



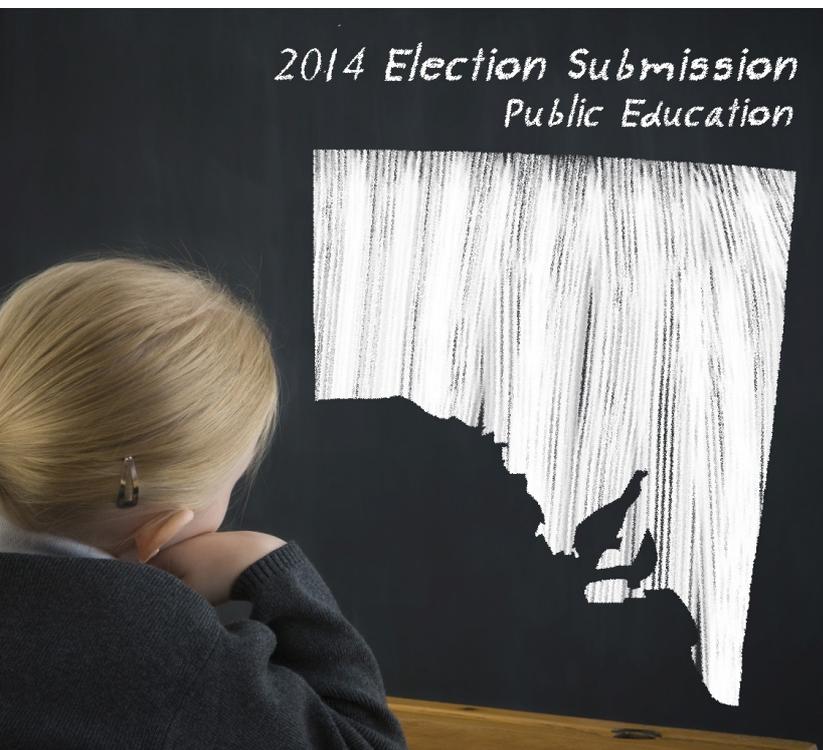
There are many talented and well-known people with dyslexia:<sup>1</sup>

- Richard Branson (entrepreneur)
- Kerry Packer (media magnate)
- Whoopi Goldberg (actor)
- Albert Einstein (physicist)
- Agatha Christie (author)
- Jamie Oliver (chef)

*"There should be a legislative recognition at both State and Commonwealth level of dyslexia as a disability as determined under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992)."*<sup>2</sup> Dyslexia Working Party.

*"We ask the House to recognise dyslexia as a disability and to provide funding to ensure that students with dyslexia receive high-quality intervention as soon as diagnosis has been confirmed."*<sup>3</sup> Education Minister, Christopher Pyne 5/6/13

In August 2013, then Education Minister, Bill Shorten announced that if re-elected, the Federal Labor Government would classify dyslexia as a disability.<sup>4</sup>



## Proposal 4 - Dyslexia

- Recognition
- Early Diagnosis
- Teacher training

Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties. The disorder - also called specific reading disability - is a life-long condition that people are born with.<sup>6</sup>

Dyslexia may affect up to 16% of the Australian population; experts fear many more students are not diagnosed until their very last years of schooling.<sup>6</sup>

Dyslexia literally means, 'trouble with words'.<sup>6</sup>

Dyslexia Australia defines dyslexia as a learning disability that causes problems with learning to read words, letters and other symbols.<sup>5</sup>

Most people who are dyslexic are of average to above average intelligence.<sup>5</sup>

Dyslexia affects males and females nearly equally, and people from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well.<sup>5</sup>

With proper diagnosis, appropriate instruction, hard work and support from family, teachers, friends, and others, individuals who are dyslexic can succeed in school and later as working adults.

People with dyslexia may display some of the following:<sup>6</sup>

- Difficulty learning to read, write and spell.
- Confused by letters, numbers, words, sequences or verbal explanations.
- Repetitions and reversals in letters, numbers and or words when writing.
- Read with little comprehension.
- Spell phonetically and inconsistently.
- Find it hard to recount a story in correct sequence.

## Proposal - Dyslexia



### Early Diagnosis

Dyslexia can affect people with differing levels of severity and can therefore, be difficult to spot.

Professionals who possess expertise in several disciplines are best qualified to make a diagnosis of dyslexia.<sup>5</sup>

The testing may be done by a single individual or by a team of specialists. A knowledge and background in psychology, reading, language and education is necessary.<sup>5</sup>

SPELD SA says a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment is required to diagnose dyslexia.<sup>1</sup>

- expensive assessment tools.
- approximately 6 hours per person.
- specific knowledge and expertise in this area.<sup>5</sup>

This is beyond the resources of most schools.<sup>5</sup>

If children who are dyslexic get effective phonological training in Kindergarten and 1st grade, they will have significantly fewer problems in learning to read at grade level than do children who are not identified or helped until 3rd grade.<sup>5</sup>

74% of the children who are poor readers in 3rd grade remain poor readers in the 9th grade.<sup>5</sup>

However, before a child can be referred to a specialist for a diagnosis, parents or the school must recognise problems with a child's learning and the potential for dyslexia.

### Teacher Training

The Australian Dyslexic Association says that "many teachers would benefit from specialised language training".<sup>6</sup>

The association has questioned the amount of training teachers receive.<sup>6</sup>

The 2004 National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy Australia, found that half of Australia's 34 Bachelor of Education teacher training courses devoted less than 5% of their four-year curriculum to teaching reading.<sup>6</sup>

This leaves us to wonder how much of this 5% (if any) is spent teaching reading to children with special needs.

Adolescent and organisational psychologist Dr Darryl Cross says teachers need more training to pick up the signs and more funding is required for support staff. "I've lost count of the number of children I've seen in Year 10, 11 and 12 that I've diagnosed with dyslexia."<sup>7</sup>

Stakeholders and parents report that there persists today, an attitude amongst some teachers that dyslexia is not a real condition.

### SAASSO Proposal

- That the State Government recognise dyslexia as a disability, and provide per student funding accordingly.
- That the State Government provide for independent assessments to achieve early diagnosis of dyslexia.
- That the State Government fund independent training for all teachers to recognise signs of dyslexia and facilitate early detection.

## Dyslexia Behind Bars<sup>8</sup>

A two-year study at Chelmsford Prison, England revealed a staggering 53% of the 2029 prisoners were dyslexic - compared to 10% of the national population. These results have since been corroborated by a Dutch study.

The evidence gathered shows that those learners who had experienced difficulties in the classroom when they were children, moved through low self-esteem, a sense of failure and frustration, leading to behaviour problems, school exclusion, inability to find jobs, apply for benefits or pass theory driving tests, spiralling into petty offences, a life of crime, prison and serial reoffending.

The 'Dyslexia Behind Bars' program, was conducted at the prison. Psychologist Jackie Hewitt-Main used a multi-sensory programme to teach 20 inmates with exceptionally low levels of literacy (equal that that of an average 4 year old), to read.

A small follow-up study found that only 5.9% of prisoners who had been taught to read and write had re-offended after 4 years.

This is compared to a national recidivism rate of 55% in two years or 68% within 5 years.

- 4 are tradespeople.
- 2 work for charities.
- 2 are voluntary workers.
- 2 have started their own businesses.
- 5 are unemployed.
- 1 is at university studying engineering.
- 1 is back in prison.

Overall, prison officers noted a transformation in the prison; with a much calmer environment and a reduction in violence resulting, requiring less intervention from prison staff.



### References

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