brendan is permanently in a wheelchair. He is unable to feed himself or drink unaided due to the rigidity of his spine and muscle wasting in his arms. He needs complete toileting assistance using a hoist and bottle. He is unable to access his curriculum areas. Whilst he has a specialised computer system he is only able to independently access this in a very limited fashion. Brendan has a major problem with fatiguing and needs frequent breaks from work. He travels by disabled taxi to and from school. Complete support structures need to be in place for excursions, retreats, camps etc. He has major therapy needs due to cramping and continuing muscle deterioration. However this is rarely available.

Commonwealth Integration funding support for Brendan is around \$3,000, actual need at least \$28,000 for Full-time Aide plus therapy support needs.

Tamarah-born 1993: <i>Moderate-severe spastic quadriparesis, Moderate intellectual disability, Epilepsy, Vision impairment – cortical blind, Non-verbal communication only, Bowel & bladder incontinence.</i>
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Tamarah needs help with toileting and ambulation. She is fed every two hours through a gastroscopy. She is currently in a wheelchair most of the time, however she has AFO's fitted to both legs to allow her to begin to weight bear. She uses basic signs and an augmentive communication board. Occupational therapy & speech therapy support are critical but seldom available.

Commonwealth Integration funding support for Tamarah is around \$3,000, actual needs include a full time Aide (\$28,000) plus therapy support costs.

Gregory-born 1993: <i>Mitochondria disease, Adrenal insufficiency, Diabetes insipidus, Epilepsy, Hypoglycaemia, Mild intellectual disability, Mild hearing loss, Impaired vision, Communication difficulties, Mobility problems</i>
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Gregory has to be in an air-conditioned class with a constant temperature as his body can't control its temperature. He cannot have any food or drink by mouth so has a constant food supplement with drugs through a button feed. His blood sugar levels are measured several times per day and all urine output must be measured and tested and his drugs altered accordingly. He is in a wheelchair as his legs have wasted due to Mitochondria disease. He fatigues easily and needs 10 minute breaks each hour, out of class. Support is considered too stressful for one Aide so two Aides are employed part-time so he has constant support. Even with this his mother has to assist on occasions. He needs Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, speech therapy & nursing support to allow him to function in a school setting.

Commonwealth Integration support for Gregory is around \$ 3,000, the actual need is \$28,000 for Full time Aide plus therapy & health support.

Sienna-born 1993: *Spastic quadriparesis, Epilepsy, non-verbal communication only, Moderate/severe intellectual disability.*

Sienna requires assistance to move & communicate at all times in the classroom. She requires constant Occupational therapy & Speech therapy support but this is at best spasmodic.

Commonwealth Integration funding support for Sienna is around \$3,000, the actual need is \$28,000 for Fulltime Aide support plus therapy costs.

❑ Riverina Primary School No One Kindergarten has 3 Students with high levels of need.

Nicholas

Nicholas is repeating Kindergarten and has a level of **Autism** that is profoundly effecting his development. He is still without verbal communication, needs constant supervision for his safety and assistance with eating and is as yet still not toilet trained. While an untrained observer would not see the gains Nicholas has made they are, to those who work with him, very observable. He can now sit with his peers for short periods of time and is included in class lessons and activities throughout the day. He will give eye contact and responds to about 5 signed words. Nicholas will now also touch known adults and indicate by looking that he needs something done such as a door being opened. The biggest gain for Nicholas is that he is happy at school and according to his mum and dad always keen to come to school He recently had a Birthday party that 5 of his classmates attended and all, especially Nicholas, enjoyed.

Madeline

She is recovering from an invasive **malignant brain tumour**. Madeline has been left with severe problems with balance, mild to severe sloping deafness, vision problems and an intellectual disability she also has problems toileting. In spite of these disabilities Madeline displays a fierce desire to do everything that her classmates do and by term 2 will be attending class all day.

Logan

Logan who is also in this class has **Muscular Dystrophy** and needs periods of rest and massaging of his legs because of severe cramping. The school has 4 other students with Disabilities.

❑ Riverina Primary School Number Two

Harry

Harry is in Year 1 and is diagnosed **Landau Kleffner Syndrome**, no understandable verbal communication. Since beginning school he has been taught to sign but constantly forgets and his teachers and Harry have to start again. His teacher assistant, teachers, classmates and school support people such as the canteen operator and handyman have all learnt signing to varying levels to assist Harry. Harry has associated behaviour difficulties and it is a reflection of how

well the school meets Harry's needs that he is settled and coping well with the demands of the school day.

Jessica

Jessica is in Kindergarten and is settling in well as the result of an excellent Transition Program that was supported by the Early Intervention Centre and Tolland Public School Intervention Preschool. Jessica has **Downs Syndrome**. Her preschool assessment placed her in the moderate range of intellectual disability and at present Jessica has no speech, and is not toilet trained. The range of disabilities of other children, presently integrated at the school are auditory, vision, autism and language.

Mid / West New South Wales:

Paddy-Year One: <i>Diagnosed with Autism</i>

High support needs in areas of behaviour, self help, language and curriculum. Paddy requires a full time assistant in order to participate in classroom activities. The staff have learnt Paddy's communication system in order to support him in school activities and to keep him safe, on the playground. Isolation means limited access to specialist consultants, therapists, professional development and technology support.

Hunter Region:

Year 5 student.

Literacy and numeracy achievement is above age and grade level. However, the student is confined to a wheelchair. Funding is needed to provide ramps and toilet modifications and an aide to assist with toileting and feeding. To measure how the Commonwealth funding has improved literacy and numeracy outcomes is futile as the funds are required to ensure that the student has access in the first instance.

Year 1 student.

A student with a moderate intellectual disability and no verbal communication used at this stage. Funds are used to teach the student to use a signing system so that he is able to communicate with his peers. Funds are also used to assist the student with learning routines and developing appropriate social skills. Learning to read is not as yet a goal and until the student is able to communicate will not become a goal.