

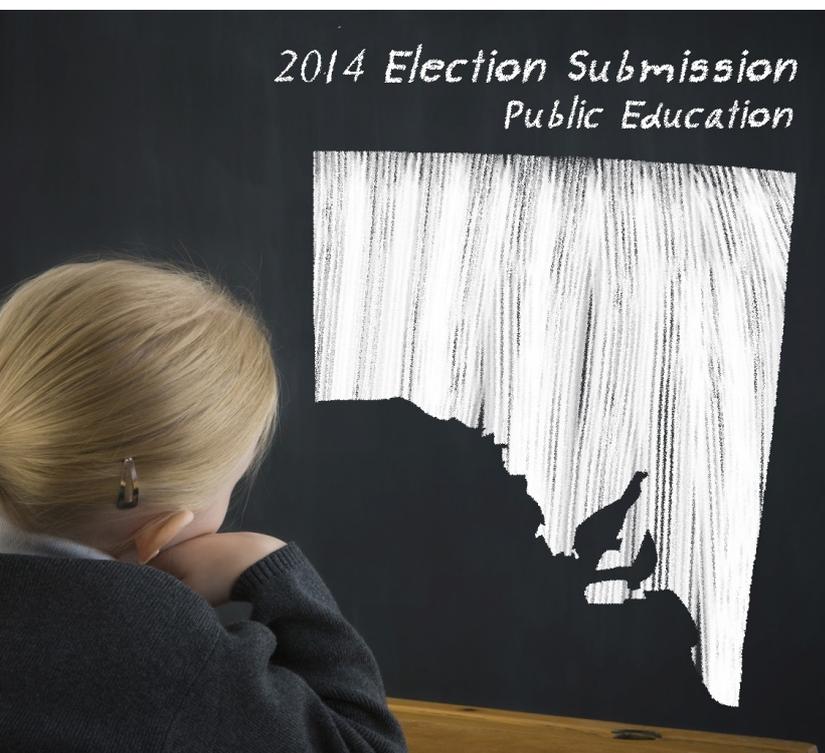


### Special Needs Facts

- Australia has 135,120 public school special needs students - 5.9%.<sup>1</sup>
- South Australia has 15,180 public school special needs students - 9.3%.<sup>1</sup>
- Only the Northern Territory has a greater proportion - 10.2%.<sup>1</sup>

### Funding per special needs student:

- National average - \$13,232.<sup>1</sup>
- ACT - \$25,765.<sup>2</sup>
- SA - \$4,808.<sup>2</sup>



There are 416 special schools - 332 of which are public.<sup>2</sup>

- 15% of people with a disability have a degree.
- 24% of people without a disability have achieved the same.<sup>2</sup>

The median income for a person:<sup>2</sup>

- with a disability is \$306 per week.
- without a disability is \$614 per week.

### Proposal 3 - Special Needs

- **Negotiated Education Plans**
- **Awareness**
- **Assessments**

#### The Negotiated Education Plans

Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) are compulsory for all students who have a disability.

According to the DECD Students With Disabilities Policy (2006), the Principal in collaboration with District Support Services is responsible for the development, implementation, review and monitoring of the NEP.

The policy also states that parents have the right to choose to participate in the planning of their child's NEP.

However, parents report that not every child who is entitled to a NEP has one, nor are all families aware of their entitlement to one.

There is a strong correlation between disability and socio-economic status - with this relationship likely to work both ways. As such, families with special needs children are more likely to be financially vulnerable.<sup>3</sup> Challenged in many areas, these families are more reliant on the school for accurate and comprehensive information on support services available.

If the school fails to initiate the NEP process after the child is assessed as having special needs (which is currently conducted by DECD), and the parents are unaware, the child may never have a NEP.

Without this plan to help address their specific learning needs, a special needs child's school experience becomes that much more difficult and unlikely to result in an effective education.

## Proposal - Special Needs



### Awareness

90% of students with disabilities attend mainstream schools.<sup>2</sup>

However, most teacher education degrees provide little training in educating children with special needs.<sup>4</sup> This can result in a lack of teacher-preparedness when dealing with students with even mild disabilities in their mainstream classes.

There are also no known requirements for other school staff - SSO's, administration, leadership and groundskeepers - to have any form of special needs training.

This lack of awareness results in too few schools having cultures that are inclusive to children with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

This causes a variety of problems when dealing with students with behavioural issues outside the classroom (before and after school, lunch and recess etc), and when teachers require assistance in the classroom.<sup>5</sup>

In some schools, even when procedures exist to assist students with special needs, they are not used because of a lack of awareness amongst staff.

General awareness training should be provided by specialist groups such as Autism SA, SPELD etc. and could be as simple as an information session one evening a year during a staff meeting. It should cover basics such as what kinds of behaviours might indicate a child has a special need, and ways to approach those behaviours.

Teaching courses at university should be reviewed to ensure they adequately cover special needs education.

### Assessments

Currently, special needs assessments are conducted by DECD officers when either a school or parent raises concern about a child's abilities.

This assessment determines what level of special need your child is classified as and therefore what additional support is available.

Children who are assessed in preschool are not necessarily re-assessed when they go to school.

There is no requirement for a student to ever be re-assessed, and according to reports from parents, it can be impossible to have children re-assessed, even if both the parent and the school feel the original assessment was wrong, or no longer accurate.

While DECD states that it is possible to have information from an independent expert considered in the assessment, parent reports tell us this is not likely - and even if such independent information is 'considered' there is no guarantee it will have any impact on the actual assessment.

### SAASSO Proposal

- That the State Government enforce the development, use and regular review of NEPs for all students with both learning difficulties and disabilities.
- That the State Government introduce generalised special needs awareness training for all school staff and specialised training for teachers of students with special needs.
- That the State Government use independent experts to conduct assessments of students' special needs.

## Special Needs - across Australia<sup>3</sup>

Definition: A person has a disability if they have a limitation, restriction or impairment which has lasted, or is likely to last for at least 6 months and restricts everyday core activities (self-care, mobility and communication).

A person with a severe or profound disability will sometimes or always need assistance with self-care, mobility and communication.

- An estimated 7% of Australian children had a disability in 2009.
- 3.9% of children have severe or profound core activity limitations.
- SA has 6.9% of Australia's children.

There are four levels of core activity limitation - Profound, Severe, Moderate & Mild.

Indigenous children are 30% more likely to require assistance with a core activity of self-care, mobility and communication.

There is no statistical difference between levels of disability between cities, regional and remote locations.

Boys are twice as likely as girls to have a disability.



### References

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3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 'A picture of Australia's children 2012'.
4. Djakovac, L 2009. 'Special Needs Students'. School Post Term 4 2009.
5. Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2010, Paper on 'Education & Autism Spectrum Disorders in Australia - The provision of appropriate educational services for school-age students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Australia'.