

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Foundational and Disability Supports

A submission to the NSW Inquiry into foundational and disability supports for children and young people was made by InSpEd at the end of April. The following points were raised as a matter of concern:

- There has been a decline in the quality of support for infants and young children with developmental disabilities and delays and their families over the last decade or so.
- There has been an increase in the number of students with a range of disabilities, including significant intellectual disability, being included in mainstream classrooms without the necessary support from qualified special educators.
- Clinical approaches to support are often provided at both the preschool and school levels rather than an inclusive, functional approach to both assessment of need and the development and implementation of evidence-based interventions in collaboration with teachers and family members and other relevant professionals.
- Special/inclusive education scholarships offered by the NSW Department of Education do not always support university courses that cover the evidence-based content necessary for the provision of quality interventions and supports.

We noted the changes to service provision, in particular for infants and young children prior to school, and their families, following the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); the lack of support for mainstream teachers trying to cater for the full range of learning needs in their classrooms; and that the policy changes required to support the use of qualified instructional specialists in mainstream classrooms would be impeded by the lack of qualified instructional specialists in senior positions in the NSW Department of Education.

Following the concerns raised we made the following recommendations:

- The NSW government needs to ensure that evidence-based foundation supports are provided to pre-school and school age children with disabilities and delays, including children with ASD and intellectual disabilities.
- These supports should be provided through the relevant government departments, including the NSW Department of Education.
- At the pre-school and school levels, these supports should be provided by qualified and experienced special educators who have completed a course in special/inclusive education that includes the evidence-based content identified in the research and embedded into the InSpEd standards.

If these supports are not provided not only will many young children and students not meet their full potential but there will be additional pressures on families and ECEC and school systems.

A full copy of the submission is available to members on the InSpEd member page.