



AASE response to the Commonwealth Government’s Senate Education and Employment References Committee “Access to real learning: the impact of policy funding and culture on students with disability” January 2016.

This report describes the barriers to education affecting the inclusion of students with disability in schools. AASE is pleased to support the key recommendations of the report, particularly those that concern the ongoing supports and professional learning required by teachers and school support staff, the monitoring of student progress and outcomes and the implementation of appropriate funding as recommended in the Gonski Review.

Whilst AASE acknowledges the family and student issues outlined and accept that there are still many challenges in the education of disabilities, we urge the government to focus on the recommendations in the report which will lead to continued improvements in the access of students with disability to improved educational outcomes.

The recommendations strongly support AASE’s long term position that education practice for students with disability should be driven by evidence based research. AASE position papers, professional learning programs, including the Disability Standards for Education on line training used by education sectors nationally, and advocacy through membership of various federal, state and territory committees has long supported Recommendation 9 which describes a strategy for improving educational outcomes.

Currently there is limited evidence to say that “few students with disability have access to adequate levels and forms of education” (2.25) or they are not achieving optimal results. Anecdotal experience suggests that there are schools that are achieving excellent education outcomes for students with disabilities and have outstanding inclusive practice in a supportive culture. Unfortunately these enquiries often do not fully acknowledge the significant progress that has been made in schools towards enhancing educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Similarly AASE strongly support s Recommendation 8 which outlines the development of a process for monitoring individual outcomes for students with disability. Nationally we are not currently reporting on the progress of students with disability but using anecdotal or individual teacher observations and perceptions.

AASE strongly supports Recommendations 1 and 2 supporting the full implementation of the Gonski review which clearly identified that funding should be allocated according to student need.

Similarly AASE has constantly advocated for and supported dedicated pre and in service training and professional learning for teachers and the establishment of standards for support staff as outlined in Recommendation 7. There is a need for compulsory, standardised and uniform special education units in preservice training. AASE would also like to highlight the recommendation in their submission to the enquiry that schools require support to consider the variety of ways in which schools can make adjustments for students with disability including increased support from special educators, peer support and tutoring systems, better deployment of specifically trained teacher assistants, volunteers and buying in appropriate programs and materials and training teachers or teacher assistants in their use.