



**Tasmanian Disability Education
Reform Lobby
2017 Teacher View Survey
Summary of Results
August 2017**

The 2017 third annual teacher survey has again given the Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby a more complete understanding of the state of the disability education system in Tasmanian public schools. It is our belief that many of the concerns about the disability education system expressed by families correlate to those frustrations expressed by teachers in our public schools. Schools, teachers and families need to work continue to work together to ensure the best outcome for students with disability.

Our 2017 survey results continue to show that teachers and families do indeed share many common concerns and that urgent reform of the disability education system in Tasmanian public schools is required. The Government continues to acknowledge that things need to improve and have promised to do better, these words are heartening but the reality is that we are not doing better and the Government needs to implement all of the Ministerial Taskforce for Improved Support for Students with Disability (**Ministerial Taskforce**) recommendations as a matter of urgency.

We will continue to measure the impact of Government reforms in the coming years but this year's result shows clearly that the system has not improved and this needs to change.

Adequacy of the Tasmanian Disability Education System:

In 2017 423 teachers participated in our survey. The results show that teachers overwhelmingly believed that the current disability education system in Tasmania is inadequate with only **2% of teachers reporting that they believed that the system was adequate. This has shown no improvement on the last year which recorded the same level of teacher confidence in the disability education system.**

A further 9% of teachers did not know whether the system was adequate leaving **89% of teachers responding that the system was inadequate.**

Further only 7% of teachers told us that the disability education system had changed positively in the last 12 months. This result is concerning as we were hoping to see that more teachers felt that positive changes in the system were occurring as the Government implemented its Ministerial Taskforce recommendations and clearly this is not the case.

Combining this result with the 2017 Parent Satisfaction survey reporting that only 27% of parents felt their child received adequate support in public schools and a 22% parent satisfaction rate in mainstream public schools, this paints a clear picture that urgent reform is needed now and that the work that has taken place over the past 12 months has not had a noticeable, positive impact on teachers or students in the classroom.

Teachers told us:

“Support personnel are spread too thinly. There is inadequate or no professional development. No time allowed for planning. Planning for students with disability is extra work on top of an already overloaded workload. No time given to work with teacher

assistants to implement planning. Classrooms are not physically set up or adequately resourced for special needs students. Furniture is often not suitable.”

“There are many students disadvantaged by teacher’s not having the correct PL to work with students with disability.”

“I have two boys with autism, a student with dyslexia, a boy with trauma who cannot read and write and a Chinese student who barely speaks English. I receive less than two day’s aide time a week.”

“Because there is an expectation that teachers will cope not enough people resourcing and consideration for the whole class of students.”

“No people to run and implement plans. I have become efficient at writing individual learning plans but with no help to implement, what’s the point?”

“There are some students (not all) who require more support than the amount they are allocated. There needs to be more emphasis on need.”

“teacher training and skilling in this field is ad hoc, lacks rigor and is not consistently offered to all teaching staff. For example, support teachers are offered more training than a classroom teacher faced with day to day challenges.”

“I’m not always told what disability students have or their funding.”

“There needs to be more PD/PL to educate teachers about the needs of students with special needs, especially anxiety disorders. Some teachers seem to think it’s an ‘imaginary’ condition.”

“Students who fall below or outside of current guidelines miss out.”

“each child is entitled to the best outcomes for them. I am not confident that I can deliver this.”

Numbers of Students with Disability in Classrooms:

58% of teachers in 2017 told us that the number of students with disability they were teaching had increased in the last 12 months with only 4% of teachers reporting that that the number of students with disability they taught had decreased.

In 2017 97% of teachers told us that they taught children with disability, with 54% of teachers teaching between 1-5 children with disability and 19% of teachers teaching between 6-10 students with disability.

These results clearly show that teachers are very likely to have at least one child with disability in their classroom, the adequacy of the disability education system impacts almost all teachers in almost all classrooms and this is why more needs to be done to reform the disability education system. These reforms will positively impact every

classroom if implemented properly.

Number of Unfunded Students:

In 2017 93% of teachers told us that they taught at least one unfunded student with disability, with 53% of teachers reporting that they had between 1 and 4 students with disability who received no additional funding to assist their school to make the relevant reasonable adjustments for these students.

Professional Development:

When we asked teachers how much disability specific professional development they had access to over the last 12 months 52% of teachers told us that they had not participated in any disability specific professional development in the last 12 months.

A theme that came through very clearly in this survey as it has in our previous surveys was that teachers wanted more disability specific professional development as many felt that they were being asked to teach children they felt they were not confident to teach.

What was disappointing to see in this survey was when compared to the 2016 survey results there was an 8% increase in teachers who didn't participate in disability specific professional development in the last 12 months. Professional development is something that teachers and parents believe is critical to improve support for students with disability, this is something that teachers should be accessing more not less.

When we asked teachers to tell us what their biggest challenge- teaching students with disability was they told us:

“time to differentiate. Lack of specific training, lack of aide support.”

“being able to make sure the curriculum is accessible. Having time to differentiate learning. Actually understanding the disability a student has.”

“not enough in classroom support and easy access to teaching materials.”

“support with learning plans. The role of Support Teacher appears to have changed from someone who assists with their development to someone who just enforces classroom teachers' completion of the work.”

“time to meet with parents, cater for every request of parents as well as prepare lessons and teach other children in the class ... it's almost impossible.”

“having time to plan lessons and aligning it with their I.E.P and the curriculum and making reasonable adjustments to suit the individual student, also getting time with teacher's assistants to discuss the appropriate way in which we want to teach the students and meet the school expectations.”

“access to external support staff such as social workers, speech pathologists, vision

impairment services.”

“lack of funding – resources – staff”

“having the time, skills and support people to provide appropriate programs for children with disabilities of all kinds.”

“ensuring the transition process into College and post year 12 meets students/families needs.”

“differentiation and time for planning.”

“I am not a super teacher nor have I the current skills to be able to evoke change across a hugely diverse group of students, especially those with special needs. I have done support work in the past and yet it is getting more and more difficult as a teacher not the other way around.”

Finally when we asked teachers what changes they would like to see to Tasmanian Disability Education System they told us:

“greater access to funding for students, greater TA resources, more training for teachers, some recognition of the additional time required to adequately cater for the needs of disabled students.”

“we need more specialised teachers actually supporting in the classroom – assisting with the planning of lessons etc. At present, the “experts” come to an IEP meeting, tell you what to do and disappear. When you are teaching a multitude of students with different abilities and needs, this can be frustrating and confusing as one of piece of advice for one student may not apply to another student.”

“Increased funding and more human resources to give support to the child as well as the classroom teacher. Many children do not meet the criteria to receive funding when they struggle to cope independently.”

“Funding according to need, rather than category. We were told that this was to occur about 3 years ago, with the NCCD, but this has not yet occurred.”

“more face to face support in the classroom. Our school takes the money and then spreads it out to other priorities.”

“more support staff for students who have milder disabilities; their needs still impact greatly on the whole class and they, as individuals, are not being treated equitably if there is no funding for them.”

“Properly resourced classrooms that both physically support the student (furniture and equipment) and give the teacher time to plan and work with the teacher assistant.”

“There needs to be funding as per the Gonski model! It is terrible that these children do not get the help they need. It also makes the lonely classroom teachers job feel overwhelming and impossible to do well.”

“better teacher training, more money and time to better support students and classroom teachers.”

“more relevant PL, more funding for support and resourcing.”

“money which equates to need. Students who have assessments done later in their schooling should still be able to access money and thus programmes which will increase their ability to access the curriculum and thus skills for life beyond school.”

“a huge increase in specialists such as speech pathologists, psychologists etc need to be in schools for more days.”