

## Inquiry into the State Education System in Victoria

In October 2023, InSpEd made a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the state education system in Victoria. We indicated that our submission specifically addressed the terms related to Section B. ***Training, accreditation and professional development, particularly for teaching students with special needs.***

We provided an overview of research relating to:

- the declining number of qualified specialist teachers in Victoria, and
- the value of qualified specialist teachers in supporting children with disabilities and learning and behaviour difficulties and their mainstream teachers.

We commended the Victorian Government for aiming to have a qualified specialist teacher able to implement research-based practice for students with disability in every mainstream school but suggested that, according to our audit of postgraduate special education courses in Victoria, only two of the courses, offered at universities with which the Department of Education in Victoria had partnered to offer scholarships, have been identified by InSpEd to have covered essential content identified as evidence-based in the research literature.

We, therefore, recommended that the Victorian Department of Education should:

- undertake a careful and detailed audit of course content before entering into partnerships with universities;
- require provision for more practical experience before specialist teachers are fully qualified; and
- provide incentives for qualified teachers who undertake further study to gain specialist qualifications, including recognition of and remuneration for their specialist skills.

A final report from that Inquiry including findings and recommendations was received in August, 2024. We support many of the recommendations including (a) the establishment of a body to commission and publish educational research; (b) early screening for potential literacy difficulties; and (c) scrutiny of the Tutor Learning Initiative in line with evidence-based practice. The reported remuneration of specialist teachers at leading teacher level is positive but there appears to be no requirement for specialist teachers to be fully qualified to receive this level of remuneration.

Unfortunately, there was no recommendation relating to the scrutiny of the universities, partnered by the Victorian Department of Education, offering post graduate courses in special/inclusive education. This is of concern given the omission of important content included in the majority of those courses.