

Andrew Wilson



## **Submission to Disability Standards for Education Review 2020**

I am a parent of a daughter with a disability in NSW, with experience in Primary and High School education.

In this submission I suggest that the commonwealth Dept of Education improve the Disability Standards for Education in the following ways:

1. Start with the context and framework of human rights. Teachers and education institutions will more likely comply if they have some basic understanding, context and pedagogy. Thus, a grounding for educators and education providers in the basic human rights of all human beings, the rights of all human beings to education, the same for persons with a disability, then UN CRPD article 24 and General Comment 4, the meaning and understanding of an inclusive education and the benefits to the disabled individual and society from an inclusive education.

In short – why bother? Many reasons: for the student with a disability, their peers, their local community and the Australian economy.

2. Clarity across Australia in language and definitions, conforming to international norms, rather than the current practice of State governments hiding behind confusing ambiguous language, to hide inaction or illegal non-conformity with international human rights.

Rather, simply, universally across Australia follow the language of the UN CRPD article 24 and General Comment 4 to give clarity in the definition and understanding of the difference between inclusive education, integration, segregation and exclusion in education.

A student in NSW in a special unit, separated by a 2m tall steel fence, with spikes, from a NSW High School adjacent to the Special Unit, that is, they are nearby but segregated by a fence from their same aged peers. The NSW Dpt of Ed suggests that those students with a disability are “in a mainstream environment” because they can look across the fence to see what they are missing out on. A more accurate language would say that the students with a disability are segregated from their peers – akin to 1970s blacks in South Africa under Apartheid. We need to adopt the UN definitions and hold State governments accountable to the DSE standards with those international definitions.

3. The Disability Standards for Education embody a concept of reasonable adjustments. There has been some success in applying that concept to the curriculum and learning pedagogy applied to students with disability.

However our experience is that this is not applied at School or by the Dept of Ed in NSW in relation to assessments. Rather when dealing with assessments, whether it comes to the small class maths test, or the HSC, the Darlecs are in control, common sense cannot be found. There is no concept of what it was we are trying to test/assess of this person with a disability – rather the Darlec commander has said that the standardised test will take X minutes, have only Y devices and no “reasonable adjustments” will be considered. Any attempt to push against the solidarity of this NSW Dept of Ed approach will be met with a career crisis summarised by the word “exterminate”, there is no flexibility – in the yr8 maths test or the yr 12 history essay. An example of this --- non compliance with the Disability Standards in NSW was the case in [REDACTED] in 2017, where a student with Cerebral Palsy, in inclusive education, sitting his HSC by typing his exam work on an ipad was not allowed extra time to do so, ---- until finally Minister Rob Stokes intervened. Do we really need Ministerial intervention? – or could the Disability Standards make this stuff clear for all in Australia??

Reasonable adjustments – includes reasonable adjustments for assessments..... Australia get you act together !!

Yours Sincerely  
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