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South Australian Association Of State School Organisations Inc.

Friday September 19, 2014

The Hon Jennifer Rankine
Minister for Education and Child Development
31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Minister,

Re: NAPLAN - Special Needs 'Adjustments'

You will hopefully be familiar with a letter we wrote to you in August regarding special needs students not receiving the assistance to sit NAPLAN, they are guaranteed under the National Protocols.

We recently received an email from one of your aides stating that an investigation was being conducted. The email also asks us to supply the names of schools from which we had received complaints.

Minister, as we have previously, personally discussed - the need for SAASSO to maintain confidentiality in its communications with its members is absolute. Most of the thousands of contacts we receive are done so under a request and expectation of confidentiality.

You are of course aware of the reports of bullying in the department - there have been repeated media reports on this. This coupled with a documented 'culture of cover-up' makes for an intimidating environment.

We can assure you that this culture does not stop at the school gate. Parents fear the repercussions of being labelled a 'trouble-maker' - none more than the parents of special needs children.

In terms of an investigation of this issue; I reiterate that from the reports we have received, this problem is widespread, across metropolitan and regional schools. I also reiterate that the only concern of parents is to ensure that this disappointing situation is corrected for 2015.

One final point: Our consideration of your aide's email has, prompted a question that we did not think to ask before. Obviously the cost of providing assistance to special needs children across the state would be substantial.

We had assumed schools were specifically funded for these 'adjustments' - if they were actually expected to cover these additional costs out of their existing school budgets, it would prove very difficult for schools to manage; particularly those with higher numbers of special needs students, or those who require more expensive types of support.

South Australia already has a comparatively low level of per student special needs funding.

Can you please confirm - are South Australia's public schools specifically and additionally funded to pay for NAPLAN adjustments?

To reply, I invite you to write to me at PO Box 6178, Halifax Street, Adelaide SA 5000.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Amato', written in a cursive style.

Gino Amato
President