Students with disability need better-resourced schools and training for teachers

Students with disability need better-resourced schools and compulsory disability training for teachers.

The AEU's submission to a Senate Inquiry on disability education has called for the Abbott Government to extend support funding to all students with a disability from 2016, and for disability education to be a compulsory part of teaching degrees.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that chronic underfunding of disability was a growing issue for schools.

"Students with disability can participate in schools and get great results with in-class support, equipment and individual learning plans, but all these things require funding," Ms Haythorpe said.

"We are seeing more students with disability or learning difficulties in classrooms, but this is not being recognised by inadequate funding levels which do not address the full scale of the problem.

"The Australian Bureau of Statistics found in its 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, that 133,000 students with disability were receiving no support or special arrangements at school, compared to 190,000 getting funding.

"It is no wonder that 84 per cent of principals say they shift funds from other parts of their budget to educate students with disability.

"We are also concerned that teachers are not getting the training and professional development they need to properly teach students with disability.

"The AEU's State of Our Schools survey found that 63 per cent of teachers said their training had not prepared them to teach students with disability, compared to only 26 per cent who found it had not prepared them for teaching in general.

"This issue was ignored by the Federal Government's TEMAG Review of teacher training, but must be addressed if we are to give students with disability the education they deserve.

"At least one unit on disability education must be a compulsory part of every teacher training course in Australia, and professional development must be available for teachers at all stages of their careers.

"Students with disability have been let down by the Abbott Government which has failed to deliver the 'disability loading' it promised at the 2013 election."

"This funding was recommended by the Gonski Review to meet the needs of students with disability and was meant to cover all students with disability who need support at school, not just those already receiving funding.

"Education Minister Christopher Pyne is in denial about the chronic underfunding of students with disability.

"Despite Mr Pyne's promises, the amount of federal funding provided per student with disability will drop in real terms from 2017 unless the disability loading is introduced.

"Our failure to properly educate students with disability is a national shame, and will have long-term consequences if it leads to students not being prepared for work and life after school."

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