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2 August 2002

The Secretary,  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee  
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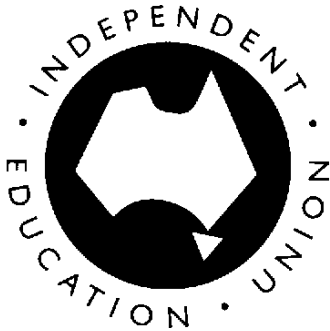
Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached the Independent Education Union's submission to the Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Rolley  
Federal Secretary



INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF  
AUSTRALIA

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

**Inquiry into the Education of Students  
with Disabilities**

**June 2002**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. For the last twenty years or so, the community has debated issues related to the services and funding for disadvantaged groups and policies of inclusion, affirmative action and the use of funds to meet the needs of marginalised groups have been the subject of policy research and legislation. The IEU has a strong commitment to equity and access strategies for all students, including students with disabilities, and supports policies and programs which provide systemic and systematic practical strategies for improving student participation, retention rates and improved learning outcomes for all students.
2. A raft of anti-discrimination legislation, both federal and state, requires that children and students with disabilities will not be discriminated against in terms of their access to educational services and their rights to expect educational outcomes in the same range as those achieved by able-bodied students.

However, many of the submissions received from members reflect their real concern at not being able to meet these obligations. The consistent and strong feedback from members is that the resources and funding arrangements for students with disabilities in non government schools are not adequate and that schools are therefore vulnerable to being in breach of the Act.

3. Over the six year period from 1996 to 2001, these figures show a 43.22% increase in the number of students with disabilities attending primary and secondary Catholic schools and a 140.4% increase of such students in independent primary and secondary schools. This represents a very substantial percentage increase over a short period of time and has not been matched by a concomitant increase in resources support.
4. The AGSRC is not a fine enough measure to take account of the number of students in a school with disabilities nor to take account of the particular educational needs of these students and their costs and this needs to be addressed urgently in relation to funding students with disabilities in non government schools.
5. It is clear from the advice of non government employing authorities and members, that in comparison to the funding of government schools, there is a considerable shortfall in the funding of non government schools with students with disabilities from Federal and State/Territory government sources in recurrent and capital funding and in the provision of government services such as assessment, transport and therapy services. This causes substantial hardship for the families of these students and for the teachers and support staff charged with the responsibility of providing quality education to meet their learning needs.
6. Disability is defined differently across all states and territories for the purposes of determining access to Commonwealth funding. The consequence of this is that in some states, students with learning disabilities do not fall within the eligibility criteria for funding.
7. Integration programs place high demands on education staff and there can be a tension in balancing the needs of the integration student with the needs of the whole class if appropriate levels of support are not in place. To ensure that

schools have the capacity to meet the educational needs of all students, it is necessary for agreed resourcing standards to be in place on issues such as class sizes, around class sizes, specialist teaching staff, appropriate and relevant professional development etc.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Broad consensus needs to exist amongst the funding partners and other stakeholders that there is a fair and equitable assessment of need and allocation of funds from all sources consistent with the principles of need, equity, and transparency. It is particularly important that this occurs in relation to the funding of the educational needs of students with disabilities and the IEU recommends that this receives specific and detailed attention from the current MCEETYA Schools Resourcing Taskforce.**
- 2. The IEU recommends that the full costs of meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities as defined and assessed are funded by federal and state governments whether they attend a government or non government school less the school fee contribution made by parents who decide to send their child to a non government school.**
- 3. An important issue is the development of a nationally consistent set of definitions as to what constitutes disability for the purposes of funding. The Union recommends that this be a matter for consideration by the MCEETYA Taskforce on Schools Funding.**
- 4. The Union recommends to this Inquiry, the outcomes and recommendations from the action research Commonwealth funded Project of National Significance "Effective Funding For Children and Students With Disabilities - Towards a New Practice" as a resource to rethink the policies in relation to the funding and education of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, regardless of their educational setting.**
- 5. The IEU urges the committee to recommend the development of a framework of teaching and learning resource standards for high quality teaching and learning conditions for students with disabilities in terms of:**
  - appropriate levels of specialist teaching and support staff**
  - class sizes which allow optimum teaching and learning for integrated classes**
  - time release for curriculum and program modification and planning, and liaising with parents and external agencies and**
  - access to appropriate and relevant professional development for teachers and support staff**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities. The IEU is the federally registered union representing over 52,000 teachers and education support staff in the non-government sector.
- 1.2 The non-government education sector is a diverse one. There are approximately 2,650 (27.7%) non-government primary and secondary schools across the country, with the sector also comprising early childhood centres, pre schools, long day care centres, English Language Colleges and private training providers. Approximately 31.2% of students attend non government schools.
- 1.3 For the last twenty years or so, the community has debated issues related to the services and funding for disadvantaged groups and policies of inclusion, affirmative action and the use of funds to meet the needs of marginalised groups have been the subject of policy research and legislation. The IEU has a strong commitment to equity and access strategies for all students, including students with disabilities, and supports policies and programs which provide systemic and systematic practical strategies for improving student participation, retention rates and improved learning outcomes for all students.
- 1.4 In preparing this submission, the union has consulted across its branch structures and in particular with its national and state Education Committees and with members working with students with special needs. The response from members to this issue has been overwhelming and reflects the level of pressure at the school and classroom level being experienced by principals, teachers and support staff in relation to resource allocation, access to support services and increasing workloads. Comments made by members are included throughout this submission and are shown in italics.
- 1.5 In responding to this Inquiry the Union has concentrated on how funding and administrative policies related to the education of students with disabilities impact on the capacity for systems, schools and particularly teachers and support staff to deliver quality teaching which meets the learning needs of such students and achieves learning outcomes. This is important not just for primary and secondary schools but also for the early childhood sector, where resourcing effective early intervention programs can make a significant difference on the later educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

## 2. RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LEGISLATION

**States Parties recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. (Convention on the Rights of the Child article 23.1)**

**States should recognise the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system.**

**(United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 1993, Rule 6)**

- 2.1 A raft of legislation, both federal and state, such as the Disability Services Act (Commonwealth 1986), the Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth 1992) and Equal Opportunity Act (for example, South Australia 1984 and 1991), requires that children and students with disabilities will not be discriminated against in terms of their access to educational services and their rights to expect educational outcomes in the same range as those achieved by able-bodied students. This legislation is in accord with the United Nations Conventions and Rules and is strongly supported by the union. The union is committed to supporting and advocating the rights of students with disabilities and to their having the same rights of access to high quality education as all other students in the country.

However, many of the submissions received from members reflect their real concern at not being able to meet the obligations as set out in various pieces of human rights legislation.

*"The Disability Discrimination Act and Equal Opportunity legislation places great responsibility on teachers who have not been appropriately trained to teach students with disabilities and who are not adequately resourced and supported with regards to time to plan, discuss and design appropriate programs, record data and organise/attend Support Group meetings."*

## 3. PREVIOUS SUBMISSIONS

- 3.1 In 1997, the IEU made a submission to a federal government department working party on the desirability and feasibility of developing education standards for the Disability Discrimination Act in 1997 and **this submission is attached (Attachment 1) for the Committee's information.** The IEU supported the development of education standards for the DDA on the basis that such standards can clarify and make transparent the rights and obligations of parties under the DDA and can assist compliance and enforceability. However, the capacity to meet such standards is dependent on the provision of appropriate resource and support systems in order to ensure student access to facilities and their participation in the curriculum which is relevant to their specific

educational needs. The consistent and strong feedback from members is that the resources and funding arrangements for students with disabilities in non government schools are not adequate and that schools are therefore vulnerable to being in breach of the Act.

- 3.2 In its submission to the HREOC National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education, the union expressed concern about the lack of adequate social and specialist services for children with disabilities in remote and rural areas.

For example, members advised that in circumstances where specialist assistance is sought by either the school or the family, it usually entails travelling long distances in rural areas. The level of commitment needed to access such assistance is high, and is a huge obstacle to overcome.

***"The lack of funding in rural schools is exacerbated due to the lack of professional staff available to refer students to - often students will be required to travel long distances to obtain the required assistance..."***

That submission went on to note that sometimes a disabled student might be the only student experiencing a particular disorder. This engenders a sense of isolation and means that if their family wants to try and access other families experiencing similar problems, they may also have to travel long distances to find the right resources and support. All too often, the teacher becomes the professional turned to for help, but the teacher needs support and links to both welfare roles within the school and links outside the school and these too often are not to be found.

The reality could be that ***"...In extreme circumstances, an inability to completely cover the needs of aided students may raise the issue of legal liability, be it from the family of the aided student or that of regular students."***

The Union recommends to the Committee, the report and recommendations from HREOC's report, in particular chapter 5, *Students With Disabilities*.

- 3.3 The above comments from members are consistent with those from members in relation to this Inquiry:

***"Many of the parents of special needs students indicate that they have selected our school because of our strong pastoral care programs and their perception that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment. Many of them, however, are appalled when they discover how little support independent schools receive from government special needs funding. Their comments generally focus on the inequity between the funding levels in the different educational sectors, the injustice of having to provide aide support on top of high school fees and taxes, and their right to choose a safe environment for their children. Similarly, having worked in both government and non government schools, I feel the lower levels of funding provided to our school students is bordering on discrimination."***

and further

*"Sometimes a family has to choose to send their child with a disability to a government school, despite the fact that their sibling/s attend a non government school, because they will receive more funded assistance. The difficulty of such a decision is that they lose the important emotional support of their siblings at the school."*

#### 4. RELEVANT STATISTICS

4.1 Within the non government sector, there continues to exist Special Schools which cater for students with special education needs. The number in 1996 was 54 special schools and this has remained relatively stable, with 56 schools noted in the 2000 ABS Schools publication. Approximately 865 teaching and support staff currently work within these schools and the table below shows the number of teaching and non teaching staff in non government special schools across this period.

**Number of Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff in Special Schools by State and Affiliation 1996 and 2001**

State	1996				2001			
	Catholic		Other		Catholic		Other	
	Teaching	Non-teaching	Teaching	Non-teaching	Teaching	Non-Teaching	Teaching	Non-teaching
ACT/NSW	50.8	44.0	152.8	193.4	70.1	46.6	174.8	217.6
QLD	0.0	0.0	22.0	46.3	0.0	0.0	24.4	54.1
SA	15.8	14.3	13.8	10.9	16.3	16.8	6.3	12.4
TAS	0.0	0.0	8.0	19.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	11.8
VIC	53.0	32.0	54.0	24.2	46.3	38.9	61.8	37.1
WA	6.0	0.8	9.8	8.7	4.6	2.6	5.7	15.3
AUS	125.6	91.1	260.4	302.5	137.3	104.9	274.6	348.5

DEST May 2002

4.2 Students with disabilities also attend mainstream non government schools and the union supports the successful integration of these students into the educational programs and social life of the school. Such integration relies on there being appropriate levels of funding. The public policy of integration of special needs students into mainstream schooling together with the enactment of Disability Discrimination Legislation, which places a legal requirement on schools to provide access and equity of educational provision to students with disabilities, has impacted upon the enrolment of students with disabilities in schools and this is evident in the enrolment statistics over time in the Catholic and Independent sectors.



Enrolments (FTE) of Students With Disabilities by State, Affiliation and Education Level 1996 to 2001												
State	1996				1997				1998			
	Catholic		Other		Catholic		Other		Catholic		Other	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
ACT	80.6	89.2	16.0	16.0	78.7	85.2	22.1	32.0	90.1	87.2	19.0	40.0
NSW	2,882.6	1,668.5	282.6	220.7	3,106.2	1,926.4	358.6	248.2	3,489.3	2,372.2	862.4	605.3
NT	121.0	23.0	47.0	44.0	135.5	26.0	42.0	59.0	83.0	20.0	43.0	70.0
QLD	1,010.1	562.4	293.9	170.4	1,120.8	614.7	342.5	224.0	1,153.5	705.7	358.1	173.3
SA	343.5	253.6	280.8	137.7	436.4	280.2	333.0	195.0	469.6	401.4	408.2	308.3
TAS	72.6	38.2	34.0	29.0	86.1	50.5	55.7	43.0	84.0	47.0	65.6	55.0
VIC	1,330.5	562.4	341.5	294.8	1,465.5	636.5	375.3	334.6	1,715.6	863.6	548.4	563.3
WA	597.5	250.0	146.9	108.0	535.2	234.6	153.6	99.0	573.4	230.0	181.9	96.0
AUS	6,438.4	3,447.3	1,442.7	1,020.6	6,964.4	3,854.1	1,682.8	1,234.8	7,658.5	4,727.1	2,486.6	1,911.2
State	1999				2000				2001			
	Catholic		Other		Catholic		Other		Catholic		Other	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
ACT	98.1	111.2	18.5	50.4	89.3	111.2	15.8	55.3	75.0	114.2	21.8	50.0
NSW	3,613.4	2,569.8	928.2	628.9	4,018.5	2,779.4	1,101.8	697.5	3,827.4	2,680.1	1,247.2	766.3
NT	70.0	18.0	45.0	66.0	51.0	22.6	52.8	86.0	59.0	28.0	45.0	46.6
QLD	1,063.3	715.1	358.2	198.8	989.2	708.0	426.4	268.0	975.9	685.3	418.2	276.6
SA	635.2	450.8	488.3	349.1	655.6	415.6	680.4	419.5	760.2	446.0	708.8	431.8
TAS	98.4	52.6	63.8	41.5	97.0	58.0	64.0	42.6	111.0	74.0	71.2	47.0
VIC	1,892.5	987.8	593.3	654.4	1,925.6	1,065.4	683.9	697.3	2,151.8	1,162.2	684.7	780.1
WA	621.9	256.0	176.9	97.0	693.8	313.0	184.2	98.0	687.2	321.0	218.8	110.1
AUS	8,092.8	5,161.3	2,672.2	2,086.1	8,520.0	5,473.2	3,209.3	2,364.2	8,647.5	5,510.8	3,415.7	2,508.5

Source: DEST May 2002

4.3 Over the six year period from 1996 to 2001, these figures show a 43.22% increase in the number of students with disabilities attending primary and secondary Catholic schools and a 140.4% increase of such students in independent primary and secondary schools. This represents a very substantial percentage increase over a short period of time and has not been matched by a concomitant increase in resources support.

## 5. FUNDING PRINCIPLES

5.1 The Union has made a number of submissions to government Inquiries regarding the funding of education and in particular, non government schools, and has outlined the principles which the union believes should underpin schools funding policy. In general, these include:

- Schools with similar socio-economic needs and requirements should be resourced to comparable standards, irrespective of whether they are part of the government or non government sectors.
- That a fair and proper approach to needs based schools funding requires an assessment of what should be included in a comprehensive “basket of resources” to provide quality education to all students, to a community standard or benchmark.
- Mechanisms should be in place which provide for an ongoing review of what should be in such a basket of resources, in light of changes to education policy and priorities and the challenges confronting schools, and that the elements in the basket should be assigned a proper monetary basis. Resourcing should take account of the needs

of schools in regional and remote areas and areas of educational and socioeconomic disadvantage so that they may meet such a standard.

- Thus for the non government sector, the combination of the three sources of funding (Commonwealth, State and private) should be adequate to provide all of the essential elements in the “basket” which constitute the basic entitlements for students to quality education. For non government schools whose basket of resources is at a higher level than comparable government schools, then a greater obligation falls upon private inputs for that school.
- As a consequence, comparable schools in the government and non government sectors should not in their totality be differently resourced, although the origins and proportional size of the elements of funding may be different (eg level of private income, size of Commonwealth and State grants).
- The funding of schooling in both the government and non government sectors involves quite complex issues, including the difference between the average and marginal per capita costs for the operation of the large education systems. In the non government sector, the efficiencies able to be gained from the economies of scale of running large systems in highly populated urban centres do not exist for small systems, single schools or schools in rural and remote communities. The average per capita costs for educating a student in a government urban school do not reflect the real costs of educating a student in a single non systemic school or an urban rural or regional school in either the government or non government sector.
- non government school funding is linked to the costs of government schooling as measured by the AGSRC (Average Government Schools Recurrent Costs). The difficulties with this measure is the difference between the average and marginal per capita costs; that it does not include all the costs of educating a government school student, for example superannuation costs; and the fact that the AGSRC represents the resources currently provided to schools rather than the real costs or a measure of what should be provided. In particular, it is not a fine enough measure to take account of the number of students in a school with disabilities nor to take account of the particular educational needs of these students.
- that in the assessment of school needs and the allocation of Commonwealth funds, the concept of “partnerships” between the Commonwealth, States/Territories and non government schooling authorities should apply. **Broad consensus needs to exist amongst the funding partners and other stakeholders that there is a fair and equitable assessment of need and allocation of funds from all sources consistent with the principles of need, equity, and transparency. It is particularly important that this occurs in relation to the funding of the educational needs of students with disabilities and the IEU recommends that this receives specific and detailed attention from the current MCEETYA Schools Resourcing Taskforce.**

## 6. ADEQUACY OF FUNDING LEVELS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- 6.1 It is clear from the advice of non government employing authorities and members, that in comparison to the funding of government schools, there is a considerable shortfall in the funding of non government schools with students with disabilities from Federal and State/Territory government sources in recurrent and capital funding and in the provision of government services such as assessment, transport and therapy services. This causes substantial hardship for the families of these students and for the teachers and support staff charged with the responsibility of providing quality education to meet their learning needs.

**The IEU recommends that the full costs of meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities as defined and assessed are funded by federal and state governments whether they attend a government or non government school, less the school fee contribution made by parents who decide to send their child to a non government school.**

- 6.2 A consequence of this shortfall is that schools must divert funds from other areas in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The principal of one school writes:

*"At present we have one full time Special Education teacher and two part time integration aides (total of 0.8 FTE) for 10 students classified with disabilities and some 10 other students who are just outside the classification boundaries and therefore need help outside the normal classroom situation. These are students in real need of 1:1 assistance but for whom the College receives no funding."*

- 6.3 In a submission to the Union, the Heads of Special Education at the campuses of an Independent school noted the following:

*"The current levels of Commonwealth and State funding are drastically inadequate to the needs of students, teachers and schools. It is inequitable between state and private schools and as such discriminatory to students who attend private schools. The system at present does not allow students equal or full access to educational programs...."*

*...In the most recent March 2002 rounds of funding, the amount of funding is not realistic to meet current rates of pay for either teacher/specialist intervention or integration aide support...*

*A year 3 student, diagnosed with a severe expressive and receptive language disorder received an allocation in state funding for speech therapy services. This was an allocation for 20 sessions of speech therapy at \$18 per session. However, current rates of pay for speech therapy cost approximately \$60 per hour. As such, this student will only be able to access 6 hours of speech therapy intervention for the whole year instead of the intended 20 hours."*

- 6.4 It is important to note that until 1995, students in Victorian non government schools could access the state government run services (psychology, speech therapy etc.) In 1995 the Kennett government did away with this and transferred the money to the Catholic and Independent funding authorities. While the Catholic system now employs their own specialist staff, independent schools make application for specialist service funds which clearly do not have the capacity to spread far.

Comments of this kind came from all the members/schools who provided advice to the union for this submission.

- 6.5 Advice from the non government schooling authorities is that the Commonwealth provides funding under the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes program to the Catholic and Independent authorities who then administers the funding to schools. There are government guidelines as to the level of funding for each student (up to \$3000 based on assessment of the level of disability). There is also an additional per capita grant of \$589 per student regardless of their classification.

For example: the AISV administers the funds to schools for approximately 1300 students in Victoria, with per capita funding at 3 levels: level 1 \$1000; level 2 \$2000; and level 3 \$3000. Only the most disabled students, under the definitions at categories 5 or 6, can access the \$3000.

The CECV administers the money on the same basis but the Commission adds additional money, presumably from general recurrent grants. In 2001 the top grant by the CECV was \$14,979 per student. In 2001, the top grant for a student with disabilities in government schools was \$29,000. There is a similar scenario in states and territories across Australia.

The funding provided by state and territory governments also varies according to the nature of their disability, the specific level of disability, the level of schooling and the state in which they are educated.

- 6.6 Apart from the adequacy in the levels of government funding, issues also arise in relation to the length of time that a funding application can take for approval and for the funds to flow to the school. For example:

***"We enrolled a prep student this year who is intellectually disabled and submitted a round 2 Integration application. It took until the 26 April to receive word of the funding levels. The student in particular had many needs that required extra assistance and we were unable to provide adequately due to the delay in notification of funding. Further to this, the funding level has provided us with only a further 2.5 hours per week meaning we will still be unable to cater for the needs of this particular child let alone the other two integration students within our school. Because of the delays in notifying us of the funding entitlements, we believe it is likely that this student will transfer to a government school."***

- 6.7 In relation to capital funding to provide suitable facilities to meet the needs of students with disabilities, it is clear that this becomes a matter of juggling urgent needs within the school.

*"For example last year our school had two students in wheel chairs enrol in the school. A disabled toilet had to be built. Due to the space requirements, the staff toilets had to be used to create the disabled toilet. Some funding was given for this but two new staff toilets then had to be built and no funding was available for these. The school was then left out of pocket."* and

*"It is difficult for schools to supply adequate funding for capital works. Our school has applied for state government funding to install two lifts in order to meet the needs of a severely physically disabled student. It is imperative that this student be able to remain at the college where a strong supportive base has already been established. Estimated cost for this project is \$250,000-\$300,000. Previous funding applications to the CEO have been unsuccessful. Other physically disabled students would be able to access specialist rooms with greater ease if the two lifts were installed."*

## 7. DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY

- 7.1 The issue of defining disability has critical implications at the classroom level. Disability is defined differently across all states and territories for the purposes of determining access to Commonwealth funding. The consequence of this is that in some states, students with learning disabilities do not fall within the eligibility criteria for funding. "Borderline" students with learning difficulties do not meet the criteria as defined - they are represented in the lowest 5-10% of each class but are just above the cut off rank for students with disabilities. The cut off/borderline is different for different states and territories, for example the WISC score in South Australia has a cut-off of 75; in Victoria, it is considerably lower at 70. Nevertheless schools must meet the same requirements of the DDA for these students as for students who meet the definitions and receive funding.

- 7.2 Teachers argue that the classification system is flawed in that it is label based rather than needs based. Some students meet the disability classification but require little financial assistance, while other students have significant emotional/social difficulties which impact detrimentally on their learning abilities but which attract no funding support. There should be a link between the teaching and learning needs of the student and the support and funding resources required to meet those needs.

*"Current classifications have little structure for a range of ability levels within a classification. For example, one student who is categorised as having an intellectual disability may be able to remain in mainstream classes with a slightly modified program. Another student similarly categorised may struggle with basic numeracy and literacy and need constant 1:1 assistance in these areas because he/she is working at an early years primary level. These two students at present are given the same funding which does not take into account*

*the fact that the second student needs more intense assistance for more than half the curriculum areas - Maths, English, Science, Food Technology and some SOSE and is withdrawn from French LOTE lessons. This discrepancy underlies a classification structure that does not adequately meet individual student needs..."* and further

*"I believe (and I have heard from numerous colleagues at conferences) that it is often the students with disabilities who present the least amount of problems in the classroom. The students with learning disabilities such as students with ADHD, usually present far more of a challenge - displaying feelings of inadequacy (that they are unable to cope with mainstream curriculum) and taking it out in a number of ways: anger, frustration, bullying etc. Yet, there is no funding for these students."*

Of course there are other students who are highly marginalised, such as those who are homeless or involved with substance abuse, who have serious learning disabilities but for whom there is no disability funding assistance. There are disproportionate numbers of indigenous students and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in these circumstances and this requires the urgent attention of focused government policy.

7.3 **Consequently an important issue is the development of a nationally consistent set of definitions of what constitutes disability for the purposes of funding. The Union recommends that this be a matter for consideration by the MCEETYA Taskforce on Schools Funding.**

7.3 There has been substantial government funded research work done in recent years regarding the integration of students with disabilities and the models and mechanisms for the funding of inclusive schooling. One project funded by a grant as a Project of National Significance: Children and Students Count in 1997 was *"Effective Funding For Children and Students with Disabilities - Towards a New Practice"*. The Union recommends the outcomes and recommendations from this action research to the Committee as a resource to rethink the policies in relation to the funding and education of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, regardless of their educational setting. **Extracts from this research are attached (Attachment 2).** The literature search shows many other important government funded projects which should inform the work of this Inquiry

## **8. TEACHING AND LEARNING - THE VOICE OF TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF**

8.1 Schools are legally required to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities and to ensure that every student receives highly professional assistance. Integration programs place high demands on education staff and there can be a tension in balancing the needs of the integration student with the needs of the whole class if appropriate levels of support are not in place. It can lead to a serious undermining of support within the school community if there is a perception that the interests of particular students either have precedence or are being

ignored. It is unacceptable that those who have the daily contact with the students and their parents or carers at the school must try to make sense of policies which do not permit the adequate provision of assistance to students with disabilities or must explain the fundamental human rights of all students to receive equal access to quality education.

- 8.2 Staff are strongly committed to ensuring that every student receives appropriate physical, social and intellectual support but the task is overwhelming without the ongoing support of appropriately qualified teachers and para professionals.

***"As a school we are committed to fostering equal access to the curriculum for all students. This is a labour intensive initiative, not only do we team teach in classes, we modify units of work, set alternative assessment tasks, act as notetakers and conduct intensive reading classes. This all takes an enormous amount of staffing time. Consequently the amount of funding allocated is never enough and each year one has to be more creative because the demands continue to grow."***

- 8.3 Based on comprehensive advice from members, the IEU has developed the following policy in relation to the education of students with disabilities:

- that each student with a serious intellectual and/or physical or emotional disability shall have access to an integration aide with appropriate expertise in the area of disability in every learning context.
- that time is provided for teachers and teacher aides to work together on curriculum planning and modification and to liaise with external agencies and parents when teaching students with intellectual physical or emotional difficulties
- that where there are students with serious developmental, physical or emotional disabilities, class sizes are decreased
- that the number of specialist staff employed be substantially increased to cope with the diverse needs of students. These numbers should be additional to normal staffing schedules
- that staff professional development is recognised and funded as an integral requirement to the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities. Professional development should be based on a combination of specific system initiatives, the needs of the school's development plan, an assessment of the needs of all students and the professional needs determined by the individual staff.

Clearly these policies have significant resourcing implications. Nevertheless, the IEU believes they are fundamental to protecting the rights of students with disabilities in relation to their access to quality education and the professional and industrial rights of teaching and support staff.

- 8.4 Set out below are a number of statements made by members about the impact on their work of the funding and resourcing policies currently in place:

- *the impact of current funding levels on teachers and students is hard to assess. Given the increasing numbers of special needs students in our classrooms it is evident that staff are having to deal with a much wider range of learning needs and this increases pressure on already very busy teachers. Whilst we try to ensure that other students are not disadvantaged by special needs students making additional demands on the teachers' time, this is a difficult balance to achieve, especially when resources are stretched.*
- *there are not enough resources to allow for the extra preparation required for dealing with students with disabilities. These students are physically taxing on the teacher - without appropriate assistance this can cause stress. The different programming for students may not be carried out due to the lack of human resources.*
- *when alternative programs/activities are developed for these students, staff are often limited by financial/budget constraints. There never seems to be the funds available to purchase resources for special education programs or the request takes so long to be processed.*
- *there should be more funding available to assist staff who wish to undertake further study - eg postgraduate studies in special education. Often the fees are too high for individual teachers to take up such courses*
- *there is a lack of money for appropriate PD for teachers to assist them to accommodate these students in mainstream classes so that they are not marginalised, particularly given the lack of specialised staff required to meet their particular needs.*
- *there is a need to reduce class sizes so that students with disabilities have a fair share of time/attention - the impact of large classes on staff involved is stressful - another funding and management issue*
- *many students present without the skills required for the abstract/conceptual demands of secondary school and therefore need teachers properly versed in mixed ability classroom teaching and the need to prepare separate curriculum content eg specialised worksheets, modified tasks and tests, modified homework - this takes time and resources.*
- *Staff in mainstream areas find that in relatively large classes they are trying to meet the needs of an integration student and also the needs of the remainder of the class at the same time, without support, because additional staff are not always available.*
- *teachers are not getting the support they need to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. They have to deal with the need to modify tasks and provide individual assistance while still dealing with the range of students in the class. This places a lot of extra stress on already hardworking teachers.*



- *the outsourcing of assessments regarding the level of a student's disability causes stress - there is a long wait, and often a poor level of feedback to schools and parents - there is a need for extra funding to enable services to function more efficiently*

**8.5 The IEU urges the committee to recommend a framework of teaching and learning resource standards in terms of specialist teaching and support staff, class sizes, time release for curriculum and program modification and planning, liaising with parents and external agencies, access to appropriate and relevant professional development for teachers and support staff.**

*Schools that contributed to this submission:*

Sacred Heart College, Tas  
 Our Lady of Lourdes, Tas  
 Avila College, Vic  
 Ballarat Grammar School, Vic  
 Beaconhills College, Vic  
 Catholic Ladies' College, Vic  
 Damascus College, Vic  
 Emmaus College, Vic  
 Good Samaritan Primary School, Vic  
 Lavalla Catholic College, Vic  
 Lowther Hall, Vic  
 Loyola College, Vic  
 Mary MacKillop Catholic Regional College, Vic  
 Melbourne Girls Grammar School, Vic  
 Mentone Girls Grammar School, Vic  
 Mercy College, Vic  
 Our Lady of the Rosary School, Vic  
 Overnewton Anglican Community College, Vic  
 Penola Catholic College, Vic  
 Sacred Heart College, Vic  
 Santa Maria College, Vic  
 St Anthony's Primary School, Vic  
 St Anthony's School, Vic  
 St Brigid's School, Vic  
 St Francis Xavier School, Vic  
 St James College, Vic  
 St John's Regional College, Vic  
 St Joseph's College - Ferntree Gully, Vic  
 St Joseph's College - Melbourne, Vic  
 St Joseph's College - Newtown, Vic  
 St Joseph's School - Korumburra, Vic  
 St Joseph's School - South Yarra, Vic  
 St Paul's College, Vic  
 Star of the Sea College, Vic  
 Trinity College, Vic  
 Xavier College, Vic