

# PETITION

## To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.

The Petition of the undersigned citizens of New South Wales brings to the attention of the House that for decades, successive governments in NSW have maintained systemic separation and segregation of students with disabilities from their peers. Often relegated to segregated schools and segregated classrooms, thousands of strong, resilient, and courageous young people excluded from the joy and opportunity of full participation with their peers at their local school.

This system of **segregation contradicts all of the evidence** from across Australia and internationally over the last four decades showing that children with a disability perform better academically and socially when they learn in an inclusive setting rather than a disability-specific setting (Hehir 2016, Cologon 2013, Jackson 2008). In addition, outcomes for all children are same or better in settings inclusive of children with a disability. Inclusion teaches all children acceptance, compassion, and empathy.

Also, this current practice of segregating children with a disability acts as a **violation of their fundamental human right** to receive an inclusive education under Article 24 and General Comment 4 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

**New South Wales is lagging behind** other jurisdictions around the world in their education and treatment of children with a disability. For example, New Brunswick, Canada, has merged the parallel mainstream and segregated system into one wholistic system to become a fully inclusive system. Children go to their local school, regardless of their circumstance. This transformation required political leadership, investment to support the vision to provide support to the student and to the teacher based on sound 21<sup>st</sup> Century research, best practice and a continuous improvement culture.

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to dismantle the dual system of education which segregates children with disabilities, so that ALL students in NSW, of all levels of ability, have a valued place in their local public school; in the same classroom, with same teacher, learning the same curriculum. **We want a NSW education system that can support every child's learning in every classroom to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their potential**, learn with their peers, feel a sense of belonging in their local school, and learn to celebrate human diversity. Children who learn together, learn to live together.

Name	Address	Signature

