

Federal Election 2016

Issue: Advocacy for your family member with disability

Independent advocacy and capacity building gives people with disability a voice and the capacity to be actively involved in decisions that affect their lives. They assist people with disability to successfully negotiate the service and support systems; and enable the network of generalist and specialist services, supports and resources to work effectively for people with disability. They save time, resources and effort for people and systems.

But independent advocacy for people with disability is at risk.

The NSW Government currently funds representation, independent advocacy and independent information under the NSW Department of Family and Community Services division of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). All disability funding under ADHC will be transferred to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by 1 July 2018, including advocacy funding. Unfortunately, the federal government does not have to set aside this funding for advocacy.

Representation and independent advocacy and independent information will not be funded by the NDIS. They will fund Information Linkages and Capacity Building, which will support some advocacy-like activities. This is a small amount of funding (\$132 million in 2019/20) which at this stage is not designed to fund a whole organisation and is not guaranteed to be recurring

We need the [National Disability Advocacy Program \(NDAP\)](#), which is currently under review, to be continued and expanded. The Labor party have committed to continue the NDAP. The Liberal party have not.

What you can do:

- Contact your local member. Find out who your representative is at: <http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/>
- Contact your local opposition candidate. The Labor candidates are listed at this website <http://www.alp.org.au/people> and Liberal candidates listed here. <http://nsw.liberal.org.au/federal-liberals/>
- Attend election forums and events and raise the issue. We have some suggested questions you can ask.

Questions for candidates

- Will your party continue to fund the National Disability Advocacy Program if elected?
- If so will your party increase this funding to meet the shortfall of advocacy funding in NSW?
- Will they make a statement in support of this?

Issue: Inclusive education

As you know, Family Advocacy is here to make sure children can be welcomed into the local school and that typical school experiences follow. Families work hard to make regular school life happen for their children with disability. For most families, going to the local school is a given, perhaps with a few bumps along the way. However, for families of children with disability, it can involve many hours, days, weeks and years of planning and relationship building.

[Children and Young People with Disability Australia \(CYDA\)](#) recently released survey results showing that one in four families had been turned away from school on the basis that the school could not support their child with disability.

[CYDA Education Survey 2015 - Summary of Results](#)

The Federal Government's 2016 budget included \$118 million funding for schools to support students with disability in 2016 and 2017, in addition to existing funding. This is to be allocated on the basis of results from the [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data – School Students with Disability \(NCCD\)](#). However the release date for the NCCD data has not yet been announced.

The Senate held an Inquiry in 2015 into levels of access and attainment for students with disability in the school system. Amongst many others, they made the following recommendations:

- That it be “mandatory for all initial teacher education courses to ensure beginning teachers enter the classroom with best-practice skills in the inclusion of students with disability.”
- That the government “investigate the establishment a national qualification standard for teacher aids and assistants to ensure they have the knowledge and skills required to support learning for all students.”
- That the government “prioritise the development of a national approach to modifying the curriculum for students with disability. This should include implementation tools and professionals development support.”
- That the government “work with states, territories, experts, stakeholders, school systems, parents and students to establish a national strategy to improve the education of students with disability. The strategy should aim to:

- a) recognise all students with disability as learners and drive the cultural change required to achieve this, particularly at a school leadership level;
- b) increase school participation and access rates for students with disability;
- c) close the gap in Year 10 and Year 12 completion”.

These are just a few of the many recommendations from the report which you can access in link below:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/students_with_disability/Report

You could ask your local representatives about any of the report recommendations, or use the suggested questions below.

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Questions for candidates

- How will your party improve inclusion for children with disability at school?
- Does your party acknowledge that the continued pressure from schools to enrol children in support classes and special schools means they have limited real choice to enrol in the regular class? What will your party do to combat this situation?
- Does your party support a National Strategy to improve the education of children with disabilities?