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DYSLEXIA VICTORIA SUPPORT (DVS)

SUBMISSION TO THE 2020 REVIEW ('THE REVIEW') OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION 2005 ('THE STANDARDS')

19 SEPTEMBER 2020

WHO IS DVS?

In 2014, Heidi Gregory and three other mothers were looking for answers to their children's reading difficulties and realised that there was no support. This prompted them to create the DVS Facebook group to connect with parents, share information and raise awareness. DVS membership has grown to over 5,200 parents, teachers, and allied health professionals all with the shared mission of speaking up for change in the teaching of reading in Victorian schools, so all children learn to read.

In August 2020, 436 DVS parents of a child/ren with literacy difficulties in Victorian schools participated in a survey of their experiences. Only 4% rated their child's teacher as being 'highly knowledgeable' in dyslexia, 62% said they organised and paid for their child's dyslexia assessment and 49% rated their child's level of support at school as none/a little bit of support. Comments from DVS parents are included below to support our submission.

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia can be defined as, "A specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterised by difficulties with accurate and / or fluent word recognition and by **poor spelling** and **decoding** abilities. These difficulties typically result from a **deficit in the phonological component of language** that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include **problems in reading comprehension** and **reduced reading experience** that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." [\(1\)](#)

DYSLEXIA AND 'THE STANDARDS'

Dyslexia is included in the Federal Disability Discrimination Act ('The Act') 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 as -

... 'a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction'...

While DVS has no expertise with the legislative application of 'The Act', we can provide first-hand experiences of its weight in Victorian schools. Given that 'The Act' seeks to eliminate, as far as possible,

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discrimination against people with disabilities', 'The Act' and its subordinate legislation 'The Standards' are in our experience, incredibly ineffective.

DVS RESPONSE TO THE 2020 REVIEW OF 'THE STANDARDS' SUMMARY DISCUSSION PAPER

QUESTION ONE - Do barriers still exist for students with disability wanting to access and participate in education and training?

As parents of children with dyslexia, it is our experience that the greatest barrier to our children's access and participation in education is the way reading, writing, and spelling is taught in schools. Put simply, dyslexic children are destined to reading failure under the prevailing 'balanced literacy/whole language/3-cueing' approach in schools.

'Whole language/ 3 cue system used. Acknowledgement that this does not work for him but refusal to use systematic synthetic phonic approach. Refusal to do anything to help him.' DVS parent

'Student reached year 3 unable to read at all and for ever confused with instruction. Commenced tutoring once a week and daily practice using explicit systemic [sic] phonics and now learnt all his sounds and able to read only issues now is trying to 'undo' previously learnt bad habits from school instruction.' DVS parent

'Whole word - balanced literacy with reliance on sight words No evidence based instruction No structured phonics program My child is a casualty of poor literacy instruction.' DVS parent

*'School uses balanced literacy approach which provides no support at all for my child in learning to read'.
DVS parent*

'At a whole school level they used a balanced literacy approach which included teaching children to memorize sight word lists, guess words from context or from predictable readers. My child found it very stressful and learning to read filled her with anxiety.' DVS parent

QUESTION TWO - Supporting students: Have you or your child been appropriately supported during your / their education? This includes being able to access supports, including specialist resources.

As illustrated below, children at risk for dyslexia are not identified on school arrival nor provided with early intervention under the prevailing 'wait and see' model. DVS parents report Reading Recovery as the most common reading intervention program despite it not being suitable for dyslexic learners.

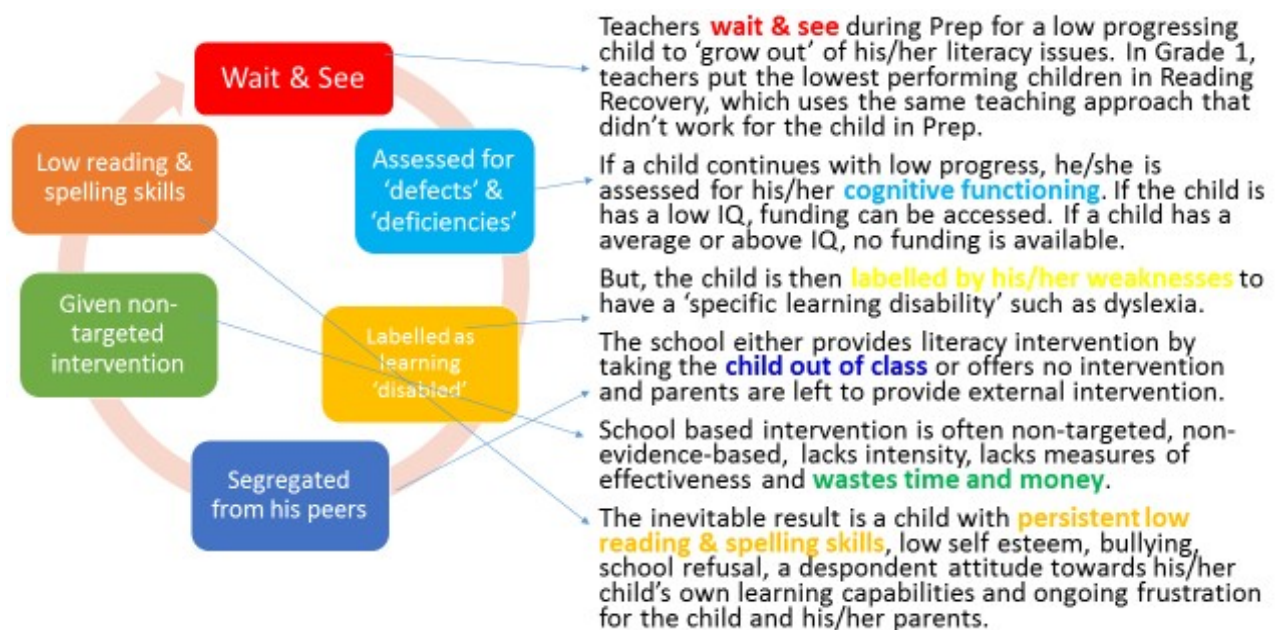
'First two years they just kept saying "it will click", it didn't. Nothing got arranged until the end of grade 2. Intervention at school only consisted of Reading Recovery which was useless.' DVS parent

*'School was blatantly neglectful-wait and see attitude and you need to read to your child at home more!'
DVS parent*

‘Despite having clear warning signs of dyslexia her early primary teachers did not pick up any difficulties despite me raising concerns. Her grade two teacher shared my concerns though told me to ‘wait and see’ instead of getting her tested. I organised and paid for testing when she was in grade 3.’ DVS parent

‘Schools seem reluctant to refer for further testing and too often play the wait and see game. It is so damaging for our children.’ DVS parent

THE ‘WAIT AND SEE’ MODEL (THE ‘WAIT TO FAIL’ MODEL)



QUESTION THREE - Participation: Has your education provider/s made reasonable adjustments to ensure you or your child can participate in education? This includes participating in courses and programs, the curriculum, and using facilities. How did your education provider consult with you?

Parents are most likely to have identified and paid for a private assessment of dyslexia. Even with an educational psychologist report confirming dyslexia with recommendations for classwork, homework, and assessments such as NAPLAN and VCE exams, it is common for children to receive no individual learning plan (ILP) nor any documented reasonable adjustments. In cases of the education provider agreeing to reasonable adjustments, their use is often inconsistent, dependent on teacher discretion, not sufficiently monitored for effectiveness and may not be preceded by consultation with the child or the parent of the child.

‘Very late diagnosis (Grade 4) after years of “literacy” support - reading recovery. - smart spelling program - no adjustments made once despite recommendations.’ DVS parent

'It's been a massive "fight" to get an ILP. Little understanding of how to write and implement an effective ILP meant had one for 6 months then nothing for years, then another attempt but goals were non evidence based and ILP was never monitored or evaluated.' DVS parent

'The school refused to do an ILP and after lengthy periods of waiting they only completed one after a complaint to the Dept of Ed. The ILP they produced was appalling quality and did not address his learning needs or any recommendations in his psychological assessment. I had to advocate very strongly to have the ILP re-written and it was still of very poor quality.' DVS parent

'If a child has a learning difficulty and the school is aware of this, adjustments should be made. Parents should not be required to spend exorbitant amounts of money on assessments for VCE adjustments. This is ludicrous, it's a human right that our children have access to an education system that caters to their needs.' DVS parent

QUESTION FOUR - Harassment or victimisation: If you or your child experienced harassment or victimisation in an education setting, what happened? What steps did your / their education provider take to address this?

DVS parents of dyslexic children report instances of harassment by teachers and/or peers in relation to their reading difficulties that cause humiliation and/or distress. As a result, it is common for dyslexic children to try to hide their difficulties in reading, spelling, and writing due to the shame they feel.

'At our previous local primary school now six years ago my child was repeatedly bullied by the teacher for "not trying", "not concentrating" and "not remembering". It was through his peers telling their parents and in turn them telling us of these issues we took him out of the school and moved him.' DVS parent

'There are always flaws, so often specialist teachers forget and emergency teacher aren't across our daughter's difficulties, making her read aloud in class - completely traumatising her.' DVS parent

'The school does not know how to teach literacy to my child. They try, but treat her like she has an intellectual disability not a learning difficulty. It is very upsetting and she often feels 'dumb' (her description of herself). Then they just say to just do what you can, and she falls further and further behind.' DVS parent

'My child's teachers generally have no understanding they have stated that he is lazy and if he worked harder he would be better off'. DVS parent

'It [remote learning] was great he progressed so much no bullying no harassment from teachers he did so well'. DVS parent

DVS PROPOSALS

1. Make new legislation to replace 'The Standards' in collaboration with education providers, disability community members and their representatives. In the new legislation, 'dyslexia' (as well as other specific learning disabilities) should be stated, a definition of 'consultation' should be specific, and the provision of 'reasonable adjustments' should be mandated.
2. Parents/carers should be provided with the new legislation when their child enters school and every subsequent year as well as information on a transparent, cost-free pathway for dispute resolution that is independent of education departments. All schools should be required to include the new legislation on their website.

DVS SUPPLEMENTARY PROPOSALS

3. The Federal Government and/or State Governments should agree on a standard definition of dyslexia (as well as other specific learning disabilities) in consultation with AUSPELD or similar.
4. The Federal Government and/or State Governments should provide 'AUSPELD accredited or similar' online tools for education providers to upskill staff as well as audit their practices in areas such as: learning disabilities, reading, writing and spelling curriculum and pedagogy, screening, assessments, reading intervention, reasonable adjustments and individual learning plans.
5. The Federal Government and/or State Governments should raise awareness of dyslexia (as well as other specific learning disabilities) in consultation with AUSPELD or similar.
6. The Federal Government and/or State Governments should promote excellence in whole-school practice. In Victoria, Bentleigh West PS exemplifies how all children can be provided with a fair education via their early screening, structured curriculum with explicit direct instruction (EDI), and Response to Intervention (RTI) practices.

FINAL WORDS

The pervasiveness of discrimination and inequity in education for children with dyslexia demonstrates 'The Standards' are a failure and need to be replaced by robust legislation. As parents, we will always speak up for a fair education for our children, but we can only do so much on our own.

'They are extraordinary little humans who deserve every opportunity to shine in the sun like everyone else, rather than hiding in the shadows!' DVS parent

[REDACTED], parent of child with dysgraphia and ASD. Another child with suspected dyslexia, ADHD, ASD, ODD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of two children with dyslexia and ADHD.

[REDACTED] parent of a child with ID

[REDACTED] parent of 2 boys with Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, dysgraphia and possible Add and Asd

[REDACTED] aunt to child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] Disability Advocate

[REDACTED] educator and parent of 3 children with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a son with dyslexia, and early childhood teacher.

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia.

[REDACTED] I have Dyslexia, and Hyperlexia.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent of children with dyslexia and ADHD and literacy tutor at Learning Fundamentals

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and suspected dysgraphia

[REDACTED] Occupational Therapist, parent of two kids with dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent of 2 children with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of two children with dyslexia one child Inattentive ADHD and Asperger traits and my other has ADHD and Asperger traits

[REDACTED] Primary School Teacher

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and Dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of two children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, ASD and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, ADHD and ODD and a senior college teacher

[REDACTED] Learning Support Officer, Tutor, mother of child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] kinship carer for my granddaughter aged 10 with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and associated anxiety

[REDACTED] parent of 8 year old with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Anxiety

[REDACTED] mother of a child with dyslexia and dyscalculia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of child with severe dyslexia and Occupational Therapist

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent to a son with adhd and dyslexia

[REDACTED] son with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of daughter with dyslexia, ADHD and mild autism

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. Learning Support Assistant

[REDACTED] parent of a grade 2 child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia and ASD, parent of a child with dyslexia, ASD, ADHD, OCD, ODD & mild CP

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent of 2 dyslexic boys

[REDACTED] parent of 3 clever children with dyslexia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia and a child with autism and adhd struggling with literacy

[REDACTED] parent of a dyslexic/dysgraphia child

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with ASD, ADHD and Dyslexia, Dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] mother of a child with reading difficulties

[REDACTED] Teacher, Literacy Therapist, and individual with dyslexia and dysgraphia, and parent of children with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] mother of a dyslexic son

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] parent of a primary school aged child with Dyslexia, poor working memory, anxiety and low self-esteem

[REDACTED] daughter of a dyslexic father, wife of a dyslexic husband, mother of a dyslexic, DLD son, mother of a dyslexic, ADD son, mother of a dyslexic daughter

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with

dyslexia, dysgraphia, ASD and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of two children with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia and Auditory Processing Disorder

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child provisionally diagnosed with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and ADHD. Education Support Worker

[REDACTED] retired Primary School teacher, Tutor

[REDACTED] parent of a child with learning difficulties maybe dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dyscalculia and anxiety

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, English Language Teacher, advocate for educational equity

[REDACTED] Occupational Therapist & mum to child with dyslexia, giftedness & ADHD

[REDACTED] Specialist teacher and dyslexia tutor

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia. Works with people who have a disability

[REDACTED] mother of child 10yrs with Dyslexia & slow working memory and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia, Poor Working Memory, Slow Processing Speed and Inattentive ADD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dyscalculia and ADHD.

[REDACTED] Principal Teaching Practitioner

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, add, and anxiety

[REDACTED] Primary school Teacher -Literacy Intervention Specialist

[REDACTED] Learning Intervention Specialist Teacher

[REDACTED] mother to three children, two of which have a SLD (and Occupational Therapist)

[REDACTED] parent of a dyslexic child, teacher, intervention specialist, dyslexia advocate

[REDACTED] parent to child diagnosed with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, DCD, Anxiety, Tourettes, SPD & Combined ADHD. Also parent to child with Learning Difficulties under private investigation, specifically reading, spelling & numeracy deficits. Diagnosed combined ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of children with SLDs, advocate, admin of Dyslexia Victoria Support

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia and dysgraphia, primary & secondary school teacher, specialist literacy tutor

[REDACTED] parent of 2 children with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with mild

expressive language disorder and autism spectrum disorder; aunt of a teenager of dyslexia

parent of two daughters with dyslexia

parent

primary school teacher and parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

parent of a child with dyslexia and MSL tutor/Integration aide

parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

parent of a child with Dyslexia and Autism

parent of a child with dyslexia

Speech Pathologist and Specialist Literacy Teacher

parent of child with dyslexia

mother of a dyslexic child

parent of two children with dyslexia

mother of 14 year old dyslexic boy

specialist literacy tutor

parent of two children with dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD

parent of a child with dyslexia

parent of 2 children with dyslexia

parent of child with dyslexia and primary school teacher

parent of 10yo child with dyslexia

integrated aid

parent of child with dysgraphia

parent of client with dyslexia, dyscalculia & dysgraphia

parent of a child with dyslexia

Accessibility Services at University

parent of child with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia

parent of dyslexic child

parent of two dyslexic children aged 7 and 9

parent of a child with dyslexia

Literacy Intervention Teacher

parent of a child with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia

parent of a child with dyslexia

teacher and tutor

mother of two teenage children with SLD, and parent advocate (complex profile for children consisting of dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, working memory and dysgraphia)

parent of a child with dyslexia and dyscalculia

parent of children with dyslexia and ADHD

parent of a child with Dyslexia, ADHD and ASD

parent of child with dyslexia

parent of two children with Dyslexia one of which also has ASD

parent of a struggling reader

parent of a child with Dyslexia and ADHD

child with Dyslexia

MSL specialist and primary school teacher

parent of a child with dyslexia, dysgraphia, borderline dyscalculia and anxiety disorder

primary school teacher and parent of a child with dyslexia

Early Childhood Teacher / parent of children with dyslexia/ sister and daughter to people with dyslexia

parent of a child with SLD, ADHD, Non verbal learning disorder, dyspraxia

Primary Teacher

primary school teacher

parent of a child with dyslexia

parent of child with dyslexia, dysgraphia and adhd.

parent to child 1 with dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, anxiety, child 2 with dysgraphia and ADHD, child 3 showing similar behaviours to siblings

aunt of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a student with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent to child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with specific learning disorders and Registered Psychologist

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child who is Dyslexic

[REDACTED] parent of TWO children with Dyslexia, ASD and anxiety

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and dyscalculia

[REDACTED] mother to an 11 year old boy with dyslexia, dyscalculia who also has a speech and language delay

[REDACTED] mum of two dyslexic children

[REDACTED] son is dyslexic

[REDACTED] Learning Support Teacher

[REDACTED] parent of a child who is a struggling reader and another child with dysgraphia and ASD

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia and autism

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, ADHD and ODD

[REDACTED] mother of a child with severe dyslexia & inattentive ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child who has Dyslexia and ASD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dyscalculia and ADD

[REDACTED] Special needs teacher/teacher of the deaf

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia

[REDACTED] Primary school teacher and mother of 2 children with learning difficulties

[REDACTED] parent of a son with learning difficulties

[REDACTED] parent to a child that has dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia; grandparent of child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia and a primary school teacher

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Early Childhood Educator

[REDACTED] mother to child with dyslexia (and suspected dyscalculia), and mild autism

[REDACTED] Speech Pathologist

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of dyslexic child

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] Primary School Teacher

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia. Primary teacher, students with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, ADHD and ASD

[REDACTED] parent of child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED], parent of child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia

[REDACTED] teacher and parent of 1 child with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia, and parent of 1 child with ASD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and ADHD

[REDACTED] primary School teacher and parent of a child with dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD

[REDACTED] Primary school teacher

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia

[REDACTED] Secondary School Teacher

[REDACTED] parent of a child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of child with Dyslexia

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and ADHD

[REDACTED] parent of a child with dyslexia and ADHD