



# **Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby**

## **2017 Parent Satisfaction Survey**

### **Results Summary**

**August 2017**

## The Survey:

2017 saw 188 experiences of students with disability shared in the Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby (TDERL) Parent Satisfaction Survey an increase of 44 participants on 2016.

This survey is the largest in the 6 years the TDERL has produced its Parent Satisfaction Survey, with the South making up 42% of the participants, the North West 22% and the North 36%.

77% of participants has a child with disability attending Public Schools

69% of participants has a child with disability in Primary School

## Satisfaction Levels

The 2017 results show that 34% of parent/carers were satisfied with the support their child was receiving, this is a **drop of 5% on 2016** and **the lowest satisfaction rate since our first survey in 2012**.

For the first time in 2017 we are reporting a satisfaction level for mainstream public schools, this result is important as the majority of students with disability in Tasmanian schools attend a mainstream public school.

Parents of students with disability in mainstream schools reported a satisfaction rate of 22%.

The satisfaction rate of parents of children with disability attending a mainstream public school is indicative of a system in crisis with **only 1 in every 5 parent/carers satisfied** with the level of support their child was receiving.

Satisfaction rates in the private/independent sector have dropped by 10% in the last 12 months from 58% in 2016 to 48% in 2017.

## What families told us:

*"They don't think he needs help. They think he is being naughty"*

*"They refuse to make any changes to support my daughter. They just say they cannot provide appropriate support and that she should be moved to ..... support school"*

*"....I'm grateful she can attend school"*

*"I say yes (that the support is appropriate) but my son presents a difficult set of circumstances it seems the school is doing its best with its limitations. But as a parent I don't feel it's enough"*

*"My child does not get any individual or funded support, my child should get some support"*

*"He misses out on so much and is just getting lost in the system"*

*".. it is like she's just treading water till the system can wipe their hands of her – she has goals for work yet trying to get support around transition to that .... hopeless"*

*"Appropriate support would mean providing (our child) with what is needed for participating in*

*school in the same capacity as others. In our case a Teachers Aide, our school can only provide this part time therefore his enrolment is part time."*

*"Due to the current funding model my son has no help his IQ is 6 points too high to get any help he is in grade 6 at a grade 4 learning level and not coping with it having daily meltdowns with the teacher telling him to go outside and play instead of learning is unacceptable"*

*"We have a 15 yr old that has not had fulltime school since grade 4, Eschool then a combination of part time school and E school, now he enjoys school his behaviour has been good, he is a capable student if supports are established."*

*"My son is far behind his peers. I was told by the principal that he will always be behind. So basically it doesn't matter what they do to help he won't improve so why bother attitude."*

*"My daughter in in nappies (she is 8 yrs old), she cannot communicate properly, she cannot read, she cannot write out sentences. She cannot do maths, she has very basic comprehension skills, she can only understand one instruction ... she has no aide with her for the most part of the day and even the library teacher of the school takes her to the toilet."*

### **Funding Levels:**

This year's results continue to show that parent/carers participating in our survey report low levels of students funded via the Severe Disability Register (SDR) and the 55 -70 IQ register.

Overall results showed that 26% of students with disability were funded via the SDR with a further 8% funded via the 55-70 IQ register.

***The number of unfunded students in this survey continues to be high with more than 6 out of every 10 students surveyed receiving no additional funding to assist their school to provide the reasonable adjustments they need to access an education on the same basis as other students.***

Whilst this is slight improvement on last year these numbers clearly show a gap in the required resourcing for students with disability. Further the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability (NCCD) showed that Tasmania recorded the lowest educational adjustment rate for Students with Disability in Australia in 2015 and 2016. The NCCD results together with the parent satisfaction results, in our view, reflects the very real resourcing issue Tasmania has in our schools and one that needs to be addressed now.

### **Part Time Enrolments:**

In 2017 we have seen an increase in reported part time enrollments. In 2016 15% of families told us that their child was enrolled as part time, in 2017 we have seen a 12% increase in this result with 27% of parents/carers reporting that their child was part time enrolled. When we break this number down and look at mainstream public schools the rate was of part time enrolment reported was 31%. This in our view is unacceptably high.

### **When asked how many hours their child attended school responses included:**

*"17.5 hours"*

*“19.45 hours”*

*“2 days per week”*

*“18 hours”*

*“Zero, currently enrolment canceled again”*

*“We try for 20, lucky if we get 10”*

The part time enrolment result is yet another very clear sign that schools are not providing the required support for students with disability and the Tasmanian disability education system is in crisis and in need of urgent and critical reform.

### **Suspensions:**

When asked if their child had been suspended in the last 12 months' overall results showed that 11% of parents indicated that their child had been suspended. This is a 1% increase on last year. When we look at the situation in mainstream public schools we had a reported suspension rate of 12%.

### **Exclusion:**

For the first time this year we asked participants if their child had been excluded from a school activity with 26% of parent/carers reporting that their child had been excluded from a school activity in the last 12 months.

Further when we looked at the exclusion rate in public mainstream schools we found ***that 34% of parent/carers reported that their child had been excluded from a school activity in the past year.***

### **The reason parent/carers were told for their child's exclusion included:**

*“Because I was unable to attend with her on an excursion”*

*“my son was unable to complete the last NAPLAN testing and support was not provided for him to do so despite me contacting the school”*

*“because of her limited mobility”*

*“not enough support to handle him with everyone else”*

*“because he has autism and it's too hard for the teachers to deal with”*

*“no support staff or funds”*

*“Chinese class listening activity she could not participate and she was told just to sit out. (note this student is deaf)”*

*“I have to pick him up at 1.45 so he doesn’t get to go to assembly which means he hasn’t received any certificates and he can sit their fine”*

*“because she is so different to the children tell her. Or the activity isn’t suitable for her and apparently don’t get funding for an aide for everything for her”*

*“at the public school he was dual enrolled until they made it clear they didn’t want him there in term 4 2016 before then he was asked to be kept home on certain days, he could only attend excursions if I took him to the destination and went with him even though he had a full time aide. We were threatened with his expulsion even with no prior reason “WHEN your child hurts someone I will exclude him from my school” when this threat was made I asked IF that did happen what about behavioural programs, school psych or the disability behavioural unit, to be told “oh no, we don’t offer anything like that”*

*“listening test in Chinese class as group work – could not hear it so passed over. Sat in class for 20 minutes doing nothing.”*

*“too hard for staff”*

In our view this is completely unacceptable, all children have a right to experience all aspects of their education to see that **more than 1 in 5 students with disability being excluded from** things that most children take for granted such as assemblies and excursions is simply not good enough.

## **Bullying**

In 2017 the TDERL asked parent/carers for the first time whether their child had been the subject of bullying in the past 12 months and how well the school handled the situation if it had occurred. To say we were surprised by the results would be an understatement. Whilst anecdotally bullying is known to be wide spread amongst students with disability, our survey reported that 45% of parent/carers said that their child had been subjected to bullying in the last 12 months with 55% advising that the school did not handle the situation well or handled it poorly.

When breaking down the result to see how it reported for mainstream public school students with disability we found that 51% of parent/carers reported that their child had been bullied in the last 12 months and 60% said that it was not handled well or handled poorly.

### **What parent/carers told us:**

*“peers she thought were her friends would constantly push her over, rub sand in her hair but nothing was ever done and she thought this is what friends do.”*

*“a child was continually bullying my son in the playground, hurting him and his friends, never leaving them alone. Enough was enough so we consulted with the teacher and principal and it was sorted.”*

*“Older boys told him to kill himself. Now he says he wants to kill himself when he’s upset or*

*angry”*

*“Exclusion, laughed at because he is behind, his reading and writing are significantly behind his peers. Thrown around by older children”*

*“kids calling him names and bashing him”*

*“other children have physically assaulted and verbally tormented them”*

*“he’s so far had his pants pulled down multiple times now and has been hit and pine bark shoved down his t-shirt.”*

*“..he is too afraid to venture outside the home, even with support staff, due to the constant physical and emotional bullying he was subjected to by one group of children ...Constant reports were made via phone to the school (and I spoke to parents) but nothing ever changed.”*

*“ .... My child has always been pushed under the rug and treated differently by her school. The boy who was bullying her apparently “isn’t that kind of kid” numerous times he has kicked a football in my daughters face. Hit her, pushed her to the ground leaving bruises and scratches turned to scabs and nothing was done. We have just moved her after 3 years of constant torment she didn’t want to be here anymore as she is a disappointment to everyone.” (note this is a grade 6 student)*

This result highlights the very real negative school experience of many students with disability in our schools and more needs to be done to ensure we have a truly inclusive educational environment.

### **Early Pick Up:**

In 2017 the overall rate that parent/carers reported they had been called to collect their child was 38%, with 37% of those parent/carers called to pick up their child more than 4 times.

In mainstream public school’s parent/carers reported that 41% of them had been called to pick up their child with 44% being called more than 4 times.

### **Individual Education Plans (IEP’s):**

Use of IEP’s for students with disability in this survey has stayed relatively stable with 75% of participants advising that their child had an IEP. With an increase from 78% to 83% of parent/carers reporting that they were part of the IEP process.

In mainstream public schools 71% of parent/carers advised that their child had an IEP and 76% of parents advised that they were involved in the process.

### **Conclusion:**

This year’s results are disappointing to say the least. They show clearly that the situation in our classrooms is not improving but rather getting worse for students with disability. We are particularly concerned with the results as they relate to students in mainstream schools, a

satisfaction rate of 22% combined with an exclusion rate of 34% and a bullying rate of 51% paints a very bleak picture indeed. The Government has repeatedly told us that they are committed to improving the support for students with disability in our schools however that commitment feels very hollow given the above results.

It is time for the elephant in the room to be dealt with, while Tasmania continues to fund students with disability on an IQ basis and not on need it is clear things simply will not improve. We acknowledge that the Government has committed funds to implement the taskforce recommendations from its Ministerial Taskforce into Improved Support for Students with Disability report in 2015 with initiatives including: teacher incentives to obtain special education qualifications, family partnership training for schools, provision of an inclusion advisory panel to oversee the implementation of the taskforce recommendations. However, the recommendations in relation to access to data for students with disability, having school's disability ready and responsive and changing the funding model have seen little progress in the last 2 years.

The time has come for the decision to be made to abolish our inequitable IQ based funding model. TDERL acknowledges that there is not an infinite amount of money available to spend in schools, however not tackling the issue of our outdated resourcing model has clearly made it impossible to make the reforms necessary to see students with disability receiving the education they are entitled to. The time for words is well and truly over, Tasmania can do better than this and we need to, it's time to invest in the education of all children in this state. It is time for action.

These survey results are a stark reminder that there remains an urgent and critical need for reform of the Disability Education Support System. We call on the Minister for Education and the Premier to treat the issue of Disability Education with the urgency that it deserves; there are still far too many students with disability in Tasmania not receiving an education let alone a quality one that will set them up with the skills they will need to thrive as they enter adulthood.