Disability funding call backed



The Turnbull Government must act immediately on the recommendations of a Senate Inquiry and keep its promise to properly fund disability in schools in 2016, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that the Senate Inquiry into disability in schools, which reported today, had found that the best way to ensure students with disability get the support they need at school is by delivering the full six years of needs-based Gonski funding.

“It has also called on Malcolm Turnbull to keep his promise to lift disability funding in 2016 to meet the real needs of students,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“He needs to take the lead and work with State and Territory Governments to make this happen.

“Thousands of children with disability will be attending mainstream school in 2016 without any funded support due to the Turnbull Government’s failure to keep its promise to lift disability funding to schools.

“This situation cannot continue. Every year that we delay is another cohort of students who do not get an education that equips them for work and life.

“The Federal Government’s own Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Disability (NCCD) for 2015 data found that 12.5 per cent of students need “supplementary, substantial or extensive support” at school – compared with only 5.3 per cent of students currently getting funded support.

“This data shows conclusively that more than half of the students with disability who need funded support at school are not getting it.

“These students are being denied the chance to fully benefit from their education due to a lack of resources.

“They are not receiving the in-class support, equipment or individual learning plans that could make a huge difference to their schooling.

“The Senate Inquiry has recognised the huge unmet need in the system and that the biggest barrier to education for students with disability is the lack of resources in schools.

The Federal Government promised to increase resources to students with disability at the 2013 election, to ensure that all

students who required support, received it.

The promise was repeated by the Education Minister Christopher Pyne in June last year when he said that from 2016:

“Every child in Australia with disability will be able to receive the correct loading, as they should, to match their disability’

“However there has been no increase in funding to schools, and no timeline for when one may happen.

The Senate Inquiry has also endorsed the AEU’s call for all teaching degrees to include compulsory training for teachers on how to teach students with disability.

“It is clear from our surveys that a majority of teachers believe they were not given enough training in teaching students with disability.

“This needs to be addressed both through training at university and through ongoing professional development and support throughout teachers’ careers.

“The Inquiry also recommended the full release of the NCCD data – so that we can see the full extent of the need in our schools.

“We need a cultural change in our education system so that we can fully realise the potential of students with disability, but the most important step is to ensure that our schools have the resources they need,” Ms Haythorpe said.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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