

Secretary
Senate Employment
Workplace Relation and
Education References Committee
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Parliament House
Canberra 2600

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Friday, May 31, 2002

We the under mentioned wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities.

Positive findings

In general, we have been impressed by the staff student ratio at Furlong Park School & Pre School for Deaf Children. By comparison, our children would be greatly disadvantaged if they attended regular State or private schools, even if those schools had deaf facilities. Teachers at Furlong Park are able to provide the necessary quality time to meet each child's requirements.

We are also impressed by the various forms of communication available to our children at Furlong Park. Auslan, signed supported speech, visual aids and speech are used independently or collectively in the classroom, depending on the child's preference and need.

We also wish to acknowledge that the same quality support given to our children is extended to family. Signing classes, professional advice and other support has been made available to families of children attending the school.

We feel that the current educational arrangement, and in particular the service provided by Furlong Park School & Pre School for Deaf Children goes a long way to providing our children with a fulfilling and very appropriate education program, directed at their needs, but also allowing them to work/achieve at current CSF levels.

Our children have many obstacles to overcome, simply as a result of their deafness/disabilities, to achieve what hearing children are able to achieve with minimal effort. It is very important that funding continues to provide this otherwise this becomes an additional obstacle that prevents deaf children achieving their potential.

Recommendations

It is our opinion that the Education Needs Questionnaire (ENQ) should be reviewed. Many areas of the ENQ do not accurately represent the needs of our children. An example would be the section dealing with Receptive Communication. "Stop" and "come" are basic instructions taught to deaf children, and many children would learn these quickly, however, if the child is profoundly deaf and is not facing the instructor, that child would not be able to respond to spoken commands, regardless of age or communication skills. This disability is not taken into consideration in the ENQ.

Auslan to many children who have a profound hearing loss, is like English to children who can hear. Children who use English as a second language are eligible for ESL

funding, but deaf children who rely on Auslan and come from either a non-Auslan environment, i.e. hearing families or deaf Auslan-using families are not eligible for ESL funding.

It has been the experience of many families with newly diagnosed deaf children, that little or no direction is offered on where to begin and how to have their child educated. In most cases, it is by word of mouth that parents learn of schools like Furlong Park. We would recommend that related services and clinics be advised on providing guidelines to families of the deaf.

Request for extension of time

We believe there has been insufficient time to formulate a comprehensive submission, and request an extension of time to allow expansion of the above and the inclusion of other comments.

We also believe that the broader community would wish to comment, but has had insufficient time to learn of this Inquiry.

Sincerely,

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