

NSW education system continues to fail students with disability

Yesterday's release of the findings of the NSW parliamentary inquiry into the education of students with a disability or special needs has shone a strong light on the significant failings of the NSW education system, releasing 39 recommendations. Family Advocacy notes that although several of our recommendations were adopted in the Committee's response, the broader scope of the report fails to show the strong leadership necessary in moving NSW towards a fully inclusive state. This is disappointing given the strong evidence highlighted to the Committee throughout the inquiry regarding the benefits of inclusion to all children.

We also note that although inclusion is a key recommendation of the Committee, there remains a complete lack of clarity regarding what an inclusive education system looks like. Further to this point, the assertions from the Committee that some students may require specialised segregated settings and that support units should be increased to accommodate more students reinforces the systemic discrimination that students with disability face when pursuing an education.

Our parallel education system unfortunately remains strong in NSW and although this inquiry has highlighted significant issues that are experienced by student with disability we still have a tremendous battle ahead of us to get relevant parties to make the necessary steps to ensure all students are educated together. Research has shown that students who are educated in support units have lower academic and social expectations, which continues into their adult life when seeking to be employed and a valued member of their community.

Family Advocacy would like to see significant work done to address systemic discrimination towards students with disability. While this dual system continues to exist, children with disability will always be marginalised and prevented from being fully included in their own education and community.