

Submission to the Review.

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My engagement with rights of people with disabilities starts in 1980 assisting at VCOSS to prepare a submission regarding the development of the Intellectually Disabled Persons Services Act. I observed a passionate optimism in 1980 towards the International Year of the Disabled Person and in 1981 I saw the activity fully driven by people with a disability. It was joyous to observe. I was not needed. That was good.

My teaching qualification provided a choice whether to continue my engagement with people with a disability and social justice through education. I was employed at the Work Life Prep Program in Morwell, a program of Yallourn TAFE, and the Commonwealth Rehab Service. 1984-92. The training and pathways my students took still stands them in good stead and one into a serious prison term.

Concurrent to the distillation of the IPPS Act in Victoria, the Disability legislation nationally redefined intellectually disability to be a person of moderate intellectual disability. This gave a measure of WAIS/WISK 70 and under as qualifying for Special School and funding. This nationally driven, adopted by State governments median is a sleight of hand for cutting costs for state government support and unintended cost shifting by governments.

The first Victorian State Disability Plan adopted this national median and this enabled the state government to disenfranchise the group of students WISK 70 and upwards to be in a no-mans-land. This disenfranchisement has persists now.

The educational needs of students WISK 70-85 even without compounding disabilities creates training challenges in the years till tertiary education and then a case can be put forward in the TAFE sector for support, but the work by mainstream schools is not trained or funded to the specialisation and complexity required to tailor rigorous programs to enable students in this range. They are not funded and linger in the margins of classes, behaviour intervention in school and under-resourced token literacy and numeracy efforts.

Poverty through Newstart forever, as qualifying for a Disability Pension is not viable. Insecure employment and without the intellectual agility needed for the gig economy. Over-representation of people with intellectual disability in the criminal justice system.

I taught a cohort that went through the specialist tailored programs for 70-85 IQ students and watched them blossom, struggle, but manage. These people are now 50 years old.

I coordinated and was the establishing person of a program for people with IQ that were not able to be assessed and who resided at Kew Residential Services and their opportunities were opened by the 1992 Act. The Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE created a program for these adults with State Disability funds commensurate to what their programs were

funded with tertiary qualified staff at KRS Day Programs. Then unit cost funding came in and the juggle to pay tertiary trained teaching staff was tight. After eight years 1992-2000 I went onto a policy position thinking that was a way to effect change, which it was and wasn't. Not being at the program I had so cherished, the level of compensatory philanthropic funding I had been sourcing over the eight years vapourised and the program was taken over by a day disability provider with no staff paid for their specialist teaching.

In 2011 until 2013 I found myself teaching in a Special School which had a SDS section, with a High Needs Autism sub-section, in which I taught. It was a sad underfunded misery. The students with profound Autism who were my students during that period were simply under resourced for their complex needs. They were not denied attendance. The statements were to work in a positive mode. The resources to support them, at a school budget and macro level, led at times to restrictive and punitive practices, from wilful ignorance. It could be tracked to lack of aspirational pay and conditions fair to the extreme duress of the work for support staff who assisted teachers.

- The stripping of children WISK 70 and WISK 85 of adequate funding is a slight to their potential for being in the setting of choice and being provided resources to meet their educational needs. Compensatory education within a large group setting is achievable with WISK 85 and above.
- The macro low rate of funding for high needs students creating a low paid, low trained, aspiration deficient supports workforce. The workforce needs to be reflective of the complexity of the student.