

*family*

ADVOCACY

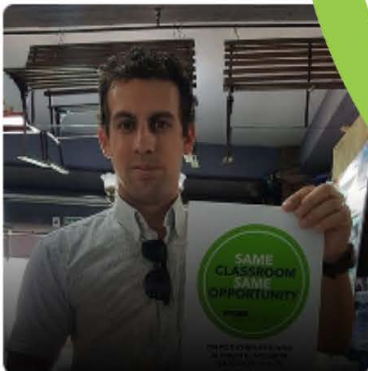
# DISABILITY INCLUSION FOR ALL

## BRIEFING BOOKLET

# SAME CLASSROOM SAME OPPORTUNITY

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**Family Advocacy is a NSW community based, disability advocacy organisation that promotes and defends the interests, rights and needs of people with developmental disability.**

This booklet contains stories, petition signatures and photos from some of the many families, allies and friends that pledge their support to make inclusion for ALL students in NSW a reality. With over 1.4 million people in NSW living with a disability, and 1 in 5 NSW public school students having a disability, we need to put disability inclusion front and centre.



*"Our vision was for Jacob to be fully engaged in his community, to work and have purpose in his life. So we wanted him to go to the same school as his brother, sister and preschool buddies. But we faced many challenges. ... people with disability are viewed and treated very differently when it comes to where they go to school, who they go to school with and what they are expected to do after graduating. The system needs to be supporting educators and parents towards progressively realising an inclusive education.*

- Annette and Jacob Bush

**Our political parties have an opportunity - and a responsibility - to make disability inclusion in NSW a genuine priority and reality.**



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We thank our Allies for their Support

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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices stand and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. Family Advocacy has accepted the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and supports a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

Family Advocacy supports the YES Campaign for the upcoming referendum.





# Securing Better Futures through an Inclusive Education

## *Family Advocacy 2023 Election Campaign*

## BRIEFING PAPER

### OUR VISION

Family Advocacy's Same Classroom, Same Opportunity - Securing Better Futures through an Inclusive Education campaign aims to ensure ALL students in NSW, no matter their circumstance, are welcomed and supported in the general classroom of their local school, all day, everyday.

### CURRENT SITUATION

The Disability Royal Commission has heard that many children and young people with a disability are being excluded, segregated, unfairly suspended, forced to attend part-time, or subjected to a heightened risk of abuse, neglect and low expectations.

Sadly, children and young people with disability are set up on a life pathway with poor employment outcomes and social isolation from the general community. This is in conflict with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031*.

Children and young people with disability in NSW deserve better!

### SOLUTIONS TO SECURE A BETTER FUTURE

The starting point to secure better futures for the one-in-five students learning with disability in NSW is through an inclusive education. We call upon the next NSW government to:

- Commit to an Inclusive Education Roadmap with a long term vision that will strengthen the system's capability including supporting teachers so students with disability can access and participate on the same basis as other students.
- Invest in a Work Transition Pilot Project to improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment.

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# OUR VISION

Family Advocacy's Same Classroom, Same Opportunity - Securing Better Futures through an Inclusive Education campaign aims to ensure ALL students in NSW, no matter their circumstance, are welcomed and supported in the general classroom of their local school, all day, everyday.

## THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSION

Inclusive education is important for our school because it sees every child thrive in our community. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence-based research that supports disabled students learning alongside their peers in general education settings. Some of these benefits include:

### Students that experience disability

- greater academic and vocational outcomes
- greater social interaction, resulting in more opportunities to establish and maintain social connections
- increased development of speech.

### Students

- elevated self-esteem
- improved behavioural development
- empathy and understanding
- opportunities to engage with friendships
- equitable education and care

### Teachers and educators

- professional growth
- increased personal satisfaction
- confidence in delivering the curriculum

### Families and community

- greater psychological and economic wellbeing for parents
- parents may feel more supported and confident to return to work
- greater community engagement

**“I’m a single parent to an outgoing, funny, cheeky, compassionate and resilient 12 year old girl named Eva, who also happens to have some complex disabilities. When schooling started for Eva I wanted her to attend the local school with all the other kids in our area but I was met with what I came to know of as “gate keeping’. A fully inclusive education system benefits all kids. Eva just wants to belong, like everyone else.”**

**Traci Caines, Parent advocate**





# WHY INCLUSION? A PARENTS PERSPECTIVE.

*"Inclusive education is important to me because it's about equal opportunity - every student deserves to be part of the same learning community as their peers. Inclusive education aims to foster a sense of belonging. Inclusive education doesn't segregate the student from others. There is also half a century's worth of research evidence showing that inclusive education leads to better lifelong outcomes for students with disabilities. What parent doesn't want their child to have the best possible opportunities and outcomes in life?"*

Angela Raynor

*"I'm a single parent to an outgoing, funny, cheeky, compassionate and resilient 12 year old girl named Eva, who also happens to have some complex disabilities. When schooling started for Eva I wanted her to attend the local school with all the other kids in our area but I was met with what I came to know of as 'gate keeping'. A fully inclusive education system benefits all kids. Eva just wants to belong, like everyone else."*

Traci Caines

*"It's because every child has the right to the same education as their peers, no matter what their story. The second we dismiss a child we dismiss the future of our society."*

*The idea of a child being denied the same rights as other children is discrimination. Pure and simple. We wouldn't accept that."*

Josephine Murphy

*"Inclusive Education's crucial to me because I've just spent the last 13 years with my now 19 year old daughter fighting for it. It's been a mammoth effort with massive barriers, and outright discriminatory practices. It has also brought huge benefits in terms of growth and ordinary opportunities not just for her but also all the other students and educators who she encountered. I will be a grandmother one day. Some of my eldest children's friends are already parents. I want the next generation of students and parents to have a seamless, welcoming education where diversity is valued."*

Di Samuels

# WHAT TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS SAY...

*"I think it all comes back to one thing. I think it all comes back to high expectations. I think it's about believing that everybody can succeed and everybody can make progress."*

*– Principal, Public School*

*I believe schools have got to be super flexible; they've got to cater for everybody. The biggest resource is attitude, a willingness to try. Our school is committed to best practice in inclusive education so that ALL children in our community can achieve their full potential "*

*– Principal, Primary School*



*"I love that there is no reflection on a child's 'deficit' or 'intellect' in the precursors [Literacy and Numeracy Precursor Indicators] but rather on specific skills – it reflects a 'not demonstrated yet' approach and high expectations that the students will achieve and this is a pathway."*

*– Teacher, Primary School*

*The ethos for our school is that everyone belongs – whether it be from a culturally diverse background or whether it be students who have a hearing impairment, or vision impairment, or any disability. They're all very much part of the wonderful fabric of this school."*

*– Head Teacher, Wellbeing, High School*





We have heard many stories from the Disability Royal Commission that there are still many kids not being included in the regular class at their local school. This should not be happening in 2023!! I have felt what it's like to be excluded. It's awful and it's wrong and it limits the opportunity for potential to rise. Without the teachers that included me, I would be in a very different place. I have a physical disability but we know there are many other types of disability - and we know that students with a disability make up 1 in 5 students. Our education system needs to cater for **EVERYONE**. The NSW government is not doing enough to ensure **ALL** students can attend the regular class at their local school, all day, everyday and that is why I strongly urge you to support the Same Classroom Same Opportunity Campaign.

**Julie Charlton, Para athlete and Disability Advocate**



# THE CURRENT SITUATION

## FACTS AND FIGURES



**NSW segregates 14% or 25,620 students because they have a disability. We could fill a football stadium with the number of students that are segregated from their peers.**



According to a report by the Royal Disability Commission students with disability make up 75% of suspensions and expulsions in NSW, and are significantly less likely to complete their secondary education than their peers without disabilities.



1 in 5 NSW public school students or 183,000 have a disability

- 3% are in Schools for Specific Purposes (that's 5,290 students)
- 11% are in Support units on the same premises as mainstream but separated from their peers (that's 20,130 students)

A pie chart with a dark green segment representing 70% of the total. The number '70%' is written in white inside the dark green segment.

**70%**

Over 70% report experiencing one or more examples of gatekeeping used to minimise the enrolment into mainstream, and/or restrictive practice.

The presence of these segregated options is why students and their parents face gatekeeping from enrolment, low expectations and suspensions in mainstream schools. This is why segregation needs to be phased out!

The result of segregation is that Australia has a poor employment record which has remained the same for nearly 30 years. The employment participation rates for people with disability at 53.4% compared with 84.1% for people without disability. But for people with an intellectual disability, its significantly lower at 14-18%.





# **SOLUTIONS TO SECURE A BETTER FUTURE**

**WE CALL UPON THE NSW GOVERNMENT TO:**

- 1.** Commit to an Inclusive Education Roadmap with a long term vision that will strengthen the system's capability including supporting teachers so students with disability can access and participate on the same basis as other students.
- 2.** Invest in a Work Transition Pilot Project to improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment.

## **WE ASKED OUR SUPPORTERS TO:**

**1** Send an email to their local MP

**2** Sign our petition

**3** Upload a photo to our wall

# THE 10 YEAR ROADMAP

## SIX KEY PILLARS



**“The Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education has developed a 10 year Roadmap, underpinned by six key pillars to help realise inclusive education in Australia and prevent the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of students with disability. These pillars are drawn from the evidence base and embed the rights of students as set out in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).”**



# WORK TRANSITION PILOT PROJECT VISUALISING POSSIBILITIES

*"Students who have access to real jobs while they are in school and plans in place to meet their ongoing needs upon graduation...have a better chance of being employed after graduation." \**

Based on a Win:Win philosophy for the person looking for work and the employer, this initiative employs the Customised Employment Model to create a Discovery and Vocational Profile process for students with disabilities, with the goal of enhancing their access to employment planning and services within mainstream school. The program is intended for Year 9/10 students, though it may be initiated earlier.

Similar to the iceberg analogy, Discovery, allows us to see what is below the waterline, it inspires us to visualize the possibilities - see below.



## PROJECT GOALS

- Paid employment whilst or at the end of school for students with disabilities.
- Increasing parental expectations of their child being employed after graduation
- Using Discovery for Students to inform transition planning and services, and to ensure access to current transition services for students with disabilities
- Creating an infrastructure within the state of NSW to provide access to the Discovery process for Students
- **Use work experiences to create Discovery Profile, which informs for a Customised plan for employment (CPE) and create a Visual Resume (VR).**

# WE THANK OUR ALLIES FOR THEIR SUPPORT

Delivering disability inclusion in NSW will take political will and action.  
We are calling on the NSW Government to:

- Commit to an Inclusive Education Roadmap with a long term vision that will strengthen the system's capability including supporting teachers so students with disability can access and participate on the same basis as other students.
- Invest in a Work Transition Pilot Project to improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment.





**SAME  
CLASSROOM  
SAME  
OPPORTUNITY**

**family  
ADVOCACY**

**We've received hundreds of  
signatures and photos for our  
SameClassSameOpportunity  
campaign petition.**

**Can we count on your support to  
secure better lives through an  
inclusive education for students  
with a disability?**



# SAME CLASSROOM SAME OPPORTUNITY

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## Our asks and important links:

- Send a letter to your MP <https://bit.ly/3CJgkyy>
- Sign our petition <https://bit.ly/3QZ7B12>
- Upload your photo to our SCSO wall logo <https://bit.ly/SCSOwall>

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